

2023

## Lived Experiences of Employees Working with Homeless Veterans in Transitional Housing Programs in New Jersey

Ieshia C. Davis  
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# Walden University

College of Allied Health

This is to certify that the doctoral dissertation by

Ieshia C. Davis

has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,  
and that any and all revisions required by  
the review committee have been made.

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Walden University  
2023

Abstract

Lived Experiences of Employees Working with Homeless Veterans in

Transitional Housing Programs in New Jersey

by

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MA, Walden University, 2015

MS, Argosy University, 2012

BS, New Jersey City University, 2005

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Clinical Psychology

Walden University

November 2023

## Abstract

Homelessness among veterans has been a widespread concern for over three decades. Individuals employed in transitional housing settings play a pivotal role in helping veterans overcome homelessness. There is a lack of qualitative studies that explores the experiences of these employees, which limits understanding of what is needed to help homeless veterans regain their place back in society and the ability to develop and implement better programs for the population. In this phenomenological study, semi-structured interviews were used to help understand and describe the lived experiences of employees who work directly with the homeless veteran population in transitional housing settings in New Jersey. The employees who work directly with homeless veterans shared insights on what motivates or discourages them in implementing more effective favorable strategies to assist homeless veterans. Herzberg's two-factor theory of motivation constituted the theoretical framework for this study. Criterion sampling was used to recruit participants, and data were analyzed using Giorgi's psychological phenomenological method. Findings revealed that transitional housing employees, whether they felt motivated or discouraged in their positions, successfully helped veterans overcome homelessness. Findings from this study would be an important contribution to the existing literature and would enhance social change initiatives through understanding many experiences of employees who work effortlessly to try and eliminate homelessness among veterans.

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## Dedication

I dedicate this study to my parents (Gloria Davis-Moore and Nathaniel Moore); they taught me that education is important and to work hard for what I want in life. Every time I wanted to give up in this process and there have been countless times, they have always encouraged me to keep going. Sadly, my mother passed away as I was writing this dissertation, and although she will not be present to see me complete my journey, I am grateful that she was by my side through it all until her last day on this earth. I also dedicate this study to the loving memory of my Godmother (Gwendolyn Townsend) who was there for all my graduations. I would have loved nothing more but for her to live to see my progress to this point, but God had other plans.

## Acknowledgments

I am very grateful to my committee members, Dr. Reba Glidewell and Dr. Denise Horton, for taking the time to help me with this study. I am also thankful for the support of my family and friends.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

### **Introduction**

In this study, the experiences of employees who work in transitional housing programs in New Jersey with homeless veterans are examined. Transitional housing programs can provide shelter for veterans who are homeless for up to two years (U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs, n.d). Veterans who reside in transitional housing programs in New Jersey can work on various areas of their life as a means of reentering back into the community. For instance, a veteran in a program might work on legal issues surrounding their driver's license or focus on applying for affordable housing.

There are various programs throughout the United States designed to offer services specifically to homeless veterans with mental illness and/or substance abuse disorders (U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs, n.d.; Community Hope, 2019; Rebecca et al., 2014; Chinman et al., 2012). Transitional housing programs in New Jersey offer a specific service designed to promote social change through the development and provision of supportive housing/services to help homeless veterans achieve residential stability, increase their skill levels, and obtain independent living (U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs, n.d).

While working with the homeless veteran population is a rewarding experience, one social problem faced by transitional housing employees is the difficulty homeless veterans face trying to achieve their full potential. Circumstances such as but not limited to unemployment, mental health issues, substance abuse problems, lack of benefits are examples of social problems. The key purpose for transitional housing employees is to

support and protect those who are considered vulnerable in society. Transitional housing employees are introduced to various cases centered on homelessness and more. With proper training, a positive mindset, and experiences, these employees have developed and will continue to develop strategies for addressing issues the homeless veterans face; however, many challenges may arise.

Chapter one contains an introduction, background of the problem, statement of the problem, purpose of study, research problem, questions, theoretical framework, nature of the study, the definition of terms, assumptions, scope and delimitations, limitations, significance, and summary.

### **Background**

Currently, there is a gap in research that does not focus specifically on the lived experiences of employees who work with homeless veterans in a transitional housing setting in New Jersey. Many homeless veterans face serious barriers to community return, including substance abuse and mental health problems. Because homelessness is the result of many factors, there are a wide range of services offered worldwide that will meet the needs of homeless veterans such as transitional housing programs (Community Hope, 2019; U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs, n.d.).

It is not uncommon for homeless veterans in New Jersey to be discharged from psychiatric units into transitional housing. Case management can be an important tool in bridging service gaps during transitions from psychiatric units. Veterans who were offered case management spent more days housed and fewer days in institutional settings than clients receiving usual VA services (U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs, n.d.). Case

management clients also reported lower alcohol use, drug use, and psychiatric problems (U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs, n.d).

Burnett-Zeigler et al. (2011) explain that there are many complex factors surrounding veteran's homelessness, such as lack of employment. This is a major area that veterans struggle within transitional housing environments. The employees in transitional housing environments work with the veterans to help them regain their places back in society, but sometimes it is not easy (U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs, n.d.; Community Hope, 2019). Employees who work in mental health organizations often have struggles of their own; staff morale, productivity, organizational effectiveness, and implementation of innovation play a part in the workplace environment (Alfes et al., 2018). The turnover rate among employees in mental health organizations is relatively high and has a direct impact on culture and work attitudes (Hulin et al., 2017). In the Veterans Health Administration (VHA), mental health clinicians providing evidence-based posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) care to veterans have experienced significant burnout (Garcia et al., 2014); non-profit contracted employees share very similar attitudes when working with the veteran population (Community Hope, 2019). According to Brazauskas et al. (2016), employees such as non-profit contracted employees work in conjunction with VA staff to provide services for veterans. While those employees may not provide evidence-based psychotherapy, it is not uncommon for them to experience burnout.

Evidence-based practices (Danish & Antonides, 2013; Chinman et al., 2012; Harnish et al., 2016;) for homelessness have been challenging to implement with the



homeless population. Chinman et al.'s (2012) study focused on staff members from three VA homeless programs who tried to improve homeless veterans' quality of care using Getting-To-Outcomes (GTO), a model and intervention of training and technical assistance that builds practitioner capacity to plan, implement, and self-evaluate evidence-based practices; some program changes across the board such as staff communication and commitment helped in working with homeless veterans. Other studies have shown several reintegration challenges for veterans. For instance, Danish and Antonides (2013) and Harnish et al. (2016) both explained that veterans experienced a great deal of distress following deployment, which makes it difficult for staff to work with them while trying to help them and their families successfully reintegrate back into the community due to undiagnosed mental illnesses and/or untreated substance abuse problems.

Using human resource (HR) literature, a five-factor HR dimension was created that suggested that employees make varying attributions for HR practices, and these attributions are differentially associated with commitment and satisfaction (Kalemci & Tuzun, 2012). HR promotes certain attributions that can aid in working with the homeless veteran population such as communication, trustworthiness, objectivity, and knowledge. The attributions employees make about the intentions of HR may affect their work, and attitudes and influence important outcomes in the satisfaction of work performance (Kalemci & Tuzun, 2012). Furthermore, Rebecca et al.'s (2014) study suggests that veterans may face significant social challenges attaining services in their communities. Negative attitudes towards receiving help and stigma from those who do

not completely understand military culture have an impact on whether veterans successfully reintegrate back into civilian life (Garcia et al., 2014; Hulin et al., 2017; Rebecca et al., 2014).

There is a gap in research that does not address all employees that work with the homeless veteran population. Most existing research in this area focuses on social workers; however, in transitional housing facilities various staff at different capacities work as a team to assist homeless veterans, and each staff member plays a vital role. I conducted this study to explore and understand the various roles of transitional housing employees, as well as how their experiences have motivated and/or discouraged them from working with the homeless veteran population. This study contributes to social change by adding research about employees who work with special populations.

### **Problem Statement**

Transitional housing employees play a pivotal role in assisting homeless veterans to regain their places back in society. Working with the veteran population may cause increased stress for workers, especially when veterans are aggressive, demanding, homicidal or suicidal, irritated, and entitled (Garcia et al., 2014). Since this may put staff at high risk for burnout, and that burnout can increase staff turnover and reduce the quality of care in transitional housing programs and/or similar programs, it is important to understand what encourages and/or discourages an employee from working with the population (Garcia et al., 2014). Currently, there are no known studies that focus specifically on the lived experiences of employees who work with homeless veterans in a transitional housing setting in New Jersey. Many homeless veterans face serious barriers

to community return, including substance abuse and mental health problems. Because homelessness is the result of many factors, there is a wide range of services offered worldwide that will meet the needs of homeless veterans such as transitional housing programs (Community Hope, 2019; U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs, n.d).

Transitional housing programs help in the development and provision of supportive housing/services to help homeless veterans achieve residential stability, increase their skill levels, and obtain independence (U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs, n.d.).

Research has shown that the way employees perceive their work can have a major influence on the efficiency and probability of an organization (Hulin et al., 2017). The way an employee's attitudes and perception are displayed in the workplace can also directly affect the atmosphere and productivity within a program (Hulin et al., 2017). Several situations within the office may affect an employee's overall behavior. For instance, if an employee develops a dislike for his or her job, he or she may lose interest in work assignments or lack motivation. These negative feelings may influence a change in attitude and perception about the program and the program's participants. Attitudes can be defined as a combination of our personality, beliefs, values, behaviors, and motivations; it includes three components: an affect (a feeling), cognition (a thought or belief), and behavior (an action) (Casper et al., 2014). Attitudes can help determine how to view situations by causing one to behave in a particular way; although the feeling and belief components of attitudes are internal to a person, it can be viewed through a person's attitude from his or her resulting behavior (Alfes et al., 2018; Hulin et al., 2017).

Many factors influence how we perceive the world and the people in it; different cultural backgrounds, life experiences, and personal values all affect our interactions and relationships with others. In some instances, what an employee perceives may be completely different from reality. Rebecca et al. (2014) suggests that given social work's unique role in the mental health field, social workers, particularly those in rural areas, can serve as a key point of outreach, advocacy, and treatment for veterans.

A way to understand how the employees who work with the homeless veteran population perceive the work that they do day-to-day is to understand their experiences through semi-structured interviews. Some studies (Chinman et al., 2012; Harpaz-Rotem et al., 2011) have reported favorable outcomes for veterans living in other types of programs. For instance, in a study of female veterans who reside in a time-limited residential facility similar to transitional housing programs in New Jersey, data suggested that an important element of recovery for homeless female veterans with psychiatric problems was a positive support system (family, friends, and program staff; Harpaz-Rotem et al., 2011). Another study showed that high levels of communication, staff member commitment to the program, and technical assistance were important factors in having successful outcomes in programs that assist homeless (Chinman et al., 2012).

In this study, staff members from three different VA homelessness programs were recruited to improve their quality of getting-to-outcomes (GTO) model. Chinman et al. (2012) describe GTO as an intervention of training and specialized assistance that builds the staff's capacity to plan, implement, and self-evaluate evidence-based practices. The GTO model is generally used in community-based non-VA settings; however, this study

piloted the GTO in the VA by creating a GTO project within each homeless program, and one across all three. The likelihood and appropriateness of GTO in the VA were examined using the results of the projects, time spent on GTO, and data from focus groups and interviews. With staff members averaging 33 minutes per week on GTO, each team made programmatic changes; staff did find the GTO to be helpful, noting that high levels of communication, staff member commitment to the program, and technical assistance were critical (Chinman et al., 2012).

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this qualitative study was to report on and explore the lived experiences of employees who work in transitional housing settings with the homeless veteran population in New Jersey, as well as to gain their perspectives on job satisfaction and encouraging factors as related to working with the population. To address the gap in the current evidence of transitional housing employee experiences, I conducted this qualitative phenomenological study using semi structured interviews. Findings from this study may be used by other programs designed to assist homeless veterans after receiving an understanding of how those working in this unique environment may help combat homelessness. This may lead to social change within organizations where employees share their experiences to help create both social support and effective programs for addressing homelessness among veterans.

### **Research Questions**

What are the lived experiences of employees working with homeless veterans in a transitional housing program in New Jersey?

**Sub Question**

What is the relationship between job satisfaction and encouraging factors as it relates to working with the homeless veteran population?

**Interview Questions**

1. How long have you been working with the homeless veteran population?
2. What is your role in working with the homeless veteran population?
3. What factors motivate you to work with the homeless veteran population?
4. What factors discourage you from working with the homeless veteran population?
5. Are you familiar with the military and its culture?
6. How does your understanding of military culture affect how you work with homeless veterans?
7. Can you share your most rewarding experience(s) working with the homeless veteran population?
8. Can you share your least rewarding experience(s) working with the homeless veteran population?
9. Have you ever experienced any difficulty with getting services for homeless veterans? If so, how do you handle it?
10. What do you think can be done to eliminate homelessness among veterans?

**Theoretical Framework for Study**

The theoretical framework for understanding the lived experiences of transitional housing employees was the two-factor theory of motivation, also known as dual-factor theory or motivation-hygiene theory (Alshmemri et al., 2017; Herzberg et al., 1959). The

two-factor theory of motivation was developed by Herzberg (1959), which explains what motivates and/or discourages employees to work with the homeless veteran population. Dr. Herzberg developed the theory out of his deep interest in motivation and job satisfaction among people (Herzberg, 1966). He conducted his research by asking groups of people about their work experiences, both good and bad, learning that groups answered questions about their good experiences very differently from the ones about their bad experiences (Herzberg, 1974; Herzberg, 1964). His theory suggests that two factors influence employee satisfaction and motivation: hygiene factors and motivator factors (Alshmemri et al., 2017; Herzberg et al., 1959). Motivator factors are found within the job itself and encourage employees to work harder, whereas hygiene factors are surrounded by the actual job and may cause employees to not work as hard (Malik & Naem, 2013). Examples of motivator factors include advancement, growth, recognition, achievement, and responsibility. Examples of hygiene factors include company policies, work conditions, supervision, relationships, salary, and security. If individuals would like to have a happy and productive workplace, they need to work on improving hygiene and motivator factors according to the two-factor theory. Simply, employees will feel motivated when supported and appreciated (Kian et al., 2013).

The two-factor theory of motivation supports the notion that individuals have different experiences based on the factors surrounding their jobs. Herzberg's theory advises that in real-world practice, hygiene factors are not the source of satisfaction, and these factors should be handled first to create an environment where employee satisfaction and motivation are even possible. If there is an environment that promotes

job satisfaction, it will develop employees who are not only motivated but productive which can contribute to a higher quality of patient care. While there is no one right way to manage people, due to varying needs, backgrounds, and expectations, Herzberg's theory offers a reasonable starting point. By creating an environment that promotes job satisfaction, employees who are motivated, productive, and fulfilled contribute to better care for program residents.

The two-factor theory serves as a basis for understanding the lived experiences of transitional housing employees. Given that the theory breaks down what influences an employee, it can help understand those experiences and why an employee is motivated or discouraged in their line of work. Although the two-factor theory of motivation is widely used, some limitations exist. For instance, one concern is the fact that some people manage to look at the aspects of their work that they like and project them onto themselves when things are going well (Malik & Naeem, 2013). External factors seem to play a larger role when things are not so good. Another limitation is that the theory assumes that job satisfaction equals higher productivity, which is not always true (Malik & Naeem, 2013).

### **Nature of Study**

In this qualitative inquiry, a phenomenological methodology was used to explore the lived experiences of transitional housing employees. Phenomenological research questions grow out of a strong interest to understand a problem or topic, while also working to understand the core and meaning of a human experience (Creswell, 2009).



Furthermore, a phenomenological framework allows the researcher to inquire about the meaning, structure, and core of lived experiences for a certain person or group of people.

The research questions constitute the influence for determining the best data collection strategy. A key reason for collecting data is to ensure that the integrity of the research question is maintained. While there are various ways to collect data, semi structured interviews were the best possible method for this study. Interviewing participants by asking specific questions related to their personal experiences allows for discussions and reflections of a direct sense of perceptions and experiences (Jamshed, 2014). The interviewing process can generate a large amount of data; therefore, making a record of what is said and done during the interview is vital to the data collected (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Audio recordings and handwritten notes were used as part of the data collection process, along with verbatim transcription using Microsoft Word before data analysis. The process of analyzing data entails making sense of a considerable amount of information; one of the most important components of managing data analysis is to be true to the participant (Sutton & Austin, 2015). The collected data from this study were analyzed using Giorgi et al (2017), who defines the steps as follows: (1) assuming the phenomenological attitude, (2) reading the entire written account for a sense of the whole, (3) delineating meaning units, (4) transforming the meaning units into psychologically sensitive statements of their lived-meanings, and (5) synthesizing a general psychological structure of the experience on the constituents of the experience.

As the research and interview questions involved examining the lived experiences of transitional housing employees, a phenomenological approach was the most appropriate as it allowed for the description of the live world, or the lived experiences of an individual. Phenomenology analyzes the words of others and creates the essence of experience or themes to elucidate understandings of human experience (Creswell, 2009). As employees recalled their experiences, the phenomenon of interest being studied was clarified. This offered breadth and depth to the complex experiences and allows for the researcher to interpret the phenomenon within the context it was described. This study will initially take place in New Jersey contingent on the location and availability of participants. I will conduct interviews via Zoom or in-person as agreed on by both myself and the participants.

### **Definitions**

Some terms may appear in this dissertation that are not in common usage, and they are defined below for further clarification:

*Bridge Housing Service:* Veterans that are enrolled in this level of care in a transitional housing program must have been offered and accepted the permanent housing intervention/plan with the anticipation of moving out of transitional housing within 90 days (Community Hope, 2019).

*Clinical Treatment Services:* Veterans enrolled under this service must have a mental health or substance use diagnosis to be accepted into transitional housing. The length of stay is nine months (Community Hope, 2019).

*Grant and Per Diem Program/Grants:* Programs that fund community agencies providing services to homeless veterans through the Department of Veterans Affairs Health Care for Homeless Veterans (U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs, n.d). The programs have two levels of funding: (a) grants and (b) per diem. Grants are used for the sole purpose of construction, renovation, or acquisition of a building for use as service centers or transitional housing for homeless Veterans; they cannot be used for salaries or operational costs (U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs, n.d). The U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs (n.d) describes the per diem component as funds that go to the recipients of grants.

*Transitional Housing:* A housing program designed to promote the development and provision of supportive housing/services to help homeless veterans achieve residential stability, increase their skill levels, and obtain independent living (U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs, n.d).

*Service Intensive Transitional Housing Service:* Veterans enrolled in this service may stay in transitional housing slightly longer than a veteran enrolled under clinical treatment or bridge housing and will receive rigorous services that address their barriers to achieving permanent housing (Community Hope, 2019; U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs, n.d).

*Transition-In-Place Model:* Veterans enrolled in this model will have the opportunity to remain in the transitional housing program and take over the lease as their permanent place of residence (U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs, n.d).

*Critical Time Intervention:* This is a time-limited, evidence-based practice that offers support to the most vulnerable people during their period of transition. It uses community integration and continuity of care to ensure that individuals have linkages within their community, as well as support systems during difficult times (Community Hope, 2019).

*Hospital to Housing:* Veterans enrolled in this service have spent some time in a hospital and have been discharged from the hospital directly into permanent housing (Community Hope, 2019).

### **Assumptions**

The primary assumption for this study was that transitional housing employees would be interested in participating in the research. Additionally, the participants who agreed to be interviewed would provide honest answers during the interview process that clearly described their line of work, as well as what motivates and/or discourages them from working with the population. To seek honest answers, I ensured that the participants' identities would not be linked to the answers they provided. A secondary assumption was that employees working with the homeless veteran population may have varied experiences. Several factors may contribute to this assumption such as months or years they have worked with the population, their level of training, and their knowledge of military culture.

### **Scope and Delimitations**

The specific aspect of this research problem that is addressed in this study is the "lived experiences" of employees that work in transitional housing settings with the

homeless veteran population. This study is limited to the experiences of employees rather than the experiences of the population they work with. This study will consider every aspect of the lived experience as related to working with homeless veterans only. The scope of this study includes transitional housing employees recruited from programs throughout New Jersey. Inclusion criteria require that all participants have a minimum of 1 year of experience as a transitional housing employee who works specifically with the homeless veteran population. Exclusion criteria include less than 1 year of experience as a transitional housing employee working specifically with the homeless veteran population. There are no exclusions based on the capacity in which the employee works with the homeless veteran. All participants agreed to be audio recorded and have their interviews transcribed verbatim. Before the interviews, informed consent was obtained, which advises the research participants of both the potential risks and benefits this study will afford.

Additionally, noted boundaries of this study are directly related to the chosen theoretical framework. The theory assumes a direct correlation between satisfaction and productivity; although, the research conducted by Herzberg stressed satisfaction and ignored productivity. This could potentially make the theory's reliability uncertain. Other theories that are closely related to this study but are not investigated are the need-fulfillment theory and social reference-group theory. The need fulfillment theory suggests that job satisfaction occurs when the job outcomes an employee receives match with those desired by him or her (Green Jr. et al., 2017). The more an employee receives as outcomes they value, the more they feel satisfied; the less they receive as outcomes they

value, the less they feel satisfied. Reference group theory suggests that employees compare their inputs and outputs from/her job to others (Judge et al., 2017). This theory is commonly used to describe relationships between individuals and groups; it gives individuals a basis for comparing themselves and experiences to others.

Transferability is established by providing the reader with evidence that the findings from the study may apply to other situations and populations. As the researcher, I cannot guarantee that the findings of the study will be relevant. I can, however, provide evidence that it could be relevant.

### **Limitations**

This study is limited, given that a small employee sample will be used, and it focuses on a limited number of transitional housing programs. Bias can also be a significant limitation in qualitative research. As a transitional housing employee, my personal bias could potentially affect the interviews conducted and how the data obtained were analyzed. My personal experiences could coincide closely with this study and may create significant understanding for the research participants. To address issues of bias, I have created interview questions before conducting the interviews that were read verbatim so as to not deviate and unintentionally interject personal thoughts and/or experiences. I enhanced the transferability of this study by doing a thorough job describing the research context and the assumptions central to the research. Although transferability can appear to be an obvious and important method to applying results and conclusions, it may not always be perceived as a valid research approach. It may only provide temporary understanding by noting that there are no absolute answers to given

situations. The dependability of my research originates from describing the changing conditions that may occur in the setting and study design as the research unfolds. I will establish that my research findings are consistent and repeatable by ensuring that if another researcher were to look over my data, they would arrive at a similar conclusion. If I am careless or make mistakes in any aspect of my study whether it is collecting data, interpreting data, or reporting findings, my study would not be dependable. Additionally, if I fail to maintain any kind of audit trail of my study, the dependability cannot be assessed, and the trustworthiness of my study would diminish. The more consistent I am in the research process, the more dependable my results will be.

### **Significance**

The themes that emerge from this study could help in identifying factors that would help employees better assist the population with whom they work. The lived experiences could determine how working in transitional housing programs with veterans who are homeless affects the participant as well. The existing literature about employee behaviors can help examine how employees interact with the homeless veteran population in transitional housing settings and add to the existing body of research about employees that work with special populations (Abstein et al., 2014; Alfes et al., 2018; Garcia et al., 2014; Kalemci & Tuzun, 2012; Rebecca et al., 2014).

Currently, there are no known studies that focus specifically on the lived experiences of employees who work with homeless veterans in a transitional housing setting in New Jersey. Many homeless veterans face serious barriers to community return, including substance abuse and mental health problems. Because homelessness is the

result of many factors, a wide range of services are offered worldwide that will meet the needs of homeless veterans such as transitional housing programs (Community Hope, 2019; U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs, n.d.). Transitional housing programs help with the development and provision of supportive housing/services to help homeless veterans achieve residential stability, increase their skill levels, and obtain independence (U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs, n.d.). This study is an important contribution to the existing literature and enhances social change initiatives by understanding the many experiences of employees and creating more enhanced programs that could better assist the veteran population.

### **Summary and Conclusion**

The phenomenology approach to this study offers an opportunity for research problems to be studied within the context in which they occur. It allows those who experience a phenomenon firsthand to give an account of their perceptions of these experiences before any theorizing. There remains a gap in research that focuses directly on the experiences of transitional housing employees and their work with the homeless veteran population. The “lived experiences” could potentially offer real-life issues that arise for the employees who work with the population. In this chapter, introductory information on the lived experiences of transitional housing employees was provided. In Chapter 2, I will present an introduction, a literature review search strategy, a theoretical foundation, a literature review related to key variables and/or concepts, and a summary.



## Chapter 2: Literature Review

### **Introduction**

Transitional housing programs help in the development and provision of supportive housing/services to help homeless veterans achieve residential stability, increase their skill levels, and obtain independence (U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs, n.d.). The employees in this setting play a pivotal role in assisting homeless veterans regain their places back in society. Working with the veteran population can cause a variety of perceptions and experiences. Understanding the factors surrounding what motivates and/or discourages these employees from working with the population can be beneficial in creating additional programs or improving current programs. Currently, there are no known studies that focus specifically on the lived experiences of employees who work with homeless veterans in a transitional housing setting in New Jersey.

In New Jersey, there are various programs that assist homeless veterans. The number of homeless veterans has dropped by 43.3% since 2011 due to more readily programs such as transitional housing programs (National Alliance to End Homeless, 2019). Many homeless veterans face serious barriers returning to civilian life. A wide range of services are offered worldwide that will meet the needs of homeless veterans such as transitional housing programs (Community Hope, 2019; U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs, n.d.).

The purpose of this qualitative study is to report and explore on the lived experiences of employees who work in transitional housing settings with the homeless

veteran population in New Jersey, as well as to gain their perspectives on job satisfaction and hygiene factors as they relate to working with the population.

Transitional housing employees are very similar to those who work in mental health settings, though the title of the roles may be slightly different. Some of those titles include, but are not limited to, Program Coordinator, Residence Manager, Behavioral Health Counselor, and Peer Assistant (Community Hope, 2019). In research conducted on mental health workers, plentiful literature focuses on the following areas: employee burnout, job dissatisfaction, and coping skills. Emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and a lack of accomplishment can take a serious toll on mental health workers, ultimately causing them to feel unmotivated while performing their job duties (Thornton, 2012; Rossler, 2012). A major stressor of working in mental health settings has been shown to be patient/client suicide, which can lead to symptoms of post-traumatic stress among employees (Alfes et al., 2018; Garcia et al., 2014; Rossler, 2012). The existing literature about employee behaviors examines how employees interact with the homeless veteran population in transitional housing settings (Abstein et al., 2014; Alfes et al., 2018; Garcia et al., 2014; Kalemci & Tuzun, 2012; Rebecca et al., 2014).

In this chapter, I explain my literature search strategy, including the research databases, search engines, search terms, and processes. This chapter also includes a summary of the theoretical framework that will be used in this study and an exhaustive literature review of the most current studies of employees who work with homeless veterans in programs like transitional housing programs. Additionally, I will explain the roles of the employees who work in the programs and provide an overview of being a

homeless veteran in New Jersey. Finally, I will provide a summary of the chapter and give a rationale for the study.

### **Literature Search Strategy**

To identify relevant peer-reviewed articles published within the last 10 years, I conducted an extensive literature review involving the following keywords: *homeless veterans, transitional housing programs for homeless veterans, employee job experiences in transitional housing settings or similar settings, and theories about job satisfaction and motivation*. I will use Walden University's library resources to obtain scholarly journals using the following databases: EBSCOHost, Academic Search Complete, ProQuest Central, and SAGE Journals. Google Scholar and websites of organizations will also be used. A Google Scholar alert was used to provide updates on current literature involving topics in the study. The literature search was exhaustive once the same patterns and/or themes keep emerging. I will also review reference sections of articles for additional sources.

The literature review helped me build upon prior research in the field, identifying themes will that relate to homeless veterans, transitional housing programs, job satisfaction, theories that relate to job satisfaction and hygiene factors, mental health programs, and employees working in mental health settings. I will also be able to identify the lack of extensive or current literature that specifically addresses the experiences of transitional housing employees who work with homeless veterans. To address the lack of research about employee experiences in this setting, employee experiences in similar settings will be examined. The gap in literature will be addressed in this study by

exploring theories related to employee experiences in similar settings. Saturation issues were addressed by reaching out to the Walden University library to address additional keywords that could be used to search the topic.

### **Theoretical Foundations**

The theoretical framework for this study is the two-factor theory of motivation, also known as dual-factor theory or motivation-hygiene theory, as developed by Herzberg et al. (1959). This theory suggests that specific elements lead to job satisfaction, as well as job dissatisfaction. These elements were placed into two categories: hygiene factors and motivator factors (Herzberg, 1966). This theory explains employee motivation and willingness to perform duties. Employees can be displeased with their place of employment due to factors such as work conditions, company policy, job security, and salary, otherwise known as hygiene factors. These factors surround the job and may cause employees to become unmotivated; in contrast, motivator factors are believed to increase an employee's purpose. For instance, personal growth, achievement, recognition, and the work itself can enable an employee to perform to the best of his/her abilities.

The two-factor theory of motivation can shed light on how individuals have different experiences based on the factors surrounding their jobs. Although the two-factor theory of motivation is widely used, some limitations may exist. For instance, one concern is the fact that some people manage to look at the aspects of their work that they like and project them onto themselves when things are going well (Malik & Naeem, 2013). External factors seem to play a larger part when things are not so good. Another

limitation is that the theory assumes that job satisfaction equals higher productivity, which is not always true in some cases (Malik & Naeem, 2013).

Herzberg's theory relates to the current study as it proposes that most factors that contribute to job satisfaction are motivators such as achievement, the satisfaction of the work itself, and opportunities for advancement, while most factors that contribute to job dissatisfaction are hygiene elements. Additionally, Herzberg's theory is one of the content theories of motivation, which explains the factors that motivate individuals through identifying and satisfying their individual needs, desires, and the aims pursued to satisfy such desires. It is among one of the most widely recognized motivational theories. Managers in businesses have used the theory to motivate staff to provide them with job satisfaction and in return receive better task performance (Herzberg, 1966).

There are a few studies that have used Herzberg's theory to explain what motivates and discourages employees in their line of work. In a study of academics, the focus was placed on the differences of the academics' experiences in the satisfaction level towards their jobs in their hometowns. The study found that both motivation and hygiene factors were significantly related to job satisfaction (Virender, 2018). There was a significant difference in the satisfaction level of academics towards hygiene and motivation factors, due to the difference in their hometowns (Virender, 2018). Other studies, such as one conducted by Alfayad and Arif (2017), found that there is a positive relationship between employee voice and job satisfaction; further, job satisfaction levels are improved when an employee's thoughts and/or ideas are acknowledged as it creates a motivational environment. Overall, it was found that when an organization reinforces and

supports employees, it will contribute to the growth of the company's effectiveness in whatever environment they work in (Alfayad & Arif, 2017). In Holmberg et al.'s (2018) study of nurses working in a mental health setting similar to a transitional housing setting, job satisfaction was studied utilizing Herzberg's two-factor theory. The theory was used to help provide a better understanding of job satisfaction among Swedish mental health nursing personnel within inpatient psychiatric care. Similar to my study, semi structured interviews were used to solicit responses from the staff. Based on those responses, it was determined that Herzberg's theory proved useful in exploring job satisfaction in the nursing mental health setting, but the findings partly contradicted the basic beliefs of the theory. For instance, advancements and incentives were perceived as lacking, which negatively influenced job satisfaction; whereas in other studies, such factors positively influenced job satisfaction (Caro et al., 2017).

The two-factor theory is one of the most prominent theories regarding motivation factors in the workplace; it best relates to this study as it recognizes satisfaction that is obtained through work itself. Furthermore, it draws attention to job design, which can make individuals aware that problems of motivation may not necessarily be directly related to the actual work that one does but by separate factors. The research questions specifically address job satisfaction and encouraging factors, which may help explain the various lived experiences of employees.

### **Literature Review Related to Key Concepts**

In this section, I will review the following topics: theoretical foundation, the various roles of employees in transitional housing, and the background of the homeless

veteran population in New Jersey. The theoretical foundation of this study will help connect the reader to existing knowledge of the staff who work with homeless veterans through the guidance of Herzberg's two-factor theory of motivation. It will also explain the various roles of the staff while offering a background into the homeless issue in general, with veterans, and in the State of New Jersey.

### **Various Roles of Employees in Transitional Housing**

Transitional housing employees are remarkably similar to those who work in mental health settings and the names of the roles may be slightly different. In research conducted on mental health workers, there is information available that focuses on employee burnout, job dissatisfaction, and coping skills as it relates to working in stressful environments. In a study to determine the relationship between individual coping, appraisal, and burnout, the work that is done by mental health workers was examined. The study found that emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and the lack of accomplishment took a serious toll on mental health workers who work in difficult environments making them unmotivated to perform their job duties (Thornton, 2012). Like transitional housing employees, working in a stressful environment can very well have the same outcome. Similarly, Rossler (2012) conducted a study on stress, burnout, and job dissatisfaction in mental health workers and found that there is a greater increase in burnout working in the mental health field. Ironically, mental health workers experience similar work stressors as other professionals, however, their stressors are unique to the psychology profession. Challenges within the psychology field may range from the stigma of the profession to the demanding relationships with clients and difficult

interactions with other mental health professionals (Rossler, 2012). A major stressor commonly found in mental health that also arises in transitional housing programs is patient suicide which can lead to symptoms of post-traumatic stress symptoms.

Transitional housing program employees, although like mental health workers, offer a specific set of staff that operate at different capacities to ensure that homeless veterans receive the best possible care. The next sections will explain the roles of transitional housing employees in detail.

The Administrative Assistant (AA) is a full-time position that assists with day-to-day office support operations and providing administrative support services to program and professional staff. The duties of the AA include answering the phone, transferring calls to appropriate extensions, and taking phone messages. The AA files documents, faxes information and photocopies documents as needed. The AA prepares and distributes documents including correspondence, reports, contracts, forms, financial documents, agency referral documentation and other administrative documents. The AA closely monitors office supplies and coordinates purchasing of office and program supplies. The AA oversees maintenance of office areas and office equipment. The AA also monitors and maintains the agency's database.

The Admissions Planner (AP) is a full-time position who may coordinate the referral and admission process by providing residential support services to veterans. The AP is known for establishing and maintaining cooperative relationships with referral sources. The AP may conduct outreach and marketing activities to identify veterans for admission if the census of the program is very low; the census of the program varies



(Casey et al., 2019). The AP completes referral forms and pre-admission assessments and collects pertinent referral documents (Community Hope, 2019). The AP may also coordinate admissions with the Veterans Administration Grant and Per Diem Liaisons. The AP maintains admissions data and requires reporting including the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS), the census spreadsheet, and the Annual Utilization Report (Community Hope, 2019). A major part of the AP's position is to ensure consumer confidentiality according to agency policies. The AP provides orientation to veterans at admission. The AP may include referral sources, case workers, therapists, family members, or other advocates in the admissions process when authorized by a veteran. The AP is also responsible for ensuring accuracy and consistency with the agencies fiscal and billing procedures.

The Assistant Program Coordinator (APC) assists the Program Coordinator and Director of Veterans Services in administering, managing, and operating the Program. The APC supervises and directs employees and ensures that veterans receive high quality care in accordance with Agency policies, procedures, and practices. The APC participates in program development and initiatives implementation. He or she provides clinical support and on-call coverage to employees and veterans for crisis intervention and emergency assistance. The APC ensures continuous overnight clinical coverage in transitional housing programs, assists in overseeing and ensuring that the program adheres to regulatory, stakeholder, and accreditation standards. The APC establishes and maintains cooperative relationships with referral sources and other community agencies.

The Clinical Case Manager (CCM) is a full-time position which provides case management and support services to veterans (Brancu et al., 2015). The CCM coordinates and monitors all aspects of service delivery including assessment, evaluation, recommendations on placements, treatment planning, case conferences, referrals for adjunctive services, family meetings, group work, individual counseling (as needed), veteran advocacy, and acts as a liaison for the veteran with other community agencies (Community Hope, 2019). The CCM observes veteran's self-administration of prescribed medication as per agency procedures and provides medication education if needed.

The Employment Specialist (ES) directs and coordinates work readiness programs. The ES may be directly responsible for helping and training to improve vocational skills, resume writing and interview skills of veterans. A major role of the ES is networking and attending events with local and state agencies and local employers to further enhance their relationship with the organization. The ES collects, organizes, and analyzes information about individuals through records, tests, interviews, and professional sources, to appraise their interests, aptitudes, abilities, and personality characteristics, for vocational and educational planning (Community Hope, 2019). Employment opportunities are created for veterans through collaboration with community employers. This links veterans to placement services and local and state agencies i.e., Division of Vocational Rehabilitation and Department of Labor. The goal of the ES is to assist the veteran in obtaining employment after gaining marketable skills.

The Overnight Behavior Health Counselor (BHC) is another full-time position within transitional housing programs that offers residential support services to veterans. The overnight BHC provides clinical coverage in the building during the hours that most veterans are sleeping. The overnight BHC is available should a veteran need supportive counseling in an emergency or crisis intervention. The overnight BHC is responsible for documenting any and all pertinent information and reviews the logs that veterans are responsible for signing on a daily basis such as Resident Sign-In Log (helps staff keep track of veterans present inside of the building), Medication Sign-In Log (each veteran is required to sign in and out when entering the medication room to take prescribed medications), and the Pass Authorization Log (veterans should sign this log during their 72 hour absence for the program) (Community Hope, 2019).

The Peer Assistant (PA) is a full or part-time position that helps and supports veterans. The (PA) is normally a veteran who has graduated from the program. The PA has a unique advantage to working with veterans as he/she can and normally will use his/her recovery experiences and successes to serve as a role model for other veterans in the program. The PA position is very similar to a receptionist's position. The PA ensures the safety and security of all access doors, lobby area, and keys. The PA also functions as a team member by covering shifts, facilitating groups, participating in activities, communicating with other team members, and covering co-workers' duties as needed.

The Residence Manager (RM) full-time position to provide daily management of the overall facility. The RM is responsible for ensuring a safe, clean, and adequate living environment for all veterans. The RM supervises and assists veterans in housekeeping,

maintenance and upkeep of the facility. The RM assists in the development and implementation of all recreational activities for veterans and assists the Director of Veteran Services in transitioning new veterans to the residence and discharge or transition of outgoing veterans to other placements. The RM is responsible for ensuring that on-site drug and alcohol screenings are completed randomly each month. The RM convenes monthly House meetings to provide information to veterans and discuss all house-related issues. The RM maintains accurate and timely documentation including meeting minutes, fire drill records, chore lists, daily logs, and appropriate clinical documentation. The RM implements and maintains appropriate safety standards and safety education. The RM is responsible for repair and maintenance requests. The RM attends and participates in all applicable meetings and training courses and possesses knowledge of agency policies and procedures.

The Program Coordinator (PC) is a full-time position to assist in the management and operations of transitional housing programs. The PC provides case management and support services to veterans. The PC provides onsite supervision to other staff members and veterans as needed. The PC coordinates and monitors all aspects of service delivery including assessment, evaluation, recommendations on placements, treatment planning, family meetings, group work, individual counseling, veteran advocacy, liaison with other community agencies and discharges. The PC provides clinical support and on-call coverage to staff and veterans for crisis intervention and emergency services. The PC assists the Director of Veteran Services in overseeing and ensuring that the program adheres to local, state, federal, and accreditation standards along with monitoring and

ensuring that the program meets contract standards and affiliation agreements. The PC is also directly involved in giving in-house tours, completing public speaking engagements as needed and helping with any special events to further promote public awareness of the program. The PC conducts and documents random inspections of facilities. The PC is responsible for having weekly staff team meetings developing therapeutic “in house” programs to meet veteran needs.

Transitional housing staff work in conjunction with VA employees to assist veterans while in a transitional housing program. Each transitional housing program is assigned to a VA Grant and Per Diem Liaison; this employee monitors the services the grantees offer to veterans and provides direct assistance to them. Upon admission into a transitional housing program, veterans are asked to sign an authorization to release information. The authorization allows the VA staff to share information with the transitional housing staff about the veteran’s records. Veterans do have the right to refuse to sign the authorization to release information. If that occurs, the VA staff cannot under any circumstances release any of the veteran’s personal information.

### **Background of Homeless Veteran Population in New Jersey**

According to the New Jersey Department of Military and Veterans Affairs (2018), there are about 2,000-3,000 homeless veterans in the state of New Jersey. Overall, veteran homelessness in New Jersey has dropped since 2011 by 28 percent. Some counties have even declared an effective end to veteran’s homelessness altogether as a result of various programs that are designed to house veterans. Although this study focuses primarily on transitional housing, there are other programs designed to assist

homeless veterans. For instance, there is a domiciliary program that is typically three-to-four months (Brown, Watson, & Wilka, 2017; U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs, n.d.). There are 85 beds, and the goal is to provide intensive rehabilitation services to veterans which includes but are not limited to medical, psychiatric, vocational, and recreational services. This type of program may use treatment modalities that include a 12-step model. Another program is work training and employment (Hoff et al., 2017). Given that many homeless veterans have not worked in many years, this program is designed to help veterans with housing and employment. The homeless veterans are placed into paid on-the-job training in various areas such as retail services or construction. They are also placed in a shelter-like facility until they can afford a place of their own.

According to the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness, there are at least nine counties out of twenty-one in New Jersey where homelessness among veterans continues to be a social problem. In January of 2019, there were 8,862 people estimated as homeless, out of that number 551 were identified as veterans (United States Interagency Council on Homelessness, 2019).

Homelessness can occur for various reasons which include but are not limited to poverty, housing, system failures, structural factors, personal and relational problems, and domestic violence (Nation Alliance to End Homelessness, 2019). Each year, an estimated 3.5 million Americans sleep in transitional housing, shelters, and public places according to the National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty. Veterans are not unlike civilians when it comes to homelessness. Veterans must navigate the lack of

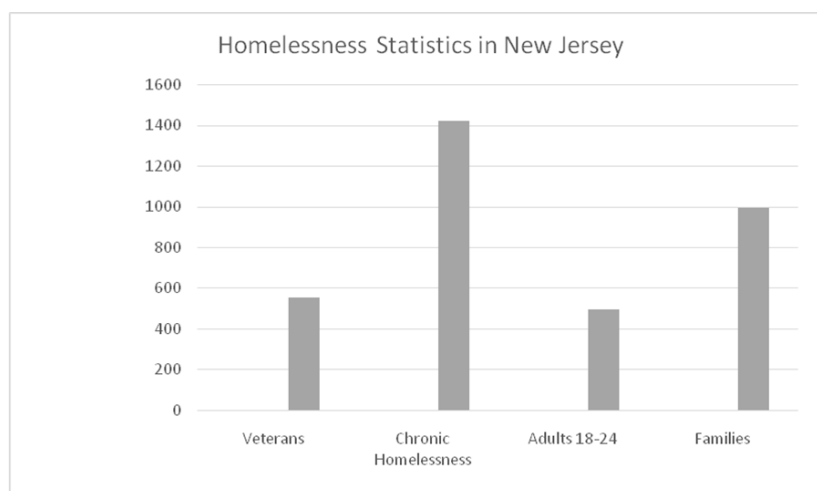
affordable housing and economic hardship in addition to the challenges that come along with multiple and extended military deployments. Blue-Howells et al., 2018).

Homelessness is usually the result of the growing impact of factors rather than just one single cause. For instance, economic and societal issues that affect opportunities and social environments are structural factors that can contribute to homelessness. The lack of adequate income and shifts in the economy can create challenges for people to earn income to be able to afford housing (National Alliance to End Homelessness, 2019). A critical shortage in affordable housing also contributes to homelessness. Additionally, system failures such as inadequate discharge planning from hospitals, corrections, and/or mental health facilities may lead into homelessness (Brown, Watson, Wilka, 2017; Tsai & Rosenheck, 2015). When a system of care or support fails it causes vulnerable people to become homeless. In some case the personal circumstances of an individual can lead to homelessness such as traumatic events (house fire), personal crisis (domestic violence), or addiction challenges (Tsai & Rosenheck, 2015).

Since 2011, the number of homeless veterans has dropped by 43.3% due to more available programs (National Alliance to End Homeless, 2019). Since 2018, the number has dropped by 2.1%. In January 2019, the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness reported that approximately 37,085 veterans were experiencing homelessness. Although there has been a decrease in veteran homelessness overall, there may be a need for more transitional housing programs around the world.

**Figure 1**

*Homelessness Statistics in New Jersey as of January 2020 (United States Interagency Council on Homelessness, 2020)*



The goal of a transitional housing program is to provide a safe, supportive environment where veterans can sustain their recovery and start on the path to rebuilding their lives. The length of the program can range from three months to twenty- four months in which a veteran will be assigned a staff member to work with him/or her throughout their duration in the program. During a veteran's time in the transitional housing, the staff strongly encourages a veteran to achieve independence and financial stability by obtaining employment. Transitional housing programs may be created in partnership with the U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs. Programs may offer recovery services for substance abuse and other mental disorders such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) or schizophrenia (Brown, Watson, & Wilka, 2017). Veterans are offered case management services linking them to health and rehabilitation services. They may



also have an employment specialist on site to help veterans obtain employment by assisting with resume rebuilding and transporting to job fairs and/or interviews. Veterans in transitional programs also have in house groups, for instance, there may be an Alcoholic Anonymous (AA) groups held in some programs during the evenings facilitated by one of the residents in the program or a staff member. Veterans also have the option of attending groups held outside of their programs. They may be transported by the program's staff or by other residents. In addition to AA groups, veterans also attend Narcotics Anonymous (NA). Other groups include, but are not limited to peer support groups, financial stability groups, diabetic groups, and pet therapy.

In 2017, a decision was made to better meet the evolving needs of homeless Veterans (U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs, n.d.). The homelessness providers Grant and Per Diem (GPD) program changed to implement a more competitive time limited grant process that required programs to reapply for funding so that grantees are located where their services are needed the most (New Jersey Department of Military and Veterans Affairs, 2018). Most transitional housing programs for homeless veterans receive funding from the government under a program known as Grant and Per Diem. A Grant and Per Deprogram can be defined as programs that fund community agencies that provide services to homeless veterans through the Department of Veteran Affairs. Under this type of program there are two levels of funding: grants and per diem. Grants are used for the sole purpose of construction, renovation, or acquisition of a building for use as service centers or transitional housing for homeless Veterans; it cannot be used for salaries or operational costs while per diem serves as a component that goes to recipients

of grants (U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs, n.d.). Three specific program models were suggested to GPD programs although there are five models to choose from (Casey et al., 2019). The first is known as bridge housing which places emphasizes on short stays in transitional housing with a quick connection to permanent housing with supportive services and benefits (U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs, n.d.). The next is known as service intensive housing which offers a slightly longer stay for veterans with intensive services that focuses strongly on the veteran's barrier to achieving permanent housing (U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs, n.d.). Transition-in-place is a time limited transitional housing assistance where the veteran takes over the lease as their permanent housing (U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs, n.d.). The other two models that were not recommended include: clinical treatment service and Hospital to Housing. Under the clinical treatment model, a veteran must have a mental health or substance use diagnosis to be accepted into transitional housing under the Hospital to Housing model. Veterans have spent some time in the hospital and after they are discharged, they are placed in permanent housing (Casey et al., 2019; New Jersey Department of Military and Veteran Affairs, 2018).

Once a veteran is admitted into a transitional housing program, he or she is admitted under a particular track depending on their current need. The admissions planner works closely with the clinical team to determine which track a veteran will be admitted on, the tracks include Bridge Housing Service, Clinical treatment Service, Service Intensive Transitional Housing Service, Transition-In-Place Model, Critical Time Intervention (Community Hope, 2019; U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs, n.d.).

Veterans that are enrolled in a transitional housing program that have been offered and accepted for permanent housing intervention/plan with the anticipation of moving out of transitional housing within 90 days fall under the bridge housing service track. Under the clinical service treatment track, a veteran may be admitted for a mental health or substance abuse disorder; his/she length of stay ranges from nine months to two years. Veterans enrolled under service intensive transitional housing service will receive rigorous services that addresses their barrier to achieving permanent housing (Community Hope, 2019; U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs, n.d.). Veterans enrolled under the transition-in-place service track will have the opportunity to remain in the transitional housing program and take over the lease as their permanent place of residence (U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs, n.d.). The critical time intervention track is a time limited evidence-based practice that offers support to the most vulnerable people during their period of transition. It uses community integration and continuity of care to ensure that individuals have linkages within their community and support systems during difficult times (Community Hope, 2019). The management staff in transitional housing programs review veteran's records prior to being admitted into the program to determine the best service track to enroll them under. There may be instances where a veteran is enrolled under one track and switched to another service track after being in the program for a while.

Although homeless veterans are in transitional housing for a limited amount of time, there are several opportunities available to them once they are admitted to a program. For instance, veterans can apply for a program called HUD-VASH. According

to the Department of Veteran affairs, HUD-VASH is a program that offers housing vouchers to homeless veterans and their families (Evans, Kroeger, Palmer, & Pohl, 2019). HUD offers rental assistance vouchers for homeless veterans who are eligible for VA health care services. In addition to a voucher, case management services are also provided. The purpose of case management is to connect veterans with supported services such as mental health treatment, counseling, health care, schooling, etc. HUD-VASH is known for enrolling the largest percentage of veterans who have experienced repeated and/or long-term homelessness. As of 2019, there are a reported 90,749 veterans with active HUD-VASH vouchers (U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs, n.d.). Not all veterans who apply for HUD-VASH are eligible for the program. A veteran must meet the definition of homelessness as it is described under the McKinney Homeless Assistance Act of 1987. This act explains in detail what is appropriately defined a chronic homelessness and HUD-VASH prioritizes the level of need depending on what is defined as such. Currently the McKinney Homeless act is the first and only major federal legislative response to homelessness. In the early 1980s, a federal task force was created to address homelessness. In the following years, advocates from around the world demanded that the federal government address homelessness as a national problem that required a national response which in turn lead to the development of the Homeless Person's Survival act introduced to Congress in 1986. This act suggested that the homeless were provided with emergency relief measures and preventive measures, along with long-term solutions for homelessness. Unfortunately, a limited part of the proposed act was enacted into the law. The first Homeless Clarification Act of 1986 removed

permanent address requirements and other barriers to existing programs such as veteran's benefits and Medicaid. In the same year, the homeless Housing Act was adopted which created the emergency shelter grant program and transitional housing programs both administered by HUD. The Homeless Person's Survival act was then introduced as the Urgent Relief for the Homeless Relief Act and in 1987 after a very intensive advocacy campaign, passed the law for homeless. After the death of Chief Republican Sponsor (Stewart B. McKinney), the act was renamed to the McKinney Homeless Assistance Act. The act was renamed again in 2000 to McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act after the death of the leading supporter (Bruce Vento) who was an advocate since the act was first established.

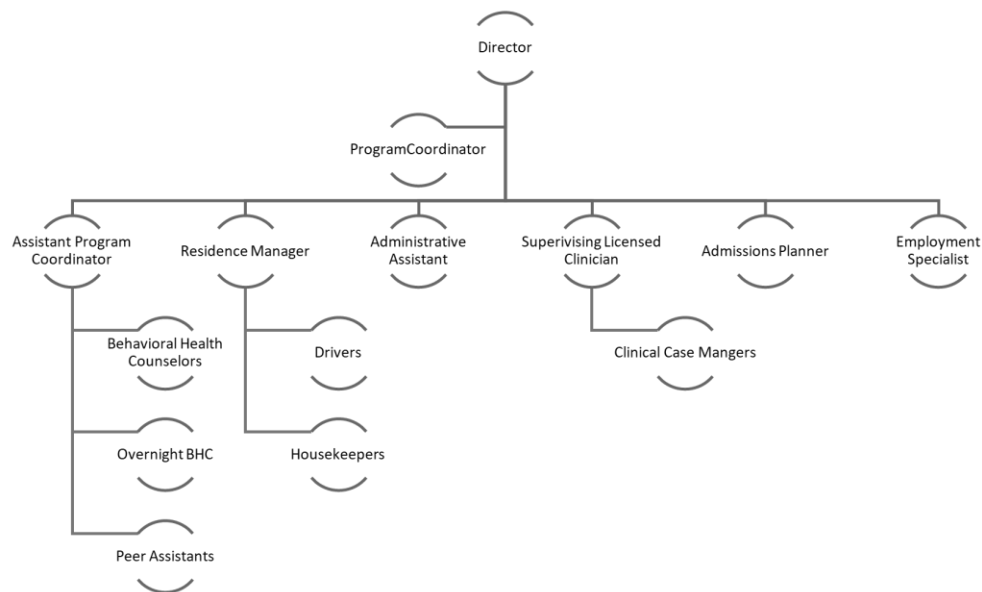
The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act originally consisted of fifteen programs that offered varied services to the homeless population. The services included, but were not limited to transitional housing, education, and job training. The act has been amended four times to expand the scope and strengthen the provisions of the original act. As of today, the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act has helped thousands of Americans regain stability through the various programs offered (Harris et al., 2018). Given the guidelines of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, homeless veterans are eligible for the HUD-VASH program based on certain criteria (Evans et al., 2019). The veteran must demonstrate the most need or vulnerability and must need case management services to obtain and sustain independent community housing. The program targets the chronically homeless veteran who is the most vulnerable and often has severe mental or physical health problems and/or substance use disorders, with

frequent emergency room visits, multiple treatment attempts, and limited access to other social supports (U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs, n.d.). Additionally, other veterans who are homeless with diminished functional capacity and resultant need for case management are also eligible for HUD-VASH (U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs, n.d.).

The main component of the HUD-VASH program is case management services offered by the Veteran's Administration (VA). Case Management is the heart of the program and is a requirement for participation in the HUD-VASH voucher program. These services are designed to improve veterans' quality of life and end their homelessness. The VA determines clinical eligibility for the program while the public housing authority (PHA) determines if the veteran participant meets HUD's regulations. The PHA determines eligibility based on income limits. The PHA will also decide if any member of the household is required to maintain Lifetime Sexual Offender Registry status, if so, they are not eligible to participate in the program. HUD-VASH provides permanent supportive housing for eligible homeless veterans who are single or eligible homeless veterans with families. The program is developed for the homeless veteran, so eligible veteran families must include the veteran. Since the program provides for veteran who may have medical, mental health and/or substance use disorders, eligible veterans must be able to complete activities of daily living and live independently in the community with case management and supportive services (Harris et al., 2018).

**Figure 2**

*Example of Hierarchy in a Transitional House Setting*



### Summary and Conclusion

Homeless veterans appear to have similar and different experiences as it relates to homelessness. While veterans may experience the same factors that lead to their homelessness, the difference between veterans and non-veterans is that veterans have access to a range of additional benefits through the US Department of Veteran Affairs (VA) system. Homelessness overall began to be regarded as a social problem in the 1980s as a result from cuts to social services and welfare, deinstitutionalization, increasing problems with housing affordability and the failure of community mental health facilities (National Alliance to End Homelessness, 2019). State, local, tribal governments and nonprofits receive capital grants and per diem payments to develop and operate transitional housing and/or service centers for veterans who are homeless (U.S.

Department of Veteran Affairs, n.d.). The VA funds an estimated 600 agencies that provide over 14,500 beds to homeless Veterans. The maximum stay in this housing is up to 24 months, with the goal of moving veterans into permanent housing. In some rare cases, a veteran may stay longer than 24 months.

Overall, transitional housing is designed to assist with eliminating homelessness, it promotes the development and provision of supportive housing/services with the goal of helping homeless veterans achieve residential stability, increase their skill levels, and obtain independence (U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs, n.d.). Some transitional programs were redesigned to provide more specialized services for women and men who served in the military. Transitional housing programs have adopted three models: clinical treatment service, bridge housing, and the service intensive model. The new models were expected to take place on or before December 31, 2017. An evidence-based practice that informs services was chosen for most of the programs. To facilitate the changes in service delivery, some employee positions in New Jersey transitional housing programs were eliminated while others were created. The men and women who work with veterans each day have varied duties to meet the needs of those in transitional housing. The employees who are mostly nonmilitary use each day to focus on the veteran regaining their places back in society. Working with veterans is not an easy task and the transitional housing facility staff can share their many experiences on what it is like to work with the homeless veteran population (Adler et al., 2015). Each employee's experience is different. The employee interviews in this study will explain



those experiences in more depth and fill a gap in research that focuses on the transitional housing employee and their importance working with the homeless veteran population.

In this review of the literature, no studies were found about the lived experiences of transitional housing employees who work with homeless veterans. There were also no studies that specifically addressed the relationship between job satisfaction and hygiene factors as it relates to this specific group of employees. Several gaps were identified by this review of the literature. Some studies were found that examined related factors but nothing very specific to the variables in the projected study. For instances, studies were found that focused on favorable outcomes for homeless veterans living in other types of programs (Chinman et al., 2012; Harpaz-Rotem et al., 2011), staff members commitment as an important factor in having successful outcomes in programs that assist homeless veterans (Chinman et al., 2012), and employee's perceptions of their work having a major influence on the efficiency and profitability of the organization (Hulin et al., 2017). Other studies, although limited, applied Herzberg's theory as it relates to job satisfaction and hygiene factors. In the field of academicians, motivation and hygiene factors were significantly related to job satisfaction (Virender, 2018). In Alfayad and Arif (2017) study, positive relationships between employee voice and job satisfaction were proven to develop when an employee's thoughts and/or ideas were acknowledged as it creates a motivational environment. Additionally, in Holmberg et al. (2018) study of nurses working in a setting like a transitional housing program, Herzberg's theory was applied to demonstrate how job satisfaction can be achieved while working in a difficult setting. My study will address gaps by exploring the specific group of employees and their lived

experiences with the homeless veteran population while applying the two-factor theory. Chapter three will explore the research design and rationale, the research question and sub-question, the role of the researcher, the methodology, participation selection logic, instrumentation, procedures for recruitment, participation, and data collection, data analysis plan, issues of trustworthiness, and ethical procedures.

## Chapter 3: Research Method

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this qualitative study was to report on and explore the lived experiences of employees who work in transitional housing settings with the homeless veteran population, and to gain their perspectives on job satisfaction and hygiene factors as it relates to working with the population. Using a phenomenology qualitative design and the two-factor theory of motivation as a theoretical framework, I will explore the lived experiences of the employees in this setting. The findings from this study may be used by other programs designed to assist homeless veterans and to gain an understanding of how those working in this unique environment may help combat homelessness. In this chapter, I will present the research method, research design, and my rationale for selecting it for this study. I will also explain the population, recruitment strategies, and sample size. Additionally, I will discuss the interview questions and procedure and my role as the researcher, as well as the data analysis plan, trustworthiness, and ethical practices throughout the study.

### **Research Design and Rationale**

The nature of this research is a phenomenological qualitative study. The goal of qualitative phenomenological research is to describe a “lived experience” of a phenomenon (Creswell, 2013; Magnus, 2016). A phenomenological qualitative study attempts to set aside preconceived notions and/or biases as it relates to human experiences (Creswell, 2013; Magnus, 2016). This research design will help more clearly understand human perceptions and human factors involved in an experience. Unlike other

designs, phenomenology focuses directly on people's experiences. This type of design will help to understand why individuals react in a specific way to an experience or even an event that has occurred. It allows examination of how transferable responses to experiences are from one participant to another.

All research topics are not appropriate for this design; however, when there is a research topic that is designed to explore how and why people do the things that they do or how they feel or interact with a phenomenon, a phenomenology design would be the most applicable. For this study, trying to understand the lived experiences of employees, the phenomenology appears to be the best fit. Phenomenology requires gathering participants' perceptions based on their own words. Given that interviews are the primary method of gathering data, what is stated in the interviews is interpreted rather than interpreting other accounts of the participants' thoughts such as direct quotes; this is expected practice in phenomenology (Creswell, 2009, 2013; Magnus, 2016).

### **Research Question**

What are the lived experiences of employees working with homeless veterans in a transitional housing program in New Jersey?

### **Sub Question**

What is the relationship between job satisfaction and encouraging factors as it relates to working with the homeless veteran population?

### **Role of the Researcher**

In a phenomenology research design, Burkholder (2016) suggests that the primary role of the researcher is to gather, organize, and analyze perceptions from participants

who have experienced a phenomenon. As the sole researcher of this study, I plan to use audio recordings during the interview process to gather information, as well as keep a journal for the purpose of gathering thoughts, ideas, or reflections. I assume the role of both researcher and observer. In my role as the researcher and observer conducting this study, I will be responsible for recruiting potential participants, obtaining consent from participants, and determining the most appropriate way to obtain data from participants. Using instruments that I have designed, I am responsible for conducting the initial and any follow-up interviews if applicable. I am also responsible for analyzing all the data to determine the major themes and findings in this study.

Since I am responsible for data collection and analysis, the potential for researcher bias exists. Researchers can introduce bias into studies in many ways; therefore, multiple methods can be used throughout the process to reduce this possibility. Researcher bias is a situation that can form when a researcher's perspective influences the results of a study claiming an objective point of view (Noble & Smith, 2015). It is possible to develop bias at any time, during the research process, the initial planning stage, theory development, data collection, or analysis. If research bias occurs, the results can conclude a subjective point of view. Researcher bias can be avoided by taking several steps such as creating a thorough research plan, evaluating the hypothesis, asking general questions before specifying, summarizing answers using the original context, showing interviewees the results, and maintaining records (Chenail, 2011; Noble & Smith, 2015).

The organization of the data collected is just as important as the study. To organize the information from the interview process, I will first create a log of the

participants and make sure that the questions asked in the interview were well defined and recorded. Secondly, I will set up a recording device to capture the entire conversation, so I could focus on the interview session itself. Next, I will transcribe the collected data. Given that this process could take longer to transcribe if I do it myself, I would invest in transcription technology, which is software that creates a transcript of oral interviews in minutes as opposed to days. With a transcript of the session at hand, I would create a spread sheet to log my findings and analyze my data.

As the researcher, the goal of the research is to attempt to access the thoughts and feelings of the study participants. I would need to ensure that the participants understand the risks and benefits if they chose to participate in the study, as it is my responsibility to safeguard participants and their data. In my role as the interviewer, I will have limited interactions with the participants, only occurring through individual, semi structured interviews. I will also serve as the contact person for the study, as well as the coder and analyzer of the obtained data. The participants and I will only have one characteristic in common, which is that I have experience working in transitional housing programs. I do not work with, have any supervisory duties, or have any other interactions with any of the participants. As a result, power differentials will not influence the data collection and analysis for this study. Minimizing researcher bias is possible by developing an understanding of what bias entails and its possible influence on the findings for the study (Chan et al., 2013). To mitigate the possible damaging effects of researcher bias, reflexivity was used as the primary approach.

## **Methodology**

### **Participant Selection Logic**

Participants were recruited through a community research agency, particularly NJCRI also known as North Jersey Community Research Initiative. Community research agencies work with various populations and can help identify appropriate programs where participants can be recruited for this study. The target population includes individuals who work at different capacities in programs for homeless veterans. This study uses purposeful convenience sampling, which is used when the aim of the research is to uncover rich and in-depth information regarding a particular phenomenon of interest. In phenomenological research, typical sample sizes range from five to 25 participants, as qualitative research designs typically use smaller sample sizes than quantitative methods (Creswell, 2013; Magnus, 2016). Patton (2015) suggested that researchers identify a minimum sample size to start with and then adjust as needed. Twenty participants were projected for this study.

In phenomenology, criterion sampling is used when participants meet a predefined criterion (Moser & Korstjens, 2018). To be a participant in this study, one must work in a transitional housing program that provides services to homeless veterans as the most prominent criterion and have experience in the field. The aim of this research approach is to explore the range of opinions, diversity of views, and to collect “rich information” (Creswell, 2013). Therefore, the number of participants required depends upon the nature of the research at hand. The focus is generally not on sample size, and more so on the sample adequacy as transferability is not the aim for this current study.

The adequacy in sampling will be justified by reaching saturation, which refers to the point in which no new information is obtained (Creswell, 2013; Nicholls, 2017).

### **Instrumentation**

The objective of the present study is to recruit 20 willing participants. Recorded interviews are the primary data collection for this study. If a participant is not comfortable with a recording device, he/she will be thanked and removed from the study. Semi structured interviews consist of several key questions that help define areas to be explored. The interview format provides participants with some guidance on what to talk about. The flexibility of this approach allows for the elaboration of information that is important to the participants. The purpose of interviewing in qualitative research is to explore experiences, views, and/or beliefs of participants on specific matters. Interviews are believed to provide “deeper” understanding of a social phenomenon (Nicholls, 2017). Interviewing is most appropriate in qualitative research, it will help explain, better understand, and explore the experiences, behaviors, phenomenon, and opinions of the research participant.

When creating the interview for this study, the interview questions will not be taken from a published instrument, rather I, the researcher will develop interview questions that pertain to the research questions (see Appendix B). The questions will be reviewed by my content expert and will be changed as per her feedback. There will be no legal documents used in this study. Questions will be asked that will most likely yield as much information as possible about the experiences of employees who work with homeless veterans in transitional housing facilities. The questions will be open-ended



which will produce more than a yes or no response. The questions will also be neutral and understandable (see Appendix B). During the interview phase of this study, the interview will start with questions that can be easily answered and the more difficult or more sensitive questions will follow. This technique will put participants at ease and generate rich data that will develop the interview further. The length of the interviews will range from thirty minutes to an hour. Ideally, face-to-face interviews would be preferred. However, if a participant is more comfortable doing a telephone or skype interview that would be acceptable. The face-to-face interview would need to occur in an atmosphere that is not too distracting, a place such as a local coffee shop which can provide a meeting on mutual ground in a relaxed atmosphere.

### **Researcher-Developed Instrument**

I am the instrument for this study. I will use the same data collection instrument for each participant, an interview guide (see Appendix C) and ten semi-structured interview questions (see Appendix B). A researcher-designed interview with open-ended questions aligned to the research questions will be used to collect sufficient data. To maintain consistency in how the interviews are conducted, I will be the only person collecting the data. I will audio-record each interview as a method of data collection. The open-ended interview questions will assist each participant in providing information elaborating on their experiences, attitudes, and understanding of their experiences. To further expand each participant's elaboration of their experiences, I will use probing questions from the interview guide throughout the interview that will elicit more information or clarify the participant's response. The use of the data collection process

and the interview guide will allow me as the researcher to generate probing questions during each interview based on participants' responses to obtain more information. This method will potentially help me gain further clarity and understanding of each participant's perception. To establish the validity of my researcher-developed instrument, questions will be prepared based on the objective of this study. Since the interview will be audio-recorded, I will be able to analyze and compare answers and feedback.

There is no prior literature found that addressed the lived experiences of employees in transitional housing settings that work with homeless veterans. The questions that will be created for the interview will be based upon anecdotal experiences that transitional housing employees may have. According to Creswell (2013) suggests that qualitative interviews are valuable because they allow participants to provide explanations and opinions on the topic of study; phenomenological researchers typically prepare some questions in advance but prefer to alter them based on the discussion and how the interview progresses. Content validity will also be used to check for accuracy of my research findings, and incorporate factors of trustworthiness consisting of credibility, transferability, confirmability, dependability, and intra- and intercoder reliability (Creswell, 2013).

### **Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection**

Originally, my plans were to conduct my research in my work setting. However, after consulting with Walden's IRB board, it was determined that collecting data from the colleagues with whom I interact with on a regular basis can potentially create the following issues: social desirability, biased responses due to cognitive priming or

personal agendas, perceived coercion to participate, and confidentiality breaches.

Therefore, I have decided to identify appropriate participants for this study by consulting with community research agencies via telephone, e-mail, and social media. The agencies can help identify the most appropriate programs to recruit participants from statewide.

The participants would need to be employed in one of the positions as described in chapter two.

I will contact the programs via phone and email to ask if the employees are willing to participate in the study. If the employee agrees to participate, I will obtain the participant's consent. Each potential participant will receive a verbal and written explanation about the researcher's purpose, the nature of the study, and information about how or why he or she was chosen. The written explanation would be a consent for participation in an interview for a research study (see Appendix D). The explanation would cover the following: participation in the research is completely voluntary and there will be no payments involved, if a question makes the participant uncomfortable, he/she has the right to decline, the interview may last anywhere from thirty minutes to an hour, agrees that the interview will be recorded, the confidentiality of the participant will remain secure, the research study has been reviewed and approved by the IRB, the participant have read and understands the written consent, and will receive a copy of the consent. I will assure that all participants will remain anonymous in any written reports, that their responses will be confidential, and that the results will be shared with them after the study is completed, if they so desired. All potential participants will have a chance to review and discuss the informed consent form (see Appendix D) and ask questions prior

to agreeing to participate in the interview. Before any individual agrees to participate in the interview, I will e-mail all potential participants a copy of the consent form.

Participants will have the opportunity to e-mail and/or contact me with questions and concerns. The potential participants and I will mutually agree upon the date, time, and location for completing the consent process and proceeding with the interview.

Participants will be presented with two consent forms, one to sign and one to keep to themselves. Each interview will begin after the consent form has been signed.

Semi-structured interviews will be used in this study. These types of interviews offer in-depth dialogues to present open-ended questions which can be used with an individual or a group. Semi-structured interviews are usually conducted once and can take place for the duration of thirty minutes to an hour. Jamshed (2014) suggests that semi-structured interviews are based on schematic presentation of questions and/or topics that need to be explored by the interviewer using an interview guide. The interview guide will serve the purpose of exploring many respondents more systematically and comprehensively while keeping the interview focus on the desired line of action.

Questions in the interview guide will consist of the core question and associated questions related to the central question (Jamshed, 2014). Additionally, to capture the interview more effectively it is most appropriate to record. Handwritten notes are also good but may be unreliable and key points may be missed. Recording an interview also makes it easier for the researcher to focus on the interview content. A digital voice recorder and a microphone would be the most appropriate devices to use for each

interview. Safeguarding the content of the interview will be completed through encryption of the recorded data.

The participants will exit the study through debriefing. Debriefing will occur at the conclusion of the study; it is a critical component and just as important as the informed consent portion of the study when participants are recruited for research (Greenspan & Loftus, 2021). Debriefing will involve the act of informing the participants about the intentions of the study that they participated in. The debriefing process will ensure that the participants are informed of all deceptive elements of the study, if any (Weinbaum & Onwuegbuzie, 2016). The process will ensure that the participants understand the occasional need for deception in some research as well as ensure that the participants leave the study with a clearer understanding of the research and positive respect for the research participation (Greenspan & Loftus, 2021). During the debriefing process, the participants will be informed about the outcome of the study. If the participants have any misconceptions about anything in the study, I will take reasonable steps to correct those misconceptions at this stage. As the researcher, I will be responsible for informing the participants of the true nature of the study as well as if there is any deception that may have occurred during the study.

Follow-up procedures are another important component of all research; this is often conducted during the actual research but can also be conducted afterward. Follow-up is generally done to increase the overall effectiveness of the research effort (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). For the purpose of this study, the follow-up will be determined based on the participant. Follow up will be conducted only on matters that directly address the

research questions. The follow-up procedure will include approval from the participant during the initial interview to contact for a follow-up, if needed.

### **Data Analysis Plan**

The data analysis approach will include identifying themes, concepts, and ideas connected to the central research question and sub-question. The coding strategy will include assembling data in meaningful categories. I will create codes by assigning meaning to the data and analyze it by focusing on the themes and concepts. Data from the participants will reflect their perceptions of their experiences working with homeless veterans. Once I have selected my data collection method, I will review my original research question and sub-question to ensure that I will be able to answer them using the most appropriate method which is through semi structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews are in-depth interviews where the participants will answer preset open-ended questions. The questions in the interview guide (see Appendix C) contain the core question and many associated questions related to the central question. The data from the interview will be captured more effectively when recorded. Jamshed (2014) reports that the recording of the interview makes it easier for the researcher to focus on the interview content and the verbal prompts and enables the transcriptionist to generate “verbatim transcript” of the interview.

During data collection and the analysis process, it is vital to avoid bias by the researcher. It is also important to remember that a participant can change his or her answers based on my (the researcher) bias. If this were to happen, then the integrity of the response could be misplaced. I should not lead the participants by implying my

questions or gestures. It is also important that I do not push a participant to answer a question he or she may not be comfortable with or refuses to answer. In phenomenology, it is important for the researcher to understand “bracketing” Burkholder (2016).

Bracketing is a method of demonstrating the validity of data collection and the analysis process in phenomenological research; this method is important as it keeps the participant’s perceptions intact (Chan et al., 2013). As the researcher, I will bracket my personal experiences, perceptions, and/or biases prior to conducting research. This process will allow participants to freely express themselves without influences from me. During data collection, the researcher brackets to analyze perceptions separately from those of the participants.

The goal of this study is to understand the lived experiences of transitional housing employees who work with the homeless veteran population. The purpose of data analysis is to discover major themes in the data of everyone as well as the group of participants. Moser and Korstjens (2018) suggest that in phenomenology, analysis aims to describe and interpret the meaning of an experience by identifying important subordinates and major themes. The outcome of a phenomenological study is a detailed description of themes that captures the essential meaning of a “lived” experience according to Moser and Korstjens (2018). My process of data analysis will begin as soon as I start to collect data. As themes develop, verbatim statements by the participants will be taken from the transcript listed under the appropriate category to link the heading with the data from which they emerged. To organize and analyze data obtained from the face-to-face interviews, the principles of psychological phenomenological method developed

by Giorgi will be used. I will also use microanalysis for all interview responses to ensure that significant concepts or ideas are not missed. The verbatim transcripts of the interviews will be analyzed using Giorgi's phenomenological method which aims to uncover the meaning of a phenomenon as experienced by a human through the identification of essential themes (Englander, 2016). The Giorgian method of phenomenological analysis is a clear-cut process, which will give a structure to the analyzes and justify the decisions made while analyzing the data. The collected data about the lived experiences of the participants will be analyzed using the Giorgi's methodological steps:

1. Assume the phenomenological attitude: this will allow for a true descriptive phenomenology attitude and a sensitivity to phenomenon of interest. This type of attitude should be maintained throughout the entire study (Giorgi et al., 2017).
2. Read entire written account for a sense of the whole: this step reviews the description provided by the participant to gain a sense of their entire experience. While maintaining the phenomenological attitude, the participants' descriptions will be observed completely with the aim of phenomenological analysis and the experience's meaning (Giorgi et al., 2017).
3. Delineate meaning units: the researcher re-reads the descriptions to develop psychologically sensitive descriptive expressions from the participant's real-world expressions and form a basis for the description (Giorgi et al., 2017).
4. Transform the meaning units into psychologically sensitive statements of their lived meanings: the meaning units are determined with the goal of



phenomenological analysis, the experience's meaning, in mind as well as maintaining the scientific phenomenological attitude (Giorgi et al., 2017).

5. synthesize a general psychological structure of the experience based on the constituents of the experience (Englander, 2016; Giorgi et al., 2017).

The themes for each participant will be placed side-by-side so that the range can be seen more clearly. The commonalities and differences in the responses of participants will be thoroughly examined.

In discrepant cases, the data analysis will be refined until it can explain or account for most cases. In this process, the goal is to choose cases that might help to modify an emerging theory and not completely contradict it. Attempts will be made to identify themes that are unique to each individual and themes that represent the group. Interviews will be transcribed which will help review for accuracy and code themes. Template analysis appears to be the most appropriate to use for coding and identifying specific themes that emerged from the interviews. It will allow me to make sense of the meanings and experiences of the research participants. The information will be entered into a Microsoft program as soon as the data is coded, and specific themes are identified. The Microsoft programs (Excel and Word) will assist with recording, organizing, and coding data. Microsoft word will specifically help transcribed recorder interviews. With Excel, I will be able to assign codes to organize and manage data.

### **Issues of Trustworthiness**

In implementing a qualitative research methodology, validity and reliability do not apply. Instead, the idea of trustworthiness is most appropriate. Sargeant (2012)

described trustworthiness as one in which the research was carried out fairly, grounded in ethical principles regarding data collection and analysis, and the products of the research closely as possible represent the experience of the individuals who were studied. The guidelines for establishing trustworthiness will be used for this current study.

### **Credibility**

The first criteria of credibility refer to the degree of fit between the participant's stories and the researcher's description and interpretation of the stories (Cutcliffe & McKenna, 1999). One way to increase credibility in this study is through prolonged engagement with the participant. Strengthen credibility will be obtained by allowing sufficient interviewing time. Additionally, paying close attention to the details of the data collection, processing, and analysis will enhance the credibility of this study (Cutcliffe & McKenna, 1999). Every attempt will be made to ensure that the categories and themes emerged from the data. As themes developed, verbatim statements by participants will be taken from transcripts and listed under the appropriate category to link the data as it emerges.

### **Transferability**

Transferability refers to the process of demonstrating that findings are applicable in other contexts (Amankwaa, 2016). Transferability will be achieved by providing descriptions that includes the use of extended quotes which attempts to make clear to the reader the connection between what the participant said and my understanding of it (Amankwaa, 2016). Thick description is a strategy commonly used to establish transferability which is a way to achieve external validity (Thompson, 2001). Thick

description is a detailed account of experiences where the researcher explicitly creates patterns of cultural and social relationships and puts them in context (Thompson, 2001).

I plan to provide in-depth and detailed accounts of the participants' lived experiences.

The degree of transferability of the findings will be determined by the reader, considering thick descriptions judgments can be made about the ability of the findings.

### **Dependability**

Dependability refers to the notion that the study's procedures were documented and traceable (Amankwaa, 2016). To establish dependability in this study, audio recordings and transcripts will be reviewed several times for accuracy. The process of data collection and analysis as well as the process of securing data will also be documented to establish the dependability of this study.

### **Confirmability**

Confirmability refers to whether the findings in the study are logical and supported by the data confirmability will be ensured by the attention to the effective organization of the data (Amankwaa, 2016). To establish the confirmability of this study, an audit trail will be used, which includes detailed descriptions of the steps I will take to conduct this study. The audio recordings of the interviews will help to establish the confirmability of this study. Additionally, reflexivity will be used to strengthen the confirmability of this study which will allow me to examine and become aware of my own personal experiences and biases. Also, bracketing will be used during the data analysis process to ensure that the data is analyzed from an open perspective.

### **Intra- and Intercoder Reliability**

O'Connor and Joffe (2020) suggest that interrater reliability is applied to data rated on ordinal or interval scales with a fixed scoring rubric while intercoder reliability is applied to nominal data such as in interview data. Intercoder reliability is relevant when an independent coder evaluates the characteristic of a message to reach the same conclusion; it demonstrates the rigor of coding procedures during the data analysis process (O'Connor & Joffe, 2020). However, its importance may be debatable in the analysis of qualitative interview data. It is believed to raise the issue of whether researchers should produce different accounts as a means of analyzing a transcript or if researchers should identify the same codes in a transcript. On the other hand, interrater reliability may be one of the easiest understood forms of reliability as it focuses more on how consistent different individuals are at measuring the same experience. Over the last few years, interrater reliability has rarely been used as a verification tool in qualitative studies with the main argument against this type of reliability being that it expects another researcher to have the same insight in a limited data base which may be viewed as unrealistic (Marques & McCall, 2005).

### **Ethical Procedures**

As the researcher of this study, I am aware that there are ethical considerations that may arise in this qualitative study throughout the entire research process. To ensure that all ethical procedures are met in this study, approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Walden University will be obtained. Upon this approval, participants will be recruited, and data will be collected. Ethical concerns surrounding the recruitment of

participants may be mitigated in several ways such as but not limited to full disclosure of the purpose of the study and ensuring participants are not forced to participate (Creswell, 2013). Before collecting any data, I will submit my research study to Walden University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) for Ethical Standards in Research. Submitting my research to IRB will be done to ensure the study follows ethical standards. IRB's focus on three policies: respect for persons, concern for welfare, and justice (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Approval of my data should be gained from IRB before collecting data. I can obtain conditional IRB approval from Walden University then gain IRB approval from the research study site. It is my understanding that IRB approval from the research study site cannot be approved until I gain conditional approval from Walden University's IRB. After permission is granted from the research site, then approval from Walden's IRB can be granted.

When collecting data, it may be under the assumption that all the information provided is confidential and the findings will be anonymous. In this case, participants will be informed of reasons confidentiality may be broken or whether the results of the study will be anonymous or not. For instance, if a participant is causing harm to themselves or someone else, it will be reported. Additionally, when collecting data, I will avoid taking advantage of easy access to groups that I wish to participate in my study and only chose those participants relevant to the study. In the data collection process, I will also be sure to protect the data that I collect from participants. I will not leave anything with personal information in a place that can easily be accessed by others; all data will be kept in a secure location.

To ensure ethical research, informed consent will be issued. A specific informed consent agreement (see appendix C) will be developed for this study. The agreement will cover the following areas: that the participants are participating in research, the purpose of the research, the procedures of the research, the risk and benefits of the research, the voluntary nature of the research participation, and the procedures used to protect confidentiality. The informed consent agreement will be thoroughly explained to the participants at the beginning of each interview. Twenty participants are sufficient to reach saturation in a phenomenological study; therefore, twenty participants will be used for this study. Data collection interviews will be used until the topic is exhausted or saturated meaning the interviewees will not introduce any new perspectives on the topic. Vasileiou et al. (2018) suggest that researchers who design qualitative studies may be faced with the dilemma of data saturation when interviewing study participants. Reaching saturation is a critical component of qualitative research; if saturation is not met, the quality of the research conducted, and content validity are obstructed (Morse, 2015). Data saturation is more so about the depth of the data, therefore if no new data has emerged then it is likely that saturation has been reached. If 20 study participants are not enough for this study, then more participants will be recruited and interviewed until saturation has been achieved.

When research involves human participants, suitable provisions must be taken to maintain the confidentiality of research data. Participants may be willing to share information for research purposes only with an understanding that the information will remain protected. It may be best to retain research data without any identifiers so that

individual participation is anonymous, and the data collected cannot be linked to the individual (Lin, 2009). Maintaining confidentiality requires safeguarding the information disclosed in a relationship of trust and with the expectation that it will not be disclosed to others without permission, except in ways that are consistent with the original disclosure (Lin, 2009; Smucker & Larsen, 2018). It will be specified in the research proposal what data management method will be used and my involvement in the data analysis. I will consult with Walden University's IRB board and familiarize myself with all policies related to record keeping even before the study begins. My data will be placed into a retrievable form to prevent loss. Lin (2009) suggests that these two rules may be helpful for researchers: "1) a numbered hard copy bound in a notebook would provide for easy follow-up in the event of future questions, and (2) an electronic copy would provide a way to validate the date when data were entered." I plan to store all data electronically on a USB drive; any documents will be scanned and saved under a participant code number into an electronic file then the paper documents will be shredded. Audio recordings will also be saved to a USB drive anonymously and labelled with a code number for each participant and securely locked inside of a file cabinet for a minimum of five years after the final publication. Data destruction is needed to ensure that research data is not used for unauthorized reasons (Smucker & Larsen, 2018). After five years, I plan to dispose of all drives by using a secure erase feature which will overwrite the files and make the data unreadable.

### **Summary**

Chapter 3 addressed the qualitative research methods used to address the study's research question and sub-question. Given that this study will focus on the lived experiences of employees who work with homeless veterans, a phenomenological study appears to be the most suitable. Phenomenological data will capture the responses of individuals in their own words through semi structured interviews. Although the sample size for this study will consist of 20 participants, I am confident that I will be able to answer the research questions and sub-questions at hand. The goal is to get the depth of lived experiences which can be accomplished using this method. To ensure the quality of this study, I will record interviews, collect as much data as possible, avoid bias, and adhere to ethical procedures. Also covered in this chapter were the participation selection logic, instrumentation that will be used, my role as the researcher, procedures for recruitment, the data analysis plan, and issues of trustworthiness. Chapter 4 will provide recruitment and data collection efforts for my study in addition to an in-depth data analysis, results, and evidence of trustworthiness.



## Chapter 4: Results

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to explore the lived experiences of employees who work in transitional housing settings with homeless veterans in New Jersey. I developed the following research question (RQ) and sub question (SQ) to guide the study:

RQ: What are the lived experiences of employees working with homeless veterans in a transitional housing program in New Jersey?

SQ: What is the relationship between job satisfaction and encouraging factors as it relates to working with the homeless veteran population?

This chapter includes the results of the phenomenological study, which include the setting, participant demographic information, data collection methods, data analysis, evidence of trustworthiness, and results that address the research questions.

### **Setting**

The geographic setting for this study was New Jersey. The participants in the study were current employees in transitional housing facilities where homeless veterans resided. I conducted interviews via Zoom with participants during the months of October 2022 through January 2023. A flyer for my study was posted on public professional networks such as Facebook and LinkedIn. The participants responded to the posted flyer by emailing me if they were interested in participating in an interview for the study. The participants replied to the emailed informed consent with the phrase “I consent” to acknowledge that they read the informed consent and wanted to participate in the study.

After I received the email with the consent for the interview process to take place, the appointment was then scheduled via Zoom. Each participant was able to use a device to join the interview via Zoom.

### **Demographics**

Initially, twenty participants were going to be included in this study; however saturation was reached after thirteen participants were interviewed. The study required that the participants were at least 21 years of age and currently working with the homeless veteran's population for at least 1 year in the state of New Jersey. This study did not require a specific gender, race, or any other distinguishing factors of a person. Of the 13 participants, 10 were male, and three were female. Nine were members of the military, and four were civilians. Of those in the military, four were Army, two were Navy, one was Air Force, and none were Coast Guard.

### **Data Collection**

Data collection began after approval from Walden University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) on September 16, 2022 (approval #09-16-22-0398304). The interviews were all conducted using the Zoom platform and recorded. The interviews ranged from 45 minutes to 1 hour in length. All participants complied with my request to be in a secure, private location within their homes while we conducted an interview. All participants responded to the email with the phrase, "I consent." There were no unusual circumstances that arose during the data collection process, and no variations were made to the data collection plan.

The study originally called for 20 participants, but I gathered enough data from thirteen participants to reach saturation. Saturation is understood as when the study gets to a point at which no new data or perceptions are being collected (Saunders et al., 2018). I collected all data and information via Zoom. Originally, I planned to use a recording device to record all interviews; however, with the participants' permission, I was able to record the session, document, and save the transcript all via Zoom. Each participant understood that they did not have to answer any questions that they were not comfortable with, and that they could stop the interview at any time. Each participant was very open about their experiences and shared a lot of information about what it was like working with homeless veterans in transitional housing facilities. Along with the recordings, the transcriptions were auto transcribed. I reviewed the transcriptions to make any corrections. When I was finished with the coding process, I reached out to each participant to review the data for accuracy. All information was reviewed and confirmed, before being implemented into the data through a process known as data checking.

### **Data Analysis**

As outlined in Chapter 3, Giorgi's phenomenological method of analysis was used to analyze the data in this study. I was able to transcribe the participants' responses for each interview using Microsoft Word. The transcripts were then uploaded into the latest NVivo software application: NVivo 14 for Windows. To begin Giorgi's phenomenological method of analysis, each interview transcript was read in its entirety to gain an understanding of the meaning units without analyzing the content (Giorgi et al., 2017). I was able to embrace the descriptions of the phenomenon by immersing myself in

all the data that I collected. In the second step of Giorgi's phenomenological method of analysis, it is recommended that I assume the psychological phenomenological attitude to discriminate meaning units (Giorgi et al., 2017). I read through the interviews again, delineated the meaning units, and extracted units that were directly related to the phenomenon being explored. In the third step of the analysis, I transformed the true meaning shared by the participants into expressions that were profound, both psychological and phenomenological (Giorgi et al., 2017). In this stage, the transformation occurred through reflection and imaginative reasoning, while converting expressions into the appropriate psychological language. I also simplified the identification of clusters of meanings during this stage. For the last step, I synthesized the transformed meaning units into specific and general descriptions (Giorgi et al., 2017). I used all transformed meaning units for synthesis to form a specific description of situated structure and a general description of situated structure. This allowed me to define and name themes by embracing the essence of each theme and what the data captured.

### *NVivo Software*

The NVivo application helped to organize the data by interview questions, identifying the frequency of data coded in each theme and coding the data for emergent themes. I hand coded the transcripts prior to using NVivo for further data analysis. I rearranged the meaning units developed during Giorgi's phenomenological method into major themes, then summarized in this section, which can be used to exhibit validity in this study for future research purposes. The NVivo application discovered common

patterns and trends within the participants responses of their lived experiences working with the homeless veteran population in transitional housing facilities throughout the state of New Jersey. There were no discrepant cases in this study.

I started the coding process by transcribing statements from each Zoom recorded interview into a Word document. The transcription was then compared to the recording to ensure that all information was transcribed correctly, and nothing was inadvertently omitted. The interview questions I used to understand the perspectives of transitional housing employees were as follows:

1. How long have you been working with the homeless veteran population?
2. What is your role in working with the homeless veteran population?
3. What factors motivate you to work with the homeless veteran population?
4. What factors discourage you from working with the homeless veteran population?
5. Are you familiar with the military and its culture?
6. How does your understanding of military culture affect how you work with homeless veterans?
7. Can you share your most rewarding experience(s) working with the homeless veteran population?
8. Can you share your least rewarding experience(s) working with the homeless veteran population?
9. Have you ever experienced any difficulty with getting services for homeless veterans? If so, how do you handle it?
10. What do you think can be done to eliminate homelessness among veterans?

I used a semi structured interview to elicit detailed accounts of the experiences of transitional housing employees. I transcribed each interview and identified descriptive codes in a Microsoft Word document. Through descriptive coding, a researcher can take a passage from qualitative data and summarize it into a word or short phrase (Bennett et al., 2019). I created a coding worksheet in Microsoft Excel that included each participant, identified by number, and the specific statements they made related to each question that was asked to help answer the research questions. After each interview was transcribed and coded on the coding worksheet, I reviewed the entire worksheet several times to look for similarities from each of the participants' responses. I clustered the commonalities that led to the development of themes. Once all interviews were completed, I then transcribed and coded all the data. Data saturation was achieved, which led to the development of five common themes centered around experiences of transitional housing employees (See Table 1).

**Table 1***Main Themes/Codes*

Main Themes	Codes
Theme 1: Encouraging Factors	Being a veteran or having veteran family members Being homeless at some point in life The need to help those who served the country. Structure and guidance Supportive environment The daily operation of the transitional housing facility
Theme 2: Discouraging Factors	The sense of entitlement Selfishness Negative cases/difficult veterans Lack of accountability for substance abuse issues.
Theme 3: Understanding Military Culture	Understanding the military ethos Being attuned to subpopulations Checking biases and misconceptions Better mental health services for veterans Educating Families about services offered
Theme 4: Eliminating Homelessness	Positive support systems Affordable housing specifically for the veteran population
Theme 5: Job Satisfaction	Positive knowing that a veteran helped Success Stories Staff Appreciation

During the interview process, each participant described their experiences working with homeless veterans. The coding worksheet created in excel allowed me to easily track which participant made each comment during the interviews. For example, when I asked the participants to tell me what factors motivate you to work with the homeless veteran population? Participant 3 stated, “The fact that I am a veteran and I was homeless at some point in my life, I can identify with the population that I work with” Upon reflecting on factors that motivate them, Participant 8 stated, “This is a supportive environment that can be very beneficial to homeless veterans” In addition, Participant 12 stated, “The structure and support offered to veterans is a major plus for me” (See table 1).

## **Evidence of Trustworthiness**

### **Credibility**

I was responsible for all aspects of the study, including planning, screening the eligibility of participants, facilitating interviews, transcribing recordings of the interviews, analyzing data, and reporting the findings as the sole researcher. Each interview included rapport building to establish a positive, friendly, and non-judgmental environment which encouraged openness in responses. Once the interview was in document form, I repeated the comparison of the manuscript to the recording multiple times to ensure accuracy. Prolonged engagement and other strategies were employed to ensure the data collection and results were a genuine reflection of the experiences of participants.

### **Transferability**

Direct quotes from participants were incorporated to ensure accurate, thick description of perceptions, feelings, behaviors, and meaning given to their experiences. Additionally, the use of direct participants' quotes provides additional verification of the accuracy of the data collected while giving the readers the opportunity to make their own connections and applications. Although the findings of this study relate to the lived experiences of employees who work with the homeless veteran population in transitional housing facilities, other researchers with similar interest should be able to relate or replicate the study with comparable participants and environments.



**Dependability**

The data collected in this study supported dependability as it was directly related to and answered the research question. The use of the zoom platform, handwritten notes, careful transcription, and verification by participants ensured the accurate capture of the lived experiences.

**Confirmability**

I presented the lived experiences as detailed by the participants without the incorporation of my opinions, experiences, preconceptions, or assumptions I may have held prior to the exploration. Using semi structured interviews, careful analysis of transcripts, and the inclusion of thick descriptions and participant quotes, I aimed for neutrality throughout the study and presentation of findings.

**Findings**

I started the interviews by asking each participant how long they have been working with the homeless veteran population. The participants from this study job titles fell under the following categories: clinician, receptionist, driver, substance abuse counselor, peer counselor, housing case manager, administrative assistant, housekeeper, director, and program coordinator and their demographics can be found in figure 4 above. Their responses varied. The average time for working with homeless veterans was about five to six years. Participant 1 stated, "I have been working with homeless veterans at different capacities for five years." Participant 3 stated, "I have been around since 2017." Participant 5 and 6 also shared that they have worked with the population for six years." After delving deeper into the interview process, I developed five prominent themes

through a review of the interview data to best explore the lived experiences of employees working in transitional housing facilities in New Jersey with homeless veterans. Themes included: encouraging factors, discouraging factors, understanding military culture, eliminating homelessness, and job satisfaction. I included participant's verbatim responses in the results. I also included grammatical errors to increase the accuracy of describing the participants responses.

The participants expressed similar emotions when asked about factors that encourage and discourage them to work with the homeless veteran population, understanding military culture, how homelessness among veterans can be eliminated, and job satisfaction. Many of the participants felt that it was a rewarding experience to serve those who fought for the country and that they were satisfied with the work that they do. A lot of them were veterans themselves and felt that the program offered consistency and structure to those having a hard time maintaining a stable lifestyle.

### **Theme 1: Encouraging Factors**

Participant 1 stated, "The fact that am a veteran and that I was homeless, so I identify.

Participant 2 stated, "Because I was also homeless and want to give back to the vets. I am also a veteran."

Participant 3 stated, "Being sick and tired of being and living in misery."

Participant 4 stated, "The program has structure and guidance. I myself is a product of the program, I am a part of that population and now I'm trying to help others along the way."

Participant 5 stated, “Knowing what they have been through in fire and seek help encourages me to want to work with them.”

Participant 6 stated, “Homelessness is a prevalent and traumatic social phenomenon in the US, according to research. The risk for veterans to become homeless is higher than that of general population, therefore I want to play an important role in support of veterans in recovery through housing search and placement.”

Participant 7, “Helping people who signed up to defend me/the country is a must for me.”

Participant 8 stated, “I was once homeless and identify with the fear of being homeless.”

Participant 9 stated, “Being a veteran myself.”

Participant 10 stated, “The resident and staff appreciation.”

Participant 11 stated, “I was once a homeless veteran, I like helping the guys and ladies.”

Participant 12 stated, “Good management, supportive environment, my workplace is comprehensively orderly. It is apparent the veterans receive help and make progress towards being stable. That is with health, housing, transport, mental health, and social services all together.”

Participant 13 stated, “My motivation for my work with the veteran population is being a part of the veteran’s support team. Watching their progress and being there if they fall. The veterans let me know that the support is a great part of their success.”

**Theme 2: Discouraging Factors**

Participant 1 stated, “Sometimes veterans can be difficult, but they are usually thankful to be heard and understood.”

Participant 2 stated, “The veterans know the rules of the program, but choose to ignore sometimes and do things their way.”

Participant 3 stated, “When you have veterans constantly looking for something for nothing and thinking that society owes them something it is kind of sad but at the same time, I can understand why they feel that way but it’s not right”

Participant 4 stated, “We need more team players to help our veterans.”

Participant 5 stated, “Factors of assistance in monetary, lack of better understanding on services that can be provided to veterans and be able to help 100%.”

Participant 6 stated, “ There are a few factors that discourages me from working with the homeless veteran population, first and foremost within my agency, I’ve seen veterans successfully complete the program, find permanent housing, found a job, participated in IOP (Intensive Outpatient Treatment), if there are substance abuse issues and within a few months, they are back in the program, it’s like a revolving door. As an employee, sometimes it feels like you’re fighting a losing battle. It all seems to boil down to, for the most part, lack of coping skills being on their own in the real world, dealing with their mental health, substance use disorder, lack of income, and lack of family support. Then it becomes unbearable to cope with life. I’ve learned that there is a strong link between substance use disorder and mental illness, which could account for why veterans facing homelessness frequently experienced both risk factors.”

Participant 7 stated, “Like with most populations, it can be hard to find success stones.”

Participant 8 stated, “The day-to-day operation of a veteran’s homeless shelter is extremely stressful at times, entitlement is a key factor.”

Participant 9 stated, “None.”

Participant 10 stated, “Selfishness, I hate it.”

Participant 11 stated, “Nothing really, I just go with the flow.”

Participant 12 stated, “The outcomes are never predetermined the wide range of factors collide. The veteran descends into worse conditions. Those are sad moments and those problematic veterans, the number of negative cases, back-to-back, that can be/does impact my own health and wellbeing.”

Participant 13 stated, “Things that discourages me, but does not prevent me from giving 100% is the sense of entitlement most have, the inability of taking responsibility for their downfalls and it’s always someone else fault.”

### **Theme 3: Understanding Military Culture**

Participant 1 stated, “Being a veteran myself, it is easy for me to understand military culture and what it is all about.”

Participant 2 stated, “I am very familiar with military culture as I am a veteran myself.”

Participant 3 stated, “I understand military culture completely being that I am a US Army veteran.”

Participant 4 stated, “I served seven years in the military and turned out to be a good upholding individual.”

Participant 5 stated, “I have family members and friends who served. They have shared their personal situations and for the fifteen years I have dedicated I’ve learned so much about military culture and I am sure there is still plenty more to learn.”

Participant 6 stated, “For the past four years, I have become familiar with the military and its culture. One of the things that I have learned is that most service men and women internalize military values. The military is built on traditions, customs, and manners, and as a result its members share a common experience.”

Participant 7 stated, “I only understand the culture minimally through my family and friends who have served.”

Participant 8 stated, “I believe I have an understanding of military culture after serving four years from 1973-1977 in the US Naval Submarine service.”

Participant 9 stated, “Yes, I understand military culture.”

Participant 10 stated, “I understand military culture and I try to follow and perform duties to that standard.”

Participant 11 stated, “After serving in the US Navy, I believe that I have a clear understanding of military culture.”

Participant 12 stated, “I inherited a lot from the military, the best and the worse that the nation has to offer, all of it.”

Participant 13 stated, “I am very familiar with the culture, my dad, my brothers, and several other family members are veterans. My husband is a US Marine veteran. I believe that my family are the culture of the military and I have learned a lot from them.”

#### **Theme 4: Eliminating Homelessness**

Participant 1 stated, “I am not sure how to eliminate homelessness. I am not sure if it is even possible.”

Participant 2 stated, “I think that if we talked to veterans, it would make things better for them.”

Participant 3 stated, “I truly believe that if veterans were provided with information about different programs and support systems after they resort back to civilian life, it could definitely eliminate the number of homeless veterans in the world.”

Participant 4 stated, “I think homelessness will always be an ongoing issue. My opinion has no weight one way or another.”

Participant 5 stated, “Educating family members on how to get informed of services that are available to veterans. There is more to share but, I will have to write them down in a notebook.”

Participant 6 stated, “I think to eliminate homelessness among veterans in my opinion, better mental health, more job opportunities, more assisted living housing properties/services for veterans and their families who may have severe mental health and substance abuse issues, and for doctors and therapists to go deeper than just writing a script, get to the root of the issues instead of masking it with medication.”

Participant 7 stated, “As crass as it may sound significantly more money and residences built specifically for the population.”

Participant 8 stated, “Better medical and psychological treatment from the VA may reduce homelessness.”

Participant 9 stated, “This country needs to respect veteran services. There is no respect for the satisfaction we give. Freedom is not free.”

Participant 10 stated, “More education, resources, opportunities, and encouragement are needed.”

Participant 11 stated, “Some veterans will always end up in need of shelter, it can’t be eliminated.”

Participant 12 stated, “Right now it seems to be long term care and social services. I am unhappy to see Valley Brook, which is permanent housing units for veterans, HUD supported, cut back of clinical support and social work. The program that I work in could be modified with more employees, or more constant and better responses to the long term ill.”

Participant 13 stated, “You need to have a team set up to reach out to veterans by flyers or face to face. Most will put their pride aside to get help (which was the case for my husband and I). There must be follow up to make sure veterans have moved to the next stage to make sure he or she does not get lost in the shuffle. Hire people who care and have a good work ethic.”



**Theme 5: Job Satisfaction**

Participant 1 stated, “I am the most satisfied when veterans thank me personally for my assistance in their journey.”

Participant 2 stated, “I like my job. I like talking with veterans about their problems. Because I was once in their shoes, I feel like I can contribute a lot to help them better themselves.”

Participant 3 stated, “When I hear other veterans say to me, I have been watching you and you’ve come a long way. That they were proud of what I am doing and how I did a complete 360 turnaround makes my job worth coming to. It lets me know that if I can get through the program so can those that I work with.”

Participant 4 stated, “I am satisfied with my job for the most part. I believe that every job has its ups and downs, but for the most part I am happy. Being able to relate and give hope and strength that maybe I can help them get through some of their issues while being homeless is satisfying.”

Participant 5 stated, “Those who have received my words of wisdom and years later, they come and report and give thanks for being there when they were at their most difficult moments. Now they are living gracefully, that makes me satisfied and happy to be a part of the program.”

Participant 6 stated, “One of the most rewarding aspects of my job is seeing the transformation so many of the veterans go through from homelessness, penniless, and filled with despair to housed, working, or collecting pension and/or disability compensation and feeling hopeful about their future.”

Participant 7, “I have worked with several veterans who have relapsed and left the program which always makes me question my quality of work then I remember that I have been able to also see several veterans move on to permanent housing which is great. Overall, I can say that I am satisfied with my job and the team that I work with is amazing. We all share the common of ensuring that our veterans receive the best quality of care no matter what. We understand that there will be success stories as well as failures however, we always do what we can to encourage and promote positivity.”

Participant 8, “Seeing veterans move on to permanent housing and maintaining their journey makes me satisfied with the job I have done.”

Participant 9 stated, “I have nothing but positive things to say about the program. When a veteran comes into the program with little to nothing and leave with a full-time job, a place to live, a car sometimes, and money in the bank, it makes me feel as if I was successful at helping someone get back on their feet.”

Participant 10 stated, “I like what I do. I never thought I would be working in the capacity to help people. It makes me feel good when I am being thanked. I also love the acknowledgement that I receive when I resolve an issue.”

Participant 11 stated, “I enjoy my job for the most part. Mostly the appreciation and acknowledgement that I get from the vets is the most rewarding part of my job. I also love that I can help those in need.”

Participant 12 stated, “Every job has its ups and downs, but I love what I do. I would say that I am satisfied with my performance and everything surrounding my job

title. I have gained a great perspective in my experiences working with the homeless veteran population.”

Participant 13 stated, “I love my job and what I do. I have so many rewarding experiences that I can recall. I remember one time there was a female veteran who was admitted with trauma. We talked every day that I worked. She shared that her divorce had left her in shambles and in debt. I suggested that she should make a payoff debt list and maybe look into consolidating her bills. A few months later she approached my desk with tears in her eyes and reported that she was now debt free. It is things like that that make my job worthwhile. Just knowing that I was able to help someone with an area in their live make me completely satisfied with the work that I do.”

### **Summary**

During the interviews and analysis of the data, I was able to further explore the lived experiences of employees who work in transitional housing facilities throughout New Jersey with the homeless veteran population. The employees shared their thoughts on what motivated them to work with the population, what discouraged them in their jobs, understanding military culture, if homelessness among veterans can be eliminated, and their job satisfaction.

The five themes that were identified were encouraging factors, discouraging factors, understanding military culture, eliminating homelessness among veterans, and job satisfaction. The participants were open about how they felt about working with the population. All participants had very similar answers when it came to the factors that motivate and discouraged them. They also expressed that homelessness may be able to

be eliminated based on available resources, treatment, and housing. Many of the participants were veterans themselves who were once a part of a transitional housing program, or they had experienced homelessness at some point in life. A lot of the participants felt that they were very helpful towards the veterans that came through the programs that they worked in as they could relate to them from experience. Many of participants felt that they had a general understanding of military culture whether it was from being in the military or being surrounded by family members who served in the military. They also shared some of the negative things that happened within the programs. The general consensus was that some veterans were too entitled and some relapsed and were unable to successfully complete the program or the veteran ended up returning to the program multiple times.

In this chapter, I included the research questions, setting, demographics, data collection, data analysis, coding process, main themes evidence of trustworthiness, and results. Chapter 5 will include the interpretation of the findings, limitations of the study, recommendations, implications, and the conclusion.

## Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of employees who work with homeless veterans in transitional housing programs in New Jersey. According to the literature, transitional housing employees are introduced to various cases centered on homelessness and more; such programs offer a specific service designed to help homeless veterans achieve residential stability, increase their skill levels, and obtain independent living (U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs, n.d). The nature of this study was qualitative using a phenomenological approach. With this approach, participants were able to describe their experiences using their own words. Criterion sampling was used when participants meet the predefined criterion for the study (Moser & Korstjens, 2018). The participant was required to work in a transitional housing program for at least one year providing services to homeless veterans, as the most prominent criterion is the participant's experience with the phenomenon under study. The study included semi structured interviews with 13 transitional housing employees. The key findings of this study included five major themes: hygiene factors, discouraging factors, understanding military culture, elimination of veteran homelessness, and job satisfaction. Findings from this study may promote a better understanding of the homeless veteran population and ways to assist homeless veterans to help combat the homeless issue.

### **Interpretation of Findings**

The findings in my study extend upon the knowledge found in the peer-reviewed literature as it demonstrated that employees' overall satisfaction develops from various

factors, the relationship between job satisfaction, and encouraging factors is among one of the most relevant. Improving an employee's job satisfaction while encouraging them to perform their jobs can be a result of a positive work environment. There were no past studies that confirmed the lived experiences of transitional housing employees who work with homeless veterans; however, research conducted by various researchers suggests that both motivation (encouraging) and hygiene (discouraging) factors were significantly related to job satisfaction. In Virender's (2018) study, it was confirmed that while employees have difference work experiences, their experiences vary based on where the employee lives. In another study conducted by Alfayad et al. (2017), it is confirmed that there is a positive relationship between employee voice and job satisfaction. More specifically, job satisfaction levels tend to improve when an employee's thoughts and/or ideas are acknowledged, as it creates a motivational environment. Additionally, when an organization reinforces and supports employees, it will contribute to the growth of the company's effectiveness in whatever environment they work in. In a study conducted by Holmberg et al. (2018), it was confirmed Herzberg's two factor theory was useful in exploring job satisfaction among employees in mental health settings, specifically nurses; however, the findings in the study somewhat contradicted the essential views of the theory.

The theoretical framework used to guide this study was the two-factor theory of motivation, which is also known as dual-factor theory or motivation-hygiene theory (Alshmemri et al., 2017; Herzberg et al., 1959). Using this theory as a guide, I was able to understand what motivated and discouraged employees from working with the

homeless veteran population. I was also able to learn and understand the employees' job satisfaction. Like what Dr. Herzberg did in his groups, I asked the participants through interviews about their work experience, both good and bad. The two-factor theory of motivation supported the notion that individuals may have different experiences based on the factors surrounding their jobs. The two-factor theory also served as a basis for understanding the lived experiences of transitional housing employees. Given that the theory breaks down what influences an employee, it helped understand those experiences and why an employee is motivated or discouraged in their line of work.

Herzberg considered hygiene factors as company policies, work conditions, supervision, relationships, salary, and security, etc. (1974). For this study, I used encouraging factors instead of hygiene factors. Although the participants did not focus much on their work conditions, salary, or company policies, most of the participants talked about other factors surrounding the program, such as providing structure and a supportive environment for veterans. They also focused on the need to help those who served the country, the fact that most of the participants were veterans, homeless at some point in life, and could relate to homeless veterans. On the other hand, the participants did bring up discouraging factors that impacted their jobs, such as the daily operation of the transitional housing facility, the sense of entitlement among veterans, selfishness among veterans, negative or difficult veterans, and the lack of accountability that some veterans have.

Job satisfaction among the interviewed participants was based on a few factors. The participants each felt that success stories, being appreciated as staff members, and

knowing that they were able to help a veteran played a major role in being satisfied in their jobs. Encouraging factors that also contributed to the participants job satisfaction included being a veteran or having veteran family members, being homeless at some point in life, and the need to help those who have served. Another encouraging factor that played a key role in job satisfaction was that the program offered structure, guidance, and a supportive environment for homeless veterans.

### **Limitations of Study**

There were limitations in this study. Findings from this study were limited to a small number of transitional housing employees in the state of New Jersey. Given that I once worked with the homeless veteran population, I had to be aware of potential biases that could potentially have influenced the interviews. To avoid this, I used an interview guide and refrained from offering my personal opinions, as well as not asking questions that would elicit certain responses from participants. All interviews were conducted via Zoom instead of in person, as some participants were not comfortable meeting in person due to the ongoing Covid pandemic, and some were recovering from the illness. Others were unable to decide on a good meeting place and felt that virtual was the best option.

The two-factor theory of motivation is known as a widely used theory, however there were limitations that exist within the theory. For instance, one concern is the fact that some people manage to look at the aspects of their work that they like and project them onto themselves when things are going well (Malik & Naeem, 2013). External factors seem to play a larger role when things are not so good. Another limitation is that



the theory assumes that job satisfaction equals higher productivity which is not always true in some cases (Malik & Naeem, 2013).

### **Recommendations**

There were no other studies that focused specifically on transitional housing employees that work with homeless veterans during my literature review. The literature that exists currently focused on experiences of employees that work in similar environments with civilians, youth, formerly incarcerated individuals, and families. This study was conducted to help fill the gap in understanding the specific experiences of transitional housing employees. This study was limited to transitional housing employees in the state of New Jersey. Recommendations for further research are indicated to include transitional housing employees outside of New Jersey either on a regional or national level. Further research is also needed to explore the correlation between job satisfaction and encouraging factors. While it appears that an employee's overall satisfaction derives from a combination of factors, the relationship between job satisfaction and encouraging factors is among one of the most relevant. Enhancing an employee's job satisfaction while encouraging them to perform their jobs to the best of their abilities may include but are not limited to ensuring there is positive work environment, having optimal work conditions, providing opportunities for advancement, being able to manage workplace stress, having effective relationships with coworkers and supervisors, etc. Based on the feedback from the participants, overall, they were satisfied with their jobs when they were recognized by those who they served. Just hearing a simple "Thank you" at times or just knowing that a veteran left the program and accomplished their goals boosted their

confidence in their jobs. There are a few things that can help improve transitional housing facilities for homeless veterans such as ensuring that the staff are properly trained to handle complex issues among veterans. A few of the participants interviewed were veterans themselves and felt that was one of the main reasons that they were able to relate to the population served. The veteran participants also felt that those who did not serve in the military could benefit from more training that specifically addresses how to effectively work with veterans and understand military culture. Additionally, the participants felt that stronger management teams could be beneficial to a transitional housing environment. Although the management of the different facilities was not completely lacking, it could use some improvement. For instance, management could advocate more for the needs of the veterans. Some veterans, although homeless, were not eligible for permanent housing and/or unable to maintain a civilian lifestyle due to lack of employment or disability. Transitional housing programs that aided all homeless veterans could be beneficial in the long run as it would not help just some veterans, but all. In some cases, the living conditions in the transitional housing facilities were not always the best and major upgrades to the building were needed to sustain a healthy living environment.

### **Implications**

The results of my study are supported by the literature that transitional housing employees working with the homeless veteran population overall have favorable working experiences. The theoretical implication for this study is that Herzberg's two factor theory is an appropriate framework to understand that satisfaction and dissatisfaction in jobs are

not affected by the same set of needs, but occurs independently of each other. The theoretical framework provided an understanding of what influences employees overall in their line of work. The research data confirmed that employees may share similar experiences although they all work with homeless veterans in different capacities. As stated in the previous chapter, the participants from this study job titles fell under the following categories: clinician, receptionist, driver, substance abuse counselor, peer counselor, housing case manager, administrative assistant, housekeeper, director, and program coordinator. The information presented in this study can enhance social change initiatives by learning of the many experiences and creating more enhanced programs that could better assist the veteran population. This study contributes to social change by adding research about employees who work with special populations. This may lead to social change within organizations where employees share their experiences to help create both social support and effective programs for addressing homelessness among veterans. The benefit of this study is to promote social change by possibly identifying solutions that could improve services offered to homeless veterans based on the participant's responses. Some of the participants suggested adding more substance abuse treatment related services as many veterans within the population struggle with abusing substances. Other suggestions included adding more financially related services that offer help with budgeting and saving. In addition, programs that teach them about establishing and maintaining healthy relationships with family and friends who are favorable.

## **Conclusion**

Homelessness among veterans in the United States continue to be an ongoing issue. Over the years, many things have been done to help resolve the matter such as creating environments like transitional housing facilities to get homeless veterans on track so they can live successful productive lives after serving in the military. The backbone of transitional housing facilities are the men and women who work there each day trying to come up with ways to assist homeless veterans the best way that they can. In my study, I examined the lived experiences of 13 transitional housing employees as a starting point to understanding their daily struggles and successes with working with the population. The men and women interviewed had a significant amount of knowledge and feedback on how to improve the issues with homeless veterans. Findings from this study can be used to encourage more studies about employees working with the homeless veteran population as well as promote more improved programs for homeless veterans.

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## Appendix A: Interview Guide

1. How long have you been working with the homeless veteran population?
  - Years of service
2. What is your role in working with the homeless veteran population?
  - At what capacity do you work with homeless veterans?
  - Have you worked in multiple roles?
3. What factors motivate you to work with the homeless veteran population?
  - What makes you want to do this type of work?
  - Is your line of work enjoyable?
4. What factors discourage you from working with the homeless veteran population?
  - Is there anything you dislike about your actual job?
  - Are there things that you would want to change?
5. Are you familiar with the military and its culture?
  - Branches of the military
  - Military slogans
  - What is acceptable and unacceptable in the military?
6. How does your understanding of military culture affect how you work with homeless veterans?
  - Do you feel that you know enough about the military to be able to relate to the veterans?
7. Can you share your most rewarding experience(s) working with the homeless veteran population?

- What gives you the greatest joy out of working with the population?
8. Can you share your least rewarding experience(s) working with the homeless veteran population?
  9. Have you ever experienced any difficulty with getting services for homeless veterans? If so, how do you handle it?
  10. What do you think can be done to eliminate homelessness among veterans?
    - Do you think this is possible?
    - What needs to change?

## Appendix B: Research Study Flyer/Invitation

Dear Transitional Housing Staff,

My name is Ieshia C. Davis, and I am a PhD student at Walden University. The proposed study described in this letter is being conducted as a part of my doctoral research. The study is being completed independently and is not affiliated with any transitional housing programs. I am interested in learning about the experiences of transitional housing employees who work with homeless veterans.

The purpose of this study is to examine the lived experiences of employees who work specifically with the homeless veteran population. The benefit of this study is to promote social change by possibly identifying solutions that could improve services offered to homeless veterans.

If you have been employed as in a transitional housing program for at least one year, at least 21 years of age, and currently working with homeless veterans, your participation is requested.

The preferred method of interviewing is virtually via Microsoft teams, however FaceTime, Zoom, WebEx may be used or by phone. This interview should take no longer than 60 minutes of your time. Each participant will be asked a series of open-ended questions regarding their experience surrounding their experiences working with homeless veterans. Your participation in this study is voluntary and can be ended at any time during the interview process.

If you are interested in participating in this study, please email me at

████████████████████ and I will respond to set up a day and time to meet. Additional



questions or concerns may also be addressed by contacting my dissertation committee chair, Dr. Reba Glidewell, at [REDACTED].

Thank you for your consideration in participating in this study.

Ieshia C. Davis

Walden University