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Public Policy and Homeless Youth in Kansas

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This is to certify that the doctoral dissertation by

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Walden University
2025

Abstract

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MBL Friends University, 2011

BBA Baker University 2009

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

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Abstract

Youth homelessness rose in Johnson County, Kansas, by 37 percent, partly due to family conflict and socioeconomic challenges. The lack of guidance, social support, and resources can create a domino effect. While existing literature has examined youth homelessness at the national level and in other sub-national locations, the impact of federal and state policies related to homelessness among youth in Johnson County, Kansas, has not been explored. The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to explore the perceptions and practices of administrators in homeless services who manage federal and state funding guided by public policies for homeless youth, based on five factors: family conflict, sexual orientation, school issues, substance abuse, and affordable housing. Social construction and policy design theory served as a theoretical foundation for the study. Eight participants over the age of 18 who had experience working with homeless youth were selected, and online interviews were conducted to collect data. The themes derived from the analysis of the interview data included (a) family conflict, (b) homelessness, (c) homeless youth, (d) affordable housing, and (e) support systems. The findings reinforced that family conflict is linked to all other factors, and providing mental health, education, employment, and housing opportunities are essential building blocks for homeless youth. Social change implications for this group involve revisiting policies.to assist, a notion highlighted by the concept of social construction.

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Dedication

I am grateful to God for his provision and mercies. I want to thank my mother, Betty, my stepmother, Madelene, better known as Sister Pet, and my grandmothers, who were strong women. I have proudly stood and benefited from their strength. To my father and grandfathers, thanks for your strength. To my four children, Tanner, Valdie, Kadeem, and especially Ethan, who from his tender years has experienced years of classes. I want you all to know that dreams can come true no matter your age. Never quit and never give up. All things are possible with God. To my granddaughter Brooke, you hold a special place in my heart. You can do whatever your heart desires with God's help. I dedicate this study to all the homeless youths out there. My hope is that you find a safe place to call home.

Acknowledgments

I am grateful to God for paving the way and providing me with the health and strength to pursue this degree. I want to acknowledge my committee chair, Dr. Gregory Campbell, who is exceptional; I am happy our paths crossed. I appreciate your insight and dynamic, positive mentorship throughout this process. To my committee member, Dr. Michael Brewer, thank you. Dr. Monique Allen, thank you for your passion for educating others. Dr. Rebecca Stout, thanks for your encouragement, always telling me I can do it. I am forever grateful to the Maddux family, who have loved and supported me throughout the years. Thanks to the faculty and friends, especially Fredah and Matthew, who have encouraged me along my journey in my academic career. Thanks to all the participants who participated and made this research possible.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to Study

Introduction

Homelessness in the United States is a national public policy issue, yet the national rate does not seem to be decreasing despite the federal and state policies and programs (Nelson, 2022). Presently, there is a 5.5% increase in homelessness nationally (Verzoni, 2023). According to the National Alliance to End Homelessness (Oliva, 2020), youth homelessness is a social problem in Kansas. The Johnson County Continuum of Care (2021) reported that youth homelessness has increased by 37% among youth under the age of 18.

This study was needed to explore the practices and perceptions of homeless service administrators and the impact of public policy programs on homeless youth. Fowell (2022) indicated that many factors contribute to homelessness, including loss of jobs, eviction, foreclosure, drug abuse, family violence, psychological problems, lack of education, racial inequality, and poverty.

This study focuses only on the following five factors to explore youth homelessness: (a) family conflicts, (b) substance abuse, (c) school behavior, (d) sexual orientation, and (e) affordable housing. The social change implications of this study will be used to inform homeless youth, social service organizations, government agencies, and private organizations on how to address youth homelessness. Additionally, the findings may provide policymakers with more effective ways to ensure that homeless youth receive the assistance needed to thrive.

Chapter 1 includes the following sections: Introduction, Background to the Study, Problem Statement, Purpose of the Study, Research Question, Theoretical Foundation, Definitions, Assumptions, Scope and Delimitations, Limitations, Significance, and Summary.

Background of Study

Homelessness in the United States is a national public policy issue, and it has impacted areas of the country, such as Johnson County, Kansas, from a youth perspective. I conducted this general qualitative study to explore the practices and perceptions of administrators responsible for providing services to homeless youth.

Consequently, this research examines the impact of two policies, McKinney-Vento 752/2 and the Kansas Statute 72-1046, which are federal and state policies designed to support the homeless and end homelessness for youth. Homelessness in the United States is a national public policy challenge. Presently, there is a 5.5% increase in homelessness nationally (Verzoni, 2023). According to the National Alliance to End Homelessness (2020), youth homelessness is a social problem in Kansas. The Johnson County Continuum of Care (2021) reported that youth homelessness has increased by 37% among youth under the age of 18.

The 752/2 of the McKinney-Vento Homelessness Education Act, which assists homeless youth, was designed to assist with the challenges homeless youth and children face in attending and succeeding in school (Gee, 2021). The McKinney-Vento Act provides immediate enrollment and educational stability for homeless children and

youths. In addition, federal funding to states and school districts to support homeless children and youth (Richard, 2021).

The Kansas Statute Code K.S.A. 72-1046 assigns residency to homeless children and youth. This statute defined a “homeless child” as one who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence and whose primary nighttime residence is: (a) A supervised publicly or privately operated shelter designed to provide temporary living accommodations (including welfare hotels, congregate shelters, and transitional housing for the mentally ill); or (b) an institution that provides a temporary residence for individuals intended to be institutionalized; or (c) a public or private place not designed for, or ordinarily used as, a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings (Kansas Statutes, 2021).

Kansas has implemented various programs and services to address homelessness. This includes current initiatives, including shelters, outreach programs, and support services offered by government agencies, non-profit organizations, and community groups. The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (Title VII-B) ensures educational rights and support for homeless students, including homeless youth (National Center for Homeless Education [NCHE], 2022). The Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program within the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) also supports community-driven efforts to prevent and end youth homelessness (HUD, 2021).

The Kansas Statewide Homeless Coalition (KSHC) has spearheaded initiatives like the Youth Count Kansas project aimed at improving data collection and understanding of the specific needs of homeless youth (KSHC, 2022). Local

organizations such as Stand-up for Kids and Covenant House Kansas City have provided outreach and shelter services to homeless youth (Stand-up for Kids, 2021; Covenant House, n.d.).

The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, particularly Title VII-B, serves as a cornerstone for policies addressing homeless youth in Kansas. The NCHE (2022) outlines the educational rights and support provided under this legislation. Additionally, the Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program by HUD (2021) supports local initiatives, with Kansas participating in the broader national effort.

The Kansas Statewide Homeless Coalition (KSHC) has been instrumental in advancing youth homelessness initiatives, such as the Youth Count Kansas project (KSHC, 2022). Local organizations, including Stand-up for Kids and Covenant House Kansas City, contribute through outreach and shelter services (Stand-up for Kids, 2021; Covenant House, n.d.).

The theory grounded in this study is social construction and policy design, which were developed by Ingram and Schneider (2007). Homeless service administrators are essential in adhering to federal and state policies in serving the homeless youth in Kansas. If the policies for homeless youth are not appropriately managed, it creates multiple problems affecting a young person's life (Pumariega et al., 2022). Some researchers have argued that there is a gap in the literature regarding the successful implementation of policies on homeless youth (Morton et al., 2018; Nelson, 2020; Pennicooke, 2021).

According to the National Alliance to End Homelessness (2020), youth homelessness is a social problem in Kansas. The Johnson County Continuum of Care (2021) reported that youth homelessness has increased by 37% among youth under the age of 18. This study was needed to explore the practices and perceptions of homeless service administrators and the impact of public policy programs on homeless youth.

Problem Statement

Although there are national and local public policies to address homelessness, the problem is that youth homelessness has increased in Kansas. According to the National Alliance to End Homelessness (2020), youth homelessness is a social problem in Kansas. The Johnson County Continuum of Care (2021) reported that youth homelessness has increased by 37% among youth under the age of 18. Homelessness in the United States is a national public policy challenge. Presently, there is a 5.5% increase in homelessness nationally (Verzoni, 2023). The Biden-Harris administration's (2022) homeless plan is to decrease homelessness by 25% by 2025. *The Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness.*

This study was needed to address youth homelessness from a public policy perspective by exploring the 752/2 of the McKinney-Vento Homelessness Education Act, which assists homeless youth. The Education Department Act was designed to assist with the challenges that homeless youth and children face. Kansas Statute Code K. S. A 72-1046, which assigns residency to homeless children and youth to ensure they have an opportunity to obtain an education. Although there is research on youth homelessness, there is a gap in research addressing how federal and state policies impact homeless

youth in Johnson County, Kansas (Nelson, 2020). Homelessness can have a serious impact on a young person's life emotionally, physically, and mentally.

Purpose of the Study

This general qualitative study aimed to explore the practices and perceptions of homeless services administrators regarding the impact of public policy programs on homeless youth. Further, the research paradigm focuses on how federal and state policies are implemented to influence youth homelessness.

The social problem of youth homelessness is highlighted by the Johnson County Continuum of Care (2021) statistics, which reported that youth homelessness has increased by 37% among youth under the age of 18. Although several factors contribute to homelessness, this study is needed to explore the factors of youth homelessness, including family conflict, substance abuse, school behavior, sexual orientation, and affordable housing.

I examined the purpose, problem, and research questions of this study through the lens of state and federal public policy, including the Kansas Statute Code K. S. A. 72-1046 that assigns residency to homeless children and youth, and 752/2 of the McKinney-Vento Homelessness Education Act, which assists homeless youth. The Education Department Act (federal policy) assists homeless youth.

The McKinney-Vento Homelessness Education Department Act was designed to assist with the challenges homeless youth and children face in attending and succeeding in school. However, Kansas reports increasing homeless youth (Gee, 2021). This study

addressed these specific problem factors: family conflict, substance abuse, sexual orientation, school problems, and affordable housing.

Research Question

RQ: What are the perceptions and practices of homeless services administrators as they administer federal and state funding guided by public policies for homeless youth in Johnson County, based upon the factors of family conflict, sexual orientation, school problems, substance abuse, and affordable housing?

Theoretical Foundation

The theoretical foundation for this inquiry research was social construction and policy design theories developed by Ingram and Schneider (2007). The theory of social construction and policy design is grounded in the belief that reality is socially constructed (Berger & Luckman, 1966/2011). The theory involves social construction, and the population targeted to understand policy design's development and implications (Ingram & Schneider,1993).

The theory describes how political power and the largest group, which are socially constructed, heavily influence how benefits and burdens are distributed (Ingram & Schneider, 2007). I chose these theories to address the lack of research on federal and state policies regarding homeless youths in Johnson County, Kansas, and the research question for this study.

Researchers in the past have used social construction and policy design theories to investigate public policy (Berger & Luckman, 1966/2011; Ingram & Schneider, 1993; Pierce et al., 2014). There is a connection between the framework and the theories of

social construction, and policy design will be used to assist in exploring why youth homelessness is rising in Johnson County, Kansas. Also, to find out why some policies are successful and why others fail to meet their purpose of solving general social problems, democratic institutions, or producing greater equality of citizenship.

The Nature of Study

The nature of this study was a general qualitative design. Qualitative research is a descriptive methodology of people making meaningful phenomena by exploring a situation to clarify and understand (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Kahlke, 2014). I filled the literature gap on homeless youth in Johnson County, Kansas, to address the research questions in this general qualitative design. The specific research included open-ended questions through Zoom interviews.

Purposive and snowball sampling were used to recruit eight homeless service administrators for this study. According to Wajeeh (2023), saturation occurs when no new information is revealed. The general qualitative approach allowed participants to be engaged, giving them a voice to express themselves and enabling the researchers to get close to data collection and obtain descriptive interviews (Elliot & Timulat, 2021). Purposive sampling allows the researcher to select participants familiar with a specific phenomenon they are researching (Campbell et al., 2020). Snowballing was used so that participants could provide referrals to recruit future participants for the researcher (Audemard, 2020).

Data collected from participant interviews were analyzed thematically. I analyzed the data using thematic coding, which consisted of recording and identifying passages of

text or images linked by a common theme. This interpretative phenomenon gave clarity and understanding of the problems and the practices used by homeless services administrators as they administer federal and state funding guided by public policies for homeless youth in Johnson County, Kansas, based on these five factors: family conflicts, sexual orientation, school problems, substance abuse, and affordable housing.

Definitions

Education – the act of processing, imparting, or acquiring general knowledge, developing the powers of reasoning and judgment (Nelson, 2022).

Homeless youth – individuals who are less than twenty-one and who are unable to live in a safe place (Chambers, 2020)

Homelessness – An individual who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residency (Brooke, 2022).

Homeless service administrators – Individuals who have the daily responsibility of making decisions (Moseley, 2013),

Policy-social problems – Include government and private agencies creating and implementing policies to solve social problems (Gleditsch, 2023).

Socioeconomic – People with a lower socioeconomic status usually have less access to financial, educational, social, and health resources than those with a higher socioeconomic status (Karaganov et al., 2010)

Standard Housing and Fair Housing Act – This act prohibits discrimination concerning the sale, rental, and financing of housing based on race, religion, national

origin, and sex. Standard housing dwelling that is safe, affordable housing, and complies with all requirements by the law (Pumariega et al., 2022)

Assumptions

Assumptions are fundamental when conducting research and must be articulated to increase a general understanding and awareness of the importance of the study (Moroi, 2020). The first assumption for this study is that individuals who are homeless service administrators who work within Johnson County, Kansas, wanted to participate in this study and give their insight into the federal and state public policies and how they impact the youth they work with. The individuals participating in the data collection, and no personal information was disclosed.

The general qualitative research design was best for this inquiry because it provides an opportunity to hear directly from the participants. That is why my assumption was to explain the research topic and how to justify the questions. The homeless service administrators participating will provide honest and accurate answers about homeless youth in Johnson County, Kansas, and how practical the federal and state policies are in the lives of homeless youth.

Scope and Delimitations

The scope of this general qualitative study included an in-depth interview to analyze homeless service administrators' practices and perceptions as they adhere to federal and state policies. The study was conducted in Midwest Johnson County, Kansas. The delimitation of this study included participants who are Homeless Service administrators working with homeless youth in Johnson County, Kansas. The study was

conducted in the Midwest region of the United States. It is an academic study limited to dissertation course hours and cannot include all homeless youth.

Limitations

There are three limitations in this study related to methodology and design. For example, qualitative studies may require a lot of content analysis from the interviews and may be time-consuming because of in-depth interviews (Creswell & Poth, 2018). A general qualitative study is best for this research. The limitations are as follows: locating the homeless service administrator for face-to-face interviews and getting participants to answer questions honestly and accurately about the practices and perceptions of serving. The sample size may be limited, given the nature of the homeless sector. Most homeless service providers are private organizations, nonprofit organizations, churches, and charitable organizations. I identified participants who had experienced the phenomena studied and public policies. Although I conducted the interviews via Zoom, as the researcher, I cannot control reporting bias.

Significance

This study aimed to fill the gap in the literature addressing how homeless service administrators practice and perceptions of federal and state policies and funding impact homeless youth in Johnson County, Kansas (Nelson, 2020). This study is relevant to understanding whether the policies are effective based on the factors used for youth homelessness. The study will focus on the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, which ensures that homeless children and youth attend school. Also, the Kansas Statute

Code A 72 1046 assigns residence to homeless children, so they had an opportunity to obtain an education at the NCHE in 2022.

Another contribution to the discipline of public policy is sharing information with policymakers at all levels of government and organizations that provide services to homeless youth within the United States. It will aim to create solutions by educating and communicating between decision-makers to develop better public policies for resolving homelessness in Johnson County.

This research has added to professional practice by adding to the existing body of knowledge regarding youth homelessness and social services delivery. The main reason for choosing the general qualitative approach is that it provides the opportunity to engage participants, giving them a voice to express themselves truthfully. The researchers can also get close to the data collection and obtain descriptive interviews (Elliot & Timula, 2021). The researcher can get better clarity on what is being said by the participants.

The significance of theory in this general qualitative study will fill the lack of literature and aim to understand the national and local public policies and practices that impact youth homelessness in Johnson County, Kansas. The research topic will examine the effects of both policies and their impact on solving youth homelessness. The positive social impact is developing new ways to investigate policies, interpret, and implement them to improve the strategies that support homeless youth and give them a voice.

Summary

The factors that contribute to youth homelessness have been identified. I used general qualitative methods to understand homeless service administrators' and youth's

practices and perceptions. In Chapter 1, I identified and outlined the challenges faced by Johnson County, Kansas, as related to youth homelessness. Chapter 1 outlined the problem and purpose of the study and the nature and significance of this study. Chapter 2 is a review of the literature related to the study topic.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

Although there are national and local public policies to address homelessness, the problem is that youth homelessness has increased in Kansas. According to the National Alliance to End Homelessness (2020), youth homelessness is a social problem in Kansas. The Johnson County Continuum of Care (2021) reported that youth homelessness has increased by 37% among youth under the age of 18. Homelessness in the United States is a national public policy challenge. Presently, there is a 5.5% increase in homelessness nationally (Verzoni, 2023). The Biden-Harris administration's (2022) homeless plan is to decrease homelessness by 25% by 2025.

This study was needed to address youth homelessness from a public policy perspective by exploring the 752/2 of the McKinney-Vento Homelessness Education Act, which assists homeless youth (Nelson, 2020). The Education Department Act was designed to assist with the challenges that homeless youth and children face. Kansas Statute Code K. S. A. 72-1046 assigns residency to homeless children and youth to ensure they have an opportunity to obtain an education. Although there is research on youth homelessness, there is a gap in research addressing how federal and state policies impact homeless youth in Johnson County, Kansas. Homelessness can have a serious impact on a young person's life emotionally, physically, and mentally.

The current literature on youth homelessness indicates that the design of state welfare programs is problematic. Federal food assistance programs, including food

stamps, provide billions in benefits to low-income households. Many of those households also turn to private nonprofit food assistance providers during times of need (Barr, 2020). It is currently estimated that there is a significant increase in food pantries and a tremendous increase in food kitchens in the United States. Thousands of workers provide services to the homeless and food-seekers. There is heavy reliance on the decisions by private and public food safety nets nationally (Riediger et al., 2020).

The mayor's task force on homelessness in Kansas City, through the support of the Kansas City Council, created the Kansas City Homelessness Task Force with the goal of "Ending Homelessness in Kansas City" (Hawley-Bates, 2022). The Kansas City Homelessness Task Force was established to identify the issues related to homelessness and to develop a strategy to address the immediate and long-term strategies, funding options, and suggestions as to how the Task Force might best partner with governmental entities, private businesses, and the community to implement the plan. Members came from business and government, and those with professional expertise in medicine, the legal system and law enforcement, education, mental health, social services, and housing.

People involved in the process included police officers, psychiatrists, counselors, housing advisors, and non-profit organization leaders serving the homeless and food-aid seekers. The plan identified eight core goals: permanent and transitional housing, a shelter system, prevention, services, public safety and outreach, education, training and employment, community awareness and coordinated response, zoning, urban design, and land use. Tackling homelessness in Kansas City became a priority at the start of this year, 2021, when two men died in the cold, and the clock ran out on the hotel rooms for those

accommodated (Gutierrez, 2021). HUD gave Kansas City, Missouri, $8 million to address the issue. However, from my fieldwork observation, most of the money goes to the non-profit organizations that offer these services (Gutierrez, 2021).

Much of this literature features urban communities constantly expanding as more individuals move to cities. Some studies focused on homelessness in rural communities and their unique issues of public transportation, limited housing options, and fewer service providers. However, very little has focused explicitly on Johnson County, Kansas, homeless youth. The existing Housing First Kansas City program, even with multiple privately owned service providers, cannot meet the demand for homelessness within its community.

This general qualitative study aimed to explore national and local public policies and the practices and perceptions of the homeless services administrators on how federal and state public policies and federal funding are implemented to assist homeless youth in Johnson County, Kansas. Currently, literature shows that there are factors that cause youth homelessness, such as family conflicts, sexual orientation, school problems, substance abuse, and the lack of stable housing. Youth homelessness is very challenging and can affect a young person's life and create multiple problems (Morton et al., 2018). Youths must be aware of the resources that are available to them.

Since 1930, America has faced housing problems, and several federal and state policies of the Great Deal were implemented (Bruner, 2020). In 1968, the Act amended Title V111 of the Civil Rights Act, which prohibits discrimination based on race, color,

religion, sex, or national origin in housing sales, rental, or financing, to ensure that people can have access to housing (Shannon & Richard, 2020).

Homelessness in America increased tremendously in the 1980s when HUD had extreme funding cuts to housing, which resulted in a higher homeless population (Zhao, 2022). According to the Coalition for the Homeless (2019), there is a 59% increase from previous decades, creating a housing crisis for affordable housing in the United States.

Several factors cause youth homelessness, such as family conflicts, sexual orientation, school problems, substance abuse, and the lack of stable housing. Youth homelessness is very challenging, and it can affect a young person's life and create multiple problems (Pumariega et al., 2022). In this study, homelessness was explored through the lens of the McKinney-Vento Act of 1987, the first federal law for the homeless. I focused on Section 752/2 of the McKinney-Vento Act.

In Chapter 2, the literature review focuses on state and federal policies related to youth homelessness using a policy design approach. Currently, there is little research exploring the practices and perceptions of Homeless Services Administrators, and even less research on how federal and state public policies benefit homeless youth in Johnson County, Kansas. The literature review will focus on state and federal policies related to youth homelessness using the social construction and policy design approach. Chapter 2 describes the literature search strategy, the theoretical foundation, and relevant literature on key variables used in the context of this study, as well as the summary and the conclusion.

Literature Search Strategy

The keywords and databases searched included the Walden University Library, Thoreau Advanced Search, Databases A-Z, Publications, and Research by Subjects. I also used Google Scholar and ProQuest databases. My keywords were *diversity*, *organization*, *homelessness*, *Kansas homeless, Johnson County homeless*, *homeless youth*, and *homelessness*. Databases and libraries used provided scholarly articles that helped identify policy issues, definitions, and previous research on the issue of homelessness.

Extensive scholarly literature and resources that were available in the sources searched for this project were mostly on Housing First programs, their development, implementation, and how to address homeless communities' needs. The literature review comprised primary sources such as books, peer-reviewed journal articles, dissertations, professional websites, and federal government publications. Research databases include SAGE Journals, EBISCOP, ProQuest, ABI/Inform, Business Source Complete, Google Scholar, a Thoreau multi-sound search, and Soc Index. Extensive database searches were conducted for words and phrases, including *homeless services*, *Kansas City homelessness*, *subsidized housing*, *diversity*, and *inequities*.

Theoretical Foundation

The theories and concepts that ground this study include the theory of social construction and policy design developed by Ingram and Schneider (2007). The theoretical foundation for this inquiry research is Ingram and Schneider's theory of social construction and policy design, which is grounded in a wider and broader notion that reality is socially constructed (Berger & Luckmann, 1966/2011). The focus is on how

reality is constructed, by whom, and how it shapes the policy that impacts target populations (Ingram & Schneider, 2007) was instrumental in introducing social construction and policy design in the late 1980s to explain how policies were formulated, implemented, and evaluated, particularly the distribution of benefits and burdens. The social construction theory has been used in public policy.

The combination of the two theories, social construction and policy design, became a framework that sheds light on the role of social construction within the policy process. Socially constructed realities and identities can be shaped by policy design within the policy's target population. In turn, the policies created and used in new policies in the future and in governing institutions, social bases, and social processes shape community politics and governance. What is different about social construction and policy design versus Berger and Luckman's (1966/2011) synthesis of social construction and social reality is that policy determines how costs and benefits are distributed among groups within the social system. In this way, social construction becomes an element of cost and benefit distribution (Ingram & Schneider, 2007).

Social construction and policy design were developed to better understand why some policies are successful and why some policies are not effective. Some of the population will benefit from the policies, while another part of the population will not, and others will not (Ingram & Schneider, 2007). Several past applications of social construction and policy design theories were researched from 1993 to 2013 to observe how widely the theories have been applied (Pierce et al., 2014). Ingram and Schneider (2007) and Pierce et al. (2014) found that the theories have been widely used in public

policy and the fields of public policy and social issues. They observed from the literature that internal and external policies to the target population could influence the social construction of the target population. The current socially constructed policy design trends include Nowlin's (2014).

The rationale for choosing social construction and policy design theories is that they allow me to explore if the federal and state programs are meeting the needs of homeless youth in Johnson County, Kansas. The following framework and concepts will answer why youth homelessness is rising in Johnson County, Kansas. My research question will fill a gap in existing literature because there is no literature on public policy and homeless youth in Johnson County, Kansas.

Literature Review

This doctoral study was needed in the field of public policy because youth homelessness is a national issue with multiple facets. It also served as a bridge to the knowledge gap by examining the practices and perceptions of the administrators administering federal and state policies regarding homeless youth in Johnson County, Kansas. Several legislations have been introduced to address the plight of homelessness and homeless youth.

The passage of the McKinney-Vento Act of 1987, which was the first federal law for the homeless, reauthorized the Education for Homeless Children and Youth program in 2001 under the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), and all homeless students are given the same opportunity. Other local county policies have shown no evidence of reducing youth homelessness. Each state is expected to appoint a state coordinator responsible for

overseeing and ensuring the effective implementation of the McKinney-Vento within their state (Gee, 2021).

Homeless in the United States

Since the 1930s, America has faced housing problems. Several federal and state policies of the Great Deal were implemented (Craghead, 2020). In 1968, the Act amended Title V111 of the Civil Rights Act, which prohibits discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, or national origin in housing sales and financing rentals to ensure that people can access housing (Shannon & Hunter, 2020). Homelessness in America increased tremendously in the 1980s when HUD had extreme funding cuts to housing, which resulted in a higher homeless population (Zhao, 2022). Presently, there is a 59% increase from previous decades, Coalition for the Homeless (2019), creating a housing crisis for affordable housing in the United States.

Policy: Federal and State McKinney-Vento and Kansas Statutes on Homelessness

In this general qualitative research, I examined the McKinney-Vento Act and how it provides immediate enrollment and educational stability for homeless children and youth, and federal funding to states and school districts to support homeless children and youth. The McKinney-Vento Act of 1987 was the first federal law for the homeless (Chen, 2023). The act was put in place to provide rights and services to children and youth who experience homelessness, including those sharing a house with others. The act noted that economic hardship was a significant cause of homelessness. It also noted and included in its provisions those homeless and staying in motels, trailer parks, state parks,

campgrounds, shelters, transitional housing, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, or sleeping in cars (Gee, 2021).

The act required every state and local educational agency to designate a liaison for homeless children and youth. The designated officer would coordinate services to ensure that homeless children and youths were enrolled in school and had the opportunity to succeed academically, like any child or youth in better circumstances. While this act exists and is implemented nationwide, issues of ensuring that there are no barriers for homeless children and youth to be identified and "enrolled in school and have a full and equal opportunity to succeed in school" are still prevalent (Chen, 2023).

The Education Department Act was designed to assist with the challenges that homeless youth and children face in attending and succeeding in school. Its goal is to strengthen the federal commitment to ensuring access to equal educational opportunity for every American and to support more effectively states, localities, and public and private institutions (Smith-John, 2022). The Education Department Act was designed to assist with the challenges faced by homeless youth and children to keep them attending school and succeeding in school. The Education for Homeless Children and Youth program was reauthorized in 2001 under the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) so that all homeless students would have the same opportunity. Each state is expected to appoint a state coordinator responsible for overseeing and ensuring the effective implementation of the McKinney-Vento within their state (NCHE, 2022).

Youth Homeless in Johnson County

The National Alliance to End Homelessness recognizes that youth homelessness is a social problem in Kansas. The Johnson County Continuum of Care (2021) reported in 2020 that youth homelessness has increased by 37% among youth under the age of 18. Johnson County, Kansas, is the focus of this study; in their plan to end homelessness, they studied the situation and documented it in their Continuum of Care (2021), United Community Services of Johnson County. This is the leading agency on homelessness in Johnson County, Kansas.

United Community Services of Johnson County has worked tirelessly with the homeless; Johnson County, Kansas, has been awarded $81,634 in federal funds for the Emergency Food and Shelter Program by the Kansas Set-Aside Committee. The agency is working with other organizations to resolve the problem of homelessness. Several private and nonprofit organizations exist, such as the Salvation Army. HUD offers a national competitive funding opportunity to the Continuums of Care working to end homelessness. This report on homeless youth provides information on how the administrators work in Johnson County, Kansas.

Kansas Statutes on Homelessness

This statute defined a “homeless child” as one who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence and whose primary nighttime residence is: (a) A supervised publicly or privately operated shelter designed to provide temporary living accommodations (including welfare hotels, congregate shelters, and transitional housing for the mentally ill); or (b) an institution that provides a temporary residence for

individuals intended to be institutionalized; or (c) a public or private place not designed for, or ordinarily used as, a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings (Kansas Statutes, 2021).

Assessing Public and State Policies on Homelessness

The researcher Moses (2018, 2019) argues that racial disparities continue to plague the United States. Moreover, other factors, such as the pandemic, have made the factors of mental illness, physical abuse, job loss, evictions, and more people losing their homes worse (Fowle, 2021). This report points out that homelessness affects minoritized groups who are primarily Hispanic and Native American people, but Black Americans have the highest rate of homelessness (Castor-Ramirez et al., 2021). The report showed that although the federal government has given funding to different housing programs, homelessness is on the rise in the nation. This report further describes the challenges facing the homeless and the economic impact on their lives.

Homelessness, coupled with other historical racial disparities, is an increasing concern not just in Kansas City but also in the whole of the United States (Fowle, 2021). On the question of why homelessness continues to affect Americans even with all the programs available, Olivet (2020) found that homelessness is not just an individual problem but also a social problem because it exists on the systemic level and the societal level as well. He argued that if Housing First, Critical Time Intervention, and other programs have helped other homeless people exit homelessness, homelessness programs work.

Olivet (2020) further pointed out that there are several reasons why homelessness continues and outlined strategies for addressing homelessness because the policies in the past have not been effective. As the Executive Director of the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness, he outlined steps that might positively impact solving the homeless problem if they are followed. These steps include scaling the successful programs, holding everyone accountable in the efforts of ending homelessness, addressing the underlying causes such as affordability, structural racism, landlords and their eviction policies, leadership that focuses on equity, and other supportive services.

Homelessness is not just about not having the basic need for shelter. There are other risks involved. Pumariega et al. (2022) cited several risks that homeless youth are exposed to, including abuse, exposure, luring into drugs, and unstable housing. The research pointed out that homeless youth suffer from more health problems and mental issues, and sometimes they lose their lives. Another major factor and risk is that most of the homeless youth are not accurately counted and planned for because they are either couch surfing or staying with friends (Richard et al., 2022). There is a need for plans to cover and address the broad areas that contribute to youth homelessness and to identify what needs to be done on a larger scale to reach homeless youth and their emotional needs (Mahoney et al., 2021).

Another study by Morton et al. (2020) focused on solutions, how to improve housing for homeless youth, and the challenges they face in the United States and other countries, including Canada, Mexico, and South Korea. This report pointed out the need to provide transitional housing and support for homeless youth, mentally and

economically. The authors emphasized the importance of policymakers' commitment to assisting with housing, providing other services for youth mental health, and providing a place to call home (Morton et al., 2020).

It is currently estimated that there is a significant increase in food pantries and a tremendous increase in emergency kitchens. Thousands of workers are involved in providing services to the homeless and food seekers. As the cost of living rises, more people in the United States are going to get assistance for their basic needs in food (Rieger et al., 2020). Heavy reliance on the decisions by private and public food safety nets nationally and specifically in Kansas City results in the recipients not having a voice on what they need. Whether explicit or not, biases can affect how shelter and food-aid providers treat recipients who are always different from themselves (Rabbitt et al., 2023).

The Kansas City Homelessness Task Force was established to identify the issues related to homelessness and to develop a strategy to address the immediate and long-term strategies, funding options, and suggestions as to how the Task Force might best partner with governmental entities, private businesses, and the community to implement the plan. Members came from business and government, and those with professional expertise in medicine, the legal system and law enforcement, education, mental health, social services, and housing (Jackson, 2021).

People involved in the process included police officers, psychiatrists, counselors, housing advisors, and leaders of non-profit organizations that serve the homeless and food-aid seekers (Swank, 2021). The plan identified eight core goals: permanent and transitional housing, a shelter system, prevention, services, public safety and outreach,

education, training and employment, community awareness and coordinated response, zoning, urban design, and land use (Jackson, 2021).

Tackling homelessness in Kansas City became a priority at the start of this year, 2021, when two men died in the cold, and the clock ran out on the hotel rooms for those accommodated (Swank, 2021). HUD gave KCMO $8 million to address the issue. However, from my fieldwork observation, most of the money goes to non-profits that focus on homeless youth in Johnson County, Kansas. The existing Housing First Kansas City program, even with multiple privately owned service providers, is unable to meet the demand for homelessness within its community (Holwick, 2022),

Many researchers on the issues of homelessness as a national issue focused on general policies, evaluating their merits and demerits, and suggesting how to improve programs. Some focused on big cities like Los Angeles, San Francisco, and New York. The struggles experienced by many U.S. cities to combat homelessness are not widely researched. Using a comparative benchmark, Pennicooke (2021) conducted an in-depth program evaluation analysis of practices used to implement the Housing First Program in some Hawaiian cities to find out how identifying housing, tailoring services, and ensuring individual stability as they relate to homelessness practices fail or advance progress in combating homelessness. She argued that the sustainability of Housing First programs relies heavily on thorough program evaluations, engaging the community, and dynamic leadership, of which there is very little research to go by (Holwick, 2022).

The Five Factors That Contribute to Youth Homelessness

Family Conflict and Its Impact on Youth Homelessness

According to Morelli et al. (2023), family conflict can be created by constantly arguing, giving negative criticism, and competing. When the family structure breaks down, it can be caused by parental struggles with job loss, which result in foreclosure, eviction, or drug use. Each youth is unique, and their reasons for homelessness will differ. Many youths run away from home to experience many problems with health and all forms of abuse (Gambon et al., 2020).

Family conflict can severely strain the family's daily existence, due to the lack of effective communication between parents and youths, when the family structure lacks respect and does not adhere to the home rules (Roche, 2022). Cultural differences in lifestyles and arguments could get out of control over simple house chores and unresolved home disputes. The breaking point usually results in constant arguments, and then the youth decide to run away from home or is told to leave (Gambon & O'Brien, 2020). Family history and experiences create trauma in a young person's life. Socio-economic parents are unable to provide the basic needs of the home. The leading cause of depression and anxiety among homeless youth is family dysfunction, such as family conflict, lack of parental supervision, and abuse (National HCH Council, 2015).

The leading cause of depression and anxiety among homeless youth is family dysfunction, such as family conflict, lack of parental supervision, and abuse (National HCH Council, 2015) cause for depression and anxiety within homeless youth is family dysfunction, such as family conflict, lack of parental supervision, and abuse (National

HCH Council, 2015). Other factors include lack of social support, time spent homeless, and the fear of stigma. The most common mental disorders besides depression and anxiety among homeless youth are posttraumatic stress disorder and attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (Hodgson et al., 2013).

School Behavior and Its Impact on Youth Homelessness

The U. S. Department of Education, NCHE (2022) federal data reports that students who did not complete high school are 4.5% more likely to report explicit homelessness compared to their peers who receive a high school diploma. The youth face limited educational opportunities and multiple school changes and suspensions. It is challenging to concentrate on learning when you are thinking about your basic needs of food and shelter; it will affect growth and development (Terrile, 2020).

Several researchers have claimed that Pumariega et al. (2022), Atwell et al. (2022), and Fernandes-Alcantara (2019), whenever youth become homeless, they will experience more significant behavior problems, dropout rates, and failed grades. A safe learning environment must be created where they are not bullied. To achieve that goal, team efforts are needed, which include families and efforts (Mahoney et al., 2021). Students who experience school problems are very diverse, affecting students from all socio-economic backgrounds. According to Glassman (2024), of youths who are 16 and older experiencing homelessness and are sheltered, 15% are unemployed, while 61% have never been in the workforce at all; compared to those youths who live in households, 60% are employed.

They are expelled several times and miss school instruction, which puts them further behind. Many express angry and violent behaviors that worsen their situation (Jeanie et al., 2019). It affects their educational grades, with 2% less likely to finish high school or attend college. It affects emotional and mental health.

Sexual Orientation and Its Impacts on Youth Homelessness

Presently, 55% of young people who have identified as LGBTQ reported their sexual orientation and gender identity. These youth are at higher risk of homelessness (Stall et al., 2020). According to HUD, 70% of youths are rejected by their parents and asked to leave because of the stigma. This leads to negative sexual behavior comprising sex for shelter, and others find themselves in a dangerous situation being trafficked (Fraser et al., 2019).

The National School Climate Survey (2024) reported that of youths who identify as LGBTQ, 76% reported that they suffered verbal harassment and physical harassment daily. It affects their educational grades, with 2% less likely to finish high school or attend college. Youths who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, and queer experience social stigma and discrimination and are at an increased risk for substance use and misuse compared to heterosexuals. The World Health Organization describes mental health as “a state of well-being in which every individual realizes his or her potential, can cope with the normal stressors of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and can contribute to their community” (Stewart, K, 2019).

Substance Abuse and the Impact on Youth Homelessness

Presently, there is an excellent increase among youth with depression, anxiety, and substance abuse. They isolate themselves from friends and struggle with school assignments (Phillip, 2022). Therefore, when a young person becomes homeless, there is a higher risk of using drugs. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2019) reported that youths are experiencing a higher level of sadness and anxiety daily. Mental Health America (2022) reported that there is an increase in drug use, and over 19% of youth ages 12 to 17 years are vaping marijuana.

According to the American Addiction Centers (2024), there is a higher substance use among LGBTQ youth than heterosexual youth. Youths who have experienced different forms of abuse, whether emotional, physical, or sexual, are at higher risk of getting involved in substance abuse. Many youths use drugs for different reasons, such as peer pressure, anxiety, and depression, which can sometimes lead to overdose (Paschen-Wolff et al., 2024).

Affordable Housing and Home

Housing is a human right in the United States. Housing is a fundamental right. Presently, it is unattainable for many; youth homelessness is a serious problem affecting many (Brooks, 2022). The director of U. S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, Olive, explains “that part of the problem is the supply of affordable housing and that wages also do not keep up with housing prices”. The nation is facing a housing crisis due to foreclosure of homes and evictions, which are affecting low-income households (Covert, 2018). Poverty is described as not having the necessities to function in daily life.

The lack of affordable housing has increased in recent decades. Housing inequality stems back decades because of old federal, state, and local policies (Caldararo, 2020). The impact is still being felt primarily by low-income and racial minorities; some families are doubling up with family and friends (Richard et al., 2022). Whenever individuals are unable to house themselves, it has a profound impact on their daily lives. Unstable housing can have a tremendous effect on individuals' ability to keep a job, and relocating can cause severe stress, resulting in mental issues (Brooks, 2022).

According to the National Low-Income Housing Coalition (2022), presently, in Kansas, there is a severe shortage of access to low-income households to affordable rental homes (ELI); their income is below the poverty line or 30% of their area median income (AMI). Many of these families are in financial need because they must spend half their pay on rent. These families deprive themselves of healthy meals and seek medical care; they are more likely to get evicted or become homeless because they cannot pay the rent (Pumariega et al., 2022).

A severe lack of affordable housing prevents the middle class from building wealth by owning their own home. The NAR senior economist and director of real estate research reports that there needs to be a different approach to create low and affordable housing and increase the supply chain with prices most people can afford (Evangelou, 2023).

Summary and Conclusions

Chapter 2 summarizes the theoretical foundation of two theories, social construction and policy design, which will expand and fill the gap in research for public

policy and homeless youth in Kansas. The literature review identified and outlined the challenges Johnson County, Kansas City faced related to youth homelessness. I outlined the nature and significance of this study to the field of homelessness, reduction, and the potential for widespread implications. Youth homelessness is a national challenge for the United States.

Chapter 3 discusses the methodology and research design of this study. The research rationale, the research role participation, the role participation, data selection, and data collection. The instruments, trustworthiness, issues, and ethical procedures. In Chapter 3, I discuss the methodology I used for my study, including the procedures for recruitment processes, the research design and rationale, the researchers' role, participation selection, data collection instruments, trustworthiness issues, and ethical procedures. The gap within the literature of homeless service providers adhering to federal and state policies as they cater to the needs of homeless youth in Johnson County, Kansas, concludes with a summary.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Introduction

This qualitative design study aimed to gain insight into the practices and perceptions of homeless service administrators who provide services for homeless youth within Johnson County, Kansas, as they cater to the needs of homeless youth. The interpretative phenomena will clarify and understand homeless youth by focusing only on these five factors contributing to their homelessness: family conflict, substance abuse, school behavior, sexual orientation, and affordable housing within Johnson County in Kansas. Social change implications of this study include that the findings can help homeless service administrators better understand how to serve homeless youth. Also, public policymakers can develop new ways to investigate policies, interpret them, and implement or improve the strategies that support homeless youth.

In Chapter 3, I discuss the methodology I plan to use for my study. I discuss the procedures for recruitment processes and explain the research design and rationale, the researchers' role, participation selection, data collection instruments, trustworthiness issues, and ethical procedures. The gap within the literature of homeless service providers adhering to federal and state policies as they cater to the needs of homeless youth in Johnson County, Kansas, concludes with a summary.

Research Design and Rationale

Research Questions

The research question for this study was: What are the practices used by homeless services administrators as they administer federal and state funding guided by public

policies for homeless youth in Johnson County, based upon the factors of family conflict, sexual orientation, school problems, substance abuse, and affordable housing?

This study focused on the lack of understanding of homeless service administrators as they adhere to federal and state policies funding homeless youths based on five specific factors. I filled the literature gap on homeless youth in Johnson County, Kansas. The study focused on the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, which ensures that homeless children and youth attend school. Also, the Kansas Statute Code A 72 1046 assigns residence to homeless children, so they have an opportunity to obtain an education at the NCHE in 2022.

Another contribution to the discipline of public policy is sharing information with policymakers at all levels of government and organizations that provide services to homeless youth within the United States. Affordable housing in the United States is necessary; housing is a fundamental right. Therefore, the findings will aim to create solutions by educating and communicating with decision-makers to develop better public policies for resolving homelessness in Johnson County. This research will also advance professional practices by adding to the body of knowledge that already exists as it relates to youth homelessness and social services delivery.

Research Tradition

I used the general qualitative design for this study (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). The main reason for choosing the general qualitative approach is that it provides the opportunity to engage participants, giving them a voice to express themselves truthfully. Researchers can also get close to the data collection and obtain descriptive interviews

(Elliot & Timula, 2021). General qualitative research design is a descriptive methodology of people making meaningful phenomena by exploring a situation to give clarity and understanding (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The researcher can get better clarity on what is being said by the participants. The positive social impact is developing new ways to investigate policies, interpret, and implement them to improve the strategies that support homeless youth and give them a voice.

Role of the Researcher

In qualitative research, the researcher becomes a participant and observer. As the researcher, I used the qualitative method of interviewing via Zoom and conducted ethical, transferable research that has a social impact on the world. I did not have any professional or personal relationship with the participants. The research was not conducted with people I knew or at my workplace. My role as a researcher was to conduct interviews with open-ended questions and follow-up questions while ensuring there was no bias in the interviewing process. Rubin and Rubin (2012) stated that qualitative studies allow researchers to gather descriptive information on how participants behave and think while addressing the complex research process.

As a researcher, observer, and volunteer, I started very ignorant of the situation that many homeless women and children find themselves in. I have volunteered for three years at the church pantry, helping people choose nutritious items to feed their families. I also cooked for women and children several times when they were homeless on weekends. I did make sure that I was transparent by communicating with my chair.

Whenever conducting research, bias may arise. Bracketing ensures that the researcher can separate personal experiences and assumptions during the research process (Shufutinsky, A., 2020). Bracketing is used consciously to avoid bias when data are outside the researcher's experience and expectations.

Methodology

This research study used a general qualitative approach (Kostere & Moser, 2018). The quantitative approach would not have worked for my interview questions because that approach is based on numbers and statistics (Creswell, 2018). The case study would not have worked because I would have had to collect data from stored information. Qualitative research allows me to meet and engage with the participants and hear directly from them. The qualitative approach is the best for my topic and research questions because it provides descriptive information about how people make meaningful phenomena by exploring a situation to give clarity and understanding (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Participant Selection Logic

The population included in this study was eight participants, homeless service administrators serving homeless youth in Johnson County, Kansas. This population was selected because of their experiences with homeless youth and government policies. They have worked with their organization in Johnson County in Kansas for 5 years. The focus was on their practices and perceptions while serving homeless youth and adhering to federal and state policies and funding.

Purposive and snowball sampling were used to recruit homeless service administrators who met the criteria for this study, according to Wajeeh (2023). These two methods of recruiting individuals are the best way to find participants. Purposive sampling allows the researcher to select participants familiar with a specific phenomenon they are researching (Campbell et al., 2020). Snowballing was used so that participants could provide referrals to recruit future participants for another person to the researcher (Audemard, 2020). Homeless service administrators had to meet the criteria to participate in this study. They had to be over 18 years old. Participants had to know federal and state law as it applies to homeless youths. I made contact via email or phone call.

The number of participants was eight, and they were homeless service administrators. According to Subedi (2021), when conducting qualitative research, you can choose from 10 to 50 or more participants, depending on your research, until saturation is achieved. After I received the information from the individuals willing to participate in the research, I contacted those individuals by phone and email to see if they met the criteria. I did not have any personal relationship with them. Also, I did not conduct any research within my workplace. I also used the snowballing method to recruit.

Instrument

The instrument for this general qualitative study was a set of self-developed interview questions (see Appendix interview) created based on the research questions. I used this instrument to conduct interviews with the individuals who participated. This qualitative research explored the practices and perceptions of homeless service administrators as they adhere to federal and state policies serving homeless youth of

Johnson County, Kansas. I contacted three Walden University experts who then reviewed the questionnaire for content validation.

I contacted the Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB) to obtain notice of my plan to undertake the study and obtain permission to proceed with data collection. I contacted some homeless organizations and emailed invitation letters to participate in the research. The participants had an opportunity to ask questions. Each participant was provided with an Informed Consent Form that included the purpose of the study, study process, declaration of privacy, voluntary nature of engagement, and contact information. All communication was private; the interviews were transcribed and coded.

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

After speaking to the City of Johnson County, I was directed to several organizations that provide services to homeless youth. I identified individuals for the study working for organizations in Johnson County, Kansas, that serve homeless youth. The names of the five organizations are Youth Family Services Center, Hillcrest Transitional Housing, Salvation Army, McKinney Vento Homeless, Shawnee Mission School District, Johnson County, Johnson Community Response to Homelessness, and Empowering Homeless Families by Engaging People of Faith. I do not have any personal relationship with any of the participants.

I contacted the organizations by phone and email and gave them an invitation letter to give to workers who are homeless service administrators within their organization. I followed up to see how many individuals were interested in the study. I explained the research and provided in-depth information on the purpose of the study. I

reached out to other individuals, and snowballing was used so that participants could provide referrals to recruit future participants for another person to the researcher (Audemard, 2020).

I contacted the Walden University IRB to obtain approval of my plan to undertake the study and obtain permission to proceed with data collection. I contacted homeless organizations to give their workers invitation letters to participate in the research. The participants had an opportunity to ask questions. Each participant was provided with an Informed Consent Form, including the purpose of the study, study process, declaration of privacy, voluntary nature of engagement, and contact information.

All communication was private. The interviews were transcribed, coded, and observed. This study used the data collection instrument of interviewing to conduct procedures for recruiting participants and data collection. I focused on recruiting 10 participants but ultimately interviewed eight homeless service administrators in Johnson County, Kansas.

The data collection was obtained from the individual who met the requirements of the study and was willing to participate. I gave my invitation letter directly to the homeless organization's workers. I conducted interviews and data collection, which took five weeks. The meetings were organized based on the availability of participants whom I accommodated. The length of the interviews was 30-45 minutes, allowing enough time for introductions, interview questions, a follow-up debriefing, closing remarks, and obtaining my contact information for future concerns they encounter. After seeking the

participants' consent, the interviews were recorded by audio recording; I also used a backup audio recording.

Data Analysis Plan

This was a general qualitative study; I used a thematic analysis to analyze the data. I used these six steps in this process (see Naeem, 2023): (a) getting familiar with the data, (b) searching for keywords from the research, (c) coding identifying the core words, (d) developing themes, and (e) finalizing the answers obtained from the research question.

First, I became acquainted by listening to the recordings and reviewing the transcribed data several times to ensure that all the data was adequate. I used high-quality auto-recording and word-to-word transcription (Tuckett, 2005). Secondly, I used deductive coding, which allows the researchers to create codes before reviewing the data associated with the research question (Smith, 2021; see also Fife & Gossner, 2024). I developed initial codes based on my relationship with homeless service administrators and the homeless youth they serve, as well as from the theoretical framework.

I used inductive open coding in the third phase to allow me to create a list of keywords from the raw data (see Naeem et al., 2023). I did put the transcription documents in using manual coding. This assisted me in observing the patterns and themes of the research question that are important to the research question on homeless service administrators, homeless youth, and theoretical theories.

I used the axial coding process as it allows me to show the relationship between codes or concepts found in the data from the interviews (Williams & Moser, 2019). In the

third phase, the themes took the form of short phrases or words that were captured. In the first two phases, I generated an extensive list of codes. In the third phase, axial coding allowed me to begin sifting and refining the process of categorizing the code into themes (Williams & Moser, 2019).

In the fourth phase, I reviewed the themes to refine them further and make connections to the research questions. I looked for elements from the initial themes directly tied to concepts related to my framework theories. In the fifth phase, I defined and determined the final themes in my thematic data analysis plan. In the final phase, I took examples from the data related to my research question. I created and used a diagram to demonstrate what was going on within the data report. There were no discrepancies to capture, state, and describe in my study (Bingham, 2023).

Issues of Trustworthiness

When pursuing scholarly research, the process must be conducted at a high standard and relevant to prove validity and trustworthiness (Alder, 2022). It is imperative to build trust in conducting qualitative research. Several factors must be addressed: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

Credibility is key in research; it opens the door to show that the findings are accurate and truthful, and it allows the researcher to unravel all the complexities and explain what is going on in the real world (Ravitch & Carl, 2019). I took steps to record all the interviews. Credibility was established by using triangulation, investigator data, saturation, and peer review, collaborating closely with my committee.

Transferability deals with the internal and external validity of the study. The goal is to ensure that the study can be replicated by researchers and expand the field of knowledge by providing valuable data (Ravitch & Carl, 2019). Transferability can be achieved by other researchers replicating the study in their setting. The researcher must provide rich descriptive data to make transferability possible (Stahl & King, 2020)

Dependability focuses on whether the data are stable and consistent so that another researcher will be able to conduct the research and get the same results (Pratt et al., 2022). I will ensure that I present the study's purpose, research questions, and design (Ravitch & Carl, 2019).

Confirmability is the objectivity of qualitative research; objectivity is required for scholarly research. The researcher must be open-minded to reflect on one's bias and note if any personal assumptions will affect the findings (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). I took the necessary steps to communicate with my chair to make sure that I was transparent.

Chapter 3 provided an overview of the proposed research process design and rationale to address the research question. The procedure, participation selection, data collection, and data analysis were discussed. All participants contributed to this research by honestly sharing what they encountered while serving the homeless youth in Johnson County, Kansas.

Ethical Procedures

In this study, I contacted Walden University's IRB to establish procedures to ensure the ethical protection of research participants and the researcher. This study was strictly voluntary, and I made sure that privacy and confidentiality were maintained by all

the individuals who participated. I obtained the IRB's approval (11-04-24- 0506672). I use selected structured interview questions. They were presented to the participants during the interview.

Ethical concerns related to recruitment were addressed quickly with the chair of my dissertation committee and the IRB. All possible participants had the same opportunity to participate in the interview. The participants were homeless service administrators as they adhered to federal and state policies while serving homeless youth in Johnson County, Kansas. The individuals who were willing to participate in the study were given an invitation to participate and an informed consent form about the interview process, the purpose of the study, and how the information would be used and stored.

Ethical concerns surrounding data collection were addressed by making my contact information available, and I shared the study results with participants upon request for an executive summary. This study is a qualitative inquiry; I did not have any personal or professional relationships with any of the participants; therefore, I have no power over the participants if any ethical issues arise in this study, such as researcher bias or power relationships with the participants, I would have immediately got advice from my chair and IRB.

Data collected for this study was kept anonymous, and everyone who participated was kept anonymous. Personal anonymity was assured, and the information collected would be classified. The data were collected from participants and stored electronically for 5 years in a password-protected database. The researcher, the dissertation committee chair, and the university's IRB will have access to the data.

Summary

Chapter 3 discusses the methodology and research design of this study. The chapter explains the research rationale, the researchers' role, participation selection, data collection instruments, trustworthiness issues, and ethical procedures. This study aimed to add to public policy knowledge and make a difference in the lives of homeless youth in Johnson County, Kansas. The impact on social change is to ensure that the policies are revisited to ensure they positively impact the communities they serve.

Chapter 4 includes an overview of the demographics and data collection process, interview process details, coding process, and themes administration during this study. This study included social construction and policy design, which gives a deeper insight into how policies work. The emerging themes were family conflict, homelessness, youth homelessness, affordable housing, and support systems. Chapter 5 included a discussion of the study's findings, limitations, and recommendations to conclude.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

The purpose of this general qualitative study was to explore the practices and perceptions of Homeless Services Administrators regarding the impact of public policy programs on homeless youth.

RQ1: What are the practices used by homeless services administrators as they administer federal and state funding guided by public policies for homeless youth in Johnson County, based upon the factors of family conflict, sexual orientation, school problems, substance abuse, and affordable housing?

Chapter 4 describes the study's setting and the participants' demographics. The data collection process, data coding procedures, text analysis, and synthesis and analysis are used to present the findings. There is also a brief discussion on evidence of trustworthiness, including credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. The chapter concludes with a summary and transition to Chapter 5.

Research Setting

I received IRB approval for this study on November 04, 2024. I started immediately seeking participants and followed the recruitment procedures outlined in Chapter 3. There were no organizational conditions that influenced participants or my study's results. Eight participants were interviewed via Zoom, and each interview lasted 30-45 minutes. I informed the individuals that they would be recorded, and that participation was voluntary. The study was to understand the perceptions and practices of homeless services administrators as they administer federal and state funding guided by

public policies for homeless youth in Johnson County, Kansas. The participants' identities were kept confidential using codes for each participant (E1–E8).

Demographics

The recruitment and data collection steps included scheduled interviews over the phone, emailed consent, explained participant privacy rights, and then conducted in-depth interviews. Table 1 describes my population. There were eight participants (E1-E8), consisting of seven White females and one African American male. The participants came from different backgrounds, state government agencies, and private organizations serving homeless youth in Johnson County, Kansas. Six administrators, one director, and one coordinator had experience and knowledge of the phenomenon, which motivated purposive selection and snowballing.

Table 1

Participants' Demographic Characteristics

Participant	Ethnicity	Gender	Agency	Occupation
E1	White	Female	Government	Administrator
E2	White	Female	Government	Administrator
E3	White	Female	Government	Administrator
E4	White	Female	Government	Administrator
E5	African American	Male	Private organization	Coordinator
E6	White	Female	Private organization	Director
E7	White	Female	Government	Administrator
E8	White	Female	Government	Administrator

Data Collection

After obtaining approval from the IRB on 11-04-24-0506672, I immediately contacted participants identified for this study. For 5 months, I encountered difficulty

getting participants to participate in the study. I identified and spoke to 25 potential participants, made several phone calls, and emailed contacts with my invitation and consent letters. The goal was 10 individuals; only eight responded, and two promised to participate but later changed their minds. I contacted the eight school districts in Johnson County that know the McKinney-Vento policy, but got no interviews. There were nine interview questions in total (see Appendix).

My study consisted of eight participants. The data collection location was via an online platform, and the frequency was eight online sessions. Each interview lasted 45 to 60 minutes, and I used my recorder and the online recorder as data collection instruments. There were no variations in data collection from the plan presented in Chapter 3. No unusual circumstances were encountered during data collection.

At the end of each interview, participants were encouraged to ask any questions concerning the interview process. I used member-checking for in-depth clarification of participant responses and experiences. This protocol helped me mitigate additional bias using participant feedback. They were also asked for further comments, which were manually transcribed. I decided to manually code the data instead of using software because it allowed me to interact with the data more deeply. The participants conveyed individual experiences expressed as opinions, thoughts, and ideas.

Data Analysis

I used manual coding instead of software because of the small number of participants. Descriptive coding summarized the topic of the qualitative excerpt (Saldaña, 2021). Saldaña (2014) recounted how holistic coding grasped basic themes or issues in

the data by absorbing them rather than analyzing them line by line. The first cycle of coding used descriptive and holistic coding.

Second, it allowed me to dive deeper into the data and provide a clearer insight into the descriptive experiences of the participants; in this general qualitative study, the thematic analysis process was used. Naeem (2023) explained the process of analyzing data for emerging themes: (a) getting familiar with the data, (b) searching for keywords from the research, (c) coding identifying the core words, (d) developing themes, and (e) finalizing the answers obtained from the research question. I followed the emerging theme step process.

First, I got acquainted by listening to the recordings and reviewing the transcribed data several times to ensure that all the data was adequate. Tucket (2005) described how researchers took detailed notes with high-quality auto-recording and word-to-word transcription. I used a personal secondary recording device and transcribed my interviews. Secondly, deductive coding allows the researchers to create codes before reviewing the data associated with the research question (Fife & Gossner, 2024). I used deductive coding as my second cycle of coding to generate categories.

According to Naeem et al. (2023), the third phase uses inductive open coding to allow the researcher to create a list of keywords from the raw data. This assisted me in observing the patterns and themes of research questions, which are important to the research question on homeless service administrators, homeless youth, and theoretical considerations.

Axial coding allows researchers to show the relationship between codes or concepts in the interview data (Williams & Moser, 2019). According to Williams and Moser (2019), the axial coding process generates an extensive list of codes in the first two phases. In the third phase, axial coding permits researchers to begin shifting and refining the process of categorizing the codes into themes. In the third phase, the themes took the form of short phrases or words that were captured.

In the fourth phase, I reviewed the themes, further refined them, and made connections to the research questions. I looked for elements from the initial themes directly tied to concepts related to my framework theories. In the fifth phase, I defined and determined the final themes in my thematic data analysis plan. In the final phase, I took examples from the data related to my research question. I created and used a table to demonstrate what happened within the data report. There were no data-discrepant cases in my study. These were eight identified descriptive codes with numerous occurrences, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2

Descriptive Code Occurrences

Descriptive code	Occurrences
Affordable housing	15
Homeless youth	44
Homelessness	38
Family conflict	22
School problems	11
Substance abuse	11
Support system	10
Transitional housing	12

Through the evolution of coding, the descriptive codes demonstrated outcomes, and the holistic coding explained the causal influence that developed into outcomes. Although my descriptive coding was efficient, my holistic coding provided emerging themes and causation sub-themes of reasons or influences of youth homelessness. Table 3 displays emerging themes and subthemes related to the causal influences of youth homelessness.

Table 3

Causation Subthemes and Emerging Themes

Causation subthemes	Emerging themes
School problems	Family conflicts
Substance abuse	Homelessness
Transitional housing	Homeless youth
Employment and education	Affordable housing
Transportation	Support system

The data surprised me when they showed that family conflict was the primary factor contributing to youth homelessness. In the literature cited in Chapters 1 and 2, it seemed as if sexual orientation was the main factor. However, as shown in Table 1, family conflict is the central emerging theme and the primary factor.

Data Reassembly: Coding Themes

Coding is the tool that researchers use to label and organize data to identify different themes and relationships between them (Mahojan & Mohajan, 2022) to capture the meaning of the data collected in the interviews. I manually developed the code from the raw data in a Microsoft Word document. After an extensive review of the questions and participants' responses, I developed the codes. I searched for similarities and

replications to categorize according to salient ideas from the participants' point of view. Then, as I continued to immerse myself in the raw data, I repetitively polled the initial codes to situate them in the relevant categories based on participant experiences.

Then, I immersed myself in the raw data and repetitively polled the initial codes to situate them in the relevant categories. Based on the participants' perspectives, researchers synthesized similar codes into categories (Saldaña, 2021). The themes that emerged from the classification of the codes corresponded to the research and the overarching research questions. I repeatedly reviewed the themes to ensure that they captured the themes. The codes developed based on the interview data were converted to categories, and the themes emerged from them. The themes allowed the reproduction of the participants' points of view on the phenomenon under study. The codes, categories, and themes addressed the research.

Issues of Trustworthiness

When pursuing scholarly research, the process must be conducted at a high standard and relevant to prove validity and trustworthiness (Alder, 2022). Trustworthiness has guided the study from the start, including the literature review, data collection, and analysis, to the conclusion. It reinforced the evidence of the finding in conformity with the quality of the appropriate data sources. The process was followed in the requirements of ordinance credibility and transferability by adopting transparency and a meticulous approach. and in conducting ethical research. It is imperative to build trust in conducting qualitative research. Several factors must be addressed: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

Credibility is key in research; it opens the door to show that the findings are accurate and truthful, and it allows the researcher to unravel all the complexities and explain what is happening in the real world (Ravitch & Carl, 2019). I took steps to record all interviews. Credibility was established using triangulation, investigator data, saturation, and peer review, collaborating closely with my committee.

Transferability deals with the internal and external validity of the study. The study aimed to ensure that researchers could replicate it and expand the field of knowledge by providing valuable data (Ravitch & Carl, 2019). Transferability can be achieved by other researchers replicating the study in their setting. I provided rich descriptive data to make transferability possible (Stahl & King, 2020)

Dependability focuses on whether the data are stable and consistent. The purpose of the study was presented, and the questions and design were aligned, showing how the results were found. It was explained such that another researcher could conduct the research and get the same results (Pratt et al., 2022). I ensured that the present purpose of the study, research questions, and design were met (Ravitch & Carl, 2019).

Confirmability is the objectivity of qualitative research; objectivity is required for scholarly research. The research was conducted open-mindedly to reflect on my bias and note any personal assumptions that could have affected the findings (see Korstjens & Moser, 2018). I took the necessary steps to have an open mind when gaining information from my participants. I also communicated with my dissertation committee chair to ensure my data collection remained authentic and supported my participant responses.

Results

The first objective of this study was to find answers to this research question for my study: What are the perceptions and practices of homeless service administrators as they administer federal and state funding guided by public policies for homeless youth in Johnson County, based upon the five factors of family conflict, sexual orientation, school problems, substance abuse, and affordable housing? Five themes were derived from the interview data that answered the research questions: (a) family conflict, (b) homelessness, (c) youth homelessness, (d) affordable housing, and (e) support system. Participant excerpts aligned with each theme and are included below.

Theme 1: Family Conflict

Some participants expressed that in helping the youths, some of the youths said they knew their parents were separating or getting divorced. The rent or mortgage was late, and the parents were having financial difficulties due to the loss of their jobs. Therefore, family conflict was the primary emerging theme, and participant qualitative excerpts from participants E3 and E4 were aligned. For example, Participant E4 stated that she worked with several single mothers and their teenagers, and they found that a lot of the mothers who became homeless had different issues to resolve.

They found that most mothers had high-interest credit cards and were using them to purchase fast food. Her organization helped by giving classes on budgeting and teaching the mothers to prepare and cook healthy foods. They also paid the rent and provided food, allowing the mothers to pay down their credit cards and other debts. Furthermore, she said that Catholic Charities also assisted in paying off debt and helped

with three months of housing payments. She also said that the McKinney-Vento program provided services to the youths, transportation to take them to school, and other services. She was saddened that her organization, which provides for homeless women and their children in Overland Park, was closing its doors because of a lack of funding from the churches that were helping.

There was consensus among female participants. Participant mothers said that their situation is generational, so they wanted to know how to break the cycle. Two participants reported that the homeless young people wanted to stay with friends they knew and attend the same school. One participant told me, after interacting with some of the youths, that there is a connection between family conflict and children being put in foster care. Those who have outgrown the system were left on their own, struggling to find housing because they have not built any credit, and do not have credit. Moreover, the youth who outgrow the program have never lived independently. Participant E3 stated,

> Some of the young people said that they were homeless because their parents were abusive and neglected them. They feared being alone and were confused about what to do about housing and food. They had never lived on their own.

Theme 2: Homelessness

All participants indicated a significant housing shortage for Johnson County, Kansas, and youth. Two qualitative excerpts were identified and aligned with the theme of homelessness. Statements by Participants E2 and E3 demonstrated the theme connection. Participant E2 observed that some youths reacted to the homeless situation

differently. In her experience working with some young women, she learned that some young girls went to live with older men to get support and feel safe.

Participant Consensus:

Some youths started using drugs and joined gangs to feel safe as a form of belonging.

Participant E3 stated, “Some youths went to live with friends by practicing couch surfing.”

Theme 3: Youth Homelessness

Homelessness is not just about not having the basic need for shelter. There are other risks involved. Two participants said that they were told by the youth they worked with that it is very stressful being homeless, and they had trouble concentrating on school because they were so worried about housing and being homeless. Participant E2 reported that some youths told her they did not want to go to school because they felt embarrassed and did not want their friends to know that they were experiencing homelessness. Participant E5 worked with homeless youth daily, and some are very frustrated about their situation, and school is the last thing on their minds. It is not a priority for them. So, they drop out or just miss classes.

The participant consensus was that despite the youth situation, some youth attend school daily and are determined to complete the school they did. One of the youths was happy to get to school with the McKinney-Vento program, which immensely helped her. Youths who worked with the homeless saw frequent outbursts in communicating with them. Sometimes, it happens at school, which causes disruptive behaviors and school

suspensions. When that happens, then, they fall behind on their assignment. Some youth felt they were growing up so quickly, going to the doctor alone. The youth had to quit his job after being relocated to a transitional house offered by his organization. He had no form of transportation to get to work.

Theme 4: Affordable Housing

Participant E8:

> Interviewed participants said affordable housing is a significant problem for Johnson County, Kansas, with youth homelessness rising.

Participant E6:

> I was told by several youths how people look down on them whenever they find out that they are homeless, so there is a stigma for them.

Participant E5:

> They would be very quiet and withdrawn whenever a new person arrived at the transitional housing. In communicating with them, he found they were confused and scared of the unknown.

Theme 5: Support System

All the participants agreed that there are different support systems, but more is needed, specifically for homeless youth programs. There was a consensus that support systems and forms of wraparound care were vital mechanisms to prevent homelessness. Healthcare was a prominent factor among this study's participants.

Participant Consensus:

Participants who provide services for foster youths said there was a significant need for a housing voucher extension for those over 25 years old and more case management advocates. Some of them did not have an ID, a phone, or transportation. She said they need more government funding to help more youths. After talking to several youths, they needed access to Medicaid, mental health, food stamps, and housing.

Participant E8:

Youth desired to have more committed case managers. Moreover, their immediate family, mother or father, because they feel so alone. After speaking to several youths, they needed more counselors they could confide in one-on-one.

Summary

Chapter 4 included a report on the study findings. I conducted interviews with eight participants. My population successfully answered the following research: What are the practices and perceptions of homeless service administrators as they administer federal and state funding guided by public policies for homeless youth in Johnson County, based upon the five factors of family conflict, sexual orientation, school problems, substance abuse, and affordable housing?

Chapter 4 also included an overview of the demographics and data collection process, interview process details, coding process, and themes administration during this study. This study included social construction and policy design, which gives a deeper insight into how policies work. The emerging themes were family conflict, homelessness, youth homelessness, affordable housing, and support systems. Chapter 5 includes a

discussion of the interpretation of the study's findings, themes, social construction, policy design, implications, and recommendations, and concludes the study.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

This general qualitative study aimed to explore the practices and perceptions of homeless services administrators regarding the impact of public policy programs on homeless youth. The nature of this study was a general qualitative design that used purposive snowball sampling methods among eight participants who had experience with homeless youth in Kansas. My study was conducted to determine the efficacy of supporting homeless youth in Kansas. Five themes were derived from the interview data that answered the research questions: (a) family conflict, (b) homelessness, (c) youth homelessness, (d) affordable housing, and (e) support system. Key findings involved the emerging themes that added to the body of knowledge.

Interpretation of the Findings

The results from this phenomenological qualitative study helped me better understand the practices and perceptions of the homeless service administrators as they administer federal and state funding to the homeless youth of Johnson County, Kansas. In terms of methodology, this generic qualitative research approach allowed for the collection of rich, detailed data that captured the diverse experiences of those serving homeless youth and the five factors that contributed to their homelessness in Johnson County, Kansas. Combining the themes and key findings from the data offered much information to be interpreted. The study results were interpreted and compared using the peer-reviewed literature discussed in Chapter 2.

I interpreted the findings of this study based on the research question asked: What are the practices and perceptions of homeless service administrators as they administer federal and state funding guided by public policies for homeless youth in Johnson County based upon the five factors of family conflict, sexual orientation, school problems, substance abuse, and affordable housing? My findings are consistent with those of other researchers who highlighted several factors contributing to youth homelessness (Gambon et al., 2020; Morelli et al., 2023; Pumariega et al., 2022). Analysis of the findings of this study revealed that although many factors lead to youth homelessness, family conflict was the major one in this research. that youth can use. Insights may also serve as a guide for policymakers. Combining the themes and key findings from the data offered much information to be interpreted.

Family Conflict Impact on Homeless Youth Theme

I asked participants which of the five following factors contributed to youth homelessness: family conflict, substance abuse, sexual orientation, school problems, and affordable housing. This question revealed much information. Participants agreed that all the factors contributed to youth homelessness, but the primary factor was family conflict. All youths are affected when they become homeless, as well as those aging out of foster care. Different participants explained the issues they saw as they served youth; all responded differently, as their families fell apart because of divorce or separation and parental job loss. Some youths were abused and faced homelessness. When a young person becomes homeless, it tremendously impacts their young lives (Glassman, 2024).

In Chapter 2, the researchers outlined the factors and what happens when youths are left to fend for themselves.

The participants also stated that when homeless youth are dealing with so much anxiety, it creates a domino effect on their lives. Students' learning suffers, and they are not able to concentrate on class work and attend regularly. There is also stress, which leads to mental issues and substance abuse to help with the pain. The participants said that when housing is provided, as well as transportation for school, healthcare, and employment opportunities, they strive. One participant said that he witnessed the resilience of some of the homeless youth, who attended school daily and were able to graduate with their high school diplomas.

Literature Review

The research points out that homeless youth suffer from more health problems and mental issues, and sometimes they lose their lives. Another major factor and risk is that most of the homeless youth are not accurately counted and planned for because they are either couch surfing or staying with friends (Richard et al., 2022). Pumariega et al. (2022) cited several risks that homeless youth are exposed to, including abuse, exposure, luring into drugs, and unstable housing. Participants confirmed that some of the homeless youths said it is very stressful being homeless and that they are unable to concentrate on school.

According to Harvard Joint Center for Housing Studies' 2024 research. America faced a housing crisis due to the high interest rates and high cost of materials, contributing to the lack of housing. Participants confirmed experiences of the housing

crisis impacting individual daily lives regarding a lack of stability. Several dynamics within the family can lead to distrust and poor communication, leading to chaos (Roche, 2022). Adding to the body of knowledge, all eight participants expressed that while interacting with homeless youth, they identified that the leading cause of youth homelessness was family conflict.

Richard et al. (2022) claimed that domestic violence took different forms of abuse, including sexual, physical, and financial abuse, within the family household. Participants confirmed that sexual and physical forms of abuse were dominant factors of domestic violence. Yet, one participant acknowledged that after working with a mother with two teenagers, the girls were very emotionally attached, holding on to their mother because of the fear that they would be put in foster care. Glassman (2024) concluded that whenever a young person becomes homeless, it can have tremendous harm to the individual. My population confirmed that although the county is wealthier, there is a great need for housing for homeless youth.

Smith (2023) noted that research themes explained how family conflict was the primary reason that created instability in the family unit. Participants confirmed that family conflict was the primary reason for homelessness. Presently, homelessness in the United States is on the rise; family homelessness has risen by 39.4%, 2023 and 2024. This is the highest ever recorded, and affordable housing drives the crisis (National Alliance to End Homelessness, 2024). Participants confirmed that affordable housing was a primary concern for homelessness among the youth population.

Social Construction and Policy Design Conceptual Framework

Insights from the literature on this study in Chapter 2 were aligned. The findings aligned with existing literature regarding federal and state policies and the five factors that cause youth to be homeless. This study was driven by insights from the literature, highlighting the five factors. Given these findings, I aimed to address the gap in the literature regarding the specific impact of federal and state policy and the factors contributing to homelessness among youth in Johnson County, Kansas.

The findings of this study align with existing literature regarding the practices and perceptions of homeless service administrators as they serve homeless youths and the five factors contributing to youth homelessness. The theory of social construction and policy design was a helpful framework for understanding the dynamics between policies and how they affect the population; they are designed to help. This framework explained the challenges associated with adhering to the policy's funding and the leading causes of youth homelessness. The study sheds light on how effective the present programs are and what needs to be done to improve homeless youth services. The interpretations did not exceed the data findings and the scope of boundaries.

Limitations of the Study

One limitation of my study was my population sample size and participants with experience with homeless youth in only one Kansas county. Another limitation was the method of data collection, which involved online interviews that did not consist of site settings for participant interviews. Another limitation involved my study's qualitative

methodology. Future studies could expand on research by using quantitative methodology among multiple counties in Kansas to examine youth homelessness.

Recommendations

This study aimed to gain insights into the views of service administrators' practices and perceptions as they served homeless youth. I aimed to explore not only the effect of federal and state policies but also the leading factors that contribute to young people becoming homeless. I pursued this study to understand the practices and perceptions of homeless service administrators regarding the impact of public policy programs and the leading factors that led to youth homelessness. The research theories of social construction and policy design investigated why some policies succeed and others fail (Ingram et al., 2007). There was confirmation in this study that youth homelessness was on the rise, and one of the primary factors was family conflict, which escalated into additional problems.

Based on the results of this study, my policy recommendations entail amendments that take a closer look at a better understanding of the disconnection in policies for youth in secure housing, education, and employment before they age out of foster care. I found that the transition plan process was inconsistent in relation to the quality of those plans and that some youth did not even know that there was a plan in place. Another public policy practice recommendation could ensure that social workers minimize their workloads to dedicate more time to understanding and involving the youth to develop a transition plan that suits their individual needs.

Implications

Based on the findings of this research, I recommend that policymakers revisit some policies for assisting homeless youth in Johnson County, Kansas. The social change implications revealed in this study were that some youths aged out of the foster care system experienced support services for wraparound care. The consequences of not being prepared with a transition plan highlighted the youth's goals to obtain housing, education, and employment. Another social change implication is to implement various policy revisions to improve the outcomes of this group and decrease certain risks.

There were far too many youths transitioning without linkage to transitional housing opportunities. To mitigate this risk, the policy practice of umbrella support that includes mental health, educational pipelines, and employment tracks while in foster care should be continued until age 21. This new policy could prevent youth involvement in unhealthy situations such as pregnancy, drugs, or criminal involvement. Empirical research that explores youth who aged out of umbrella support services should be conducted as an implication of social change. A significant implication of social change would be incorporating mentoring agencies such as Big Brothers and Big Sisters into Johnson County.

Conclusion

I used a phenomenological general qualitative approach to investigate the study topic and answer the research question, which was the following: What are the practices and perceptions of homeless service administrators as they administer federal and state funding guided by public policies for homeless youth in Johnson County, based upon

from the five factors of family conflict, sexual orientation, school problem, substance abuse, and affordable housing? All the factors presented contribute to youth homelessness, with family conflict being the primary reason based on the participants' responses.

This study highlighted the gap in social support available to homeless youth in housing, education, mental health, and employment in Johnson County, Kansas. Some youths are also outgrowing the foster care system. The most important desire for the youths is to find a safe place to call home. My study added to the body of knowledge, despite the federal and state programs, regarding the significant lack of housing designated for homeless youths in Kansas.

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Appendix: Interview Questions

1. What coping strategies have different homeless children developed to deal with their problems since becoming homeless?
2. The Homeless Task Force was established to identify the issues related to youth homelessness. Are you aware of any programs set up to support youth who are homeless?
3. Has the mayor's task force on homelessness in Kansas, through the support of the Kansas City Council (Resolution no. 090788), created the Kansas City Homelessness Task Force, and had an impact on homeless youth?
4. Of the identified eight core goals permanent and transitional housing a shelter system, prevention, services, public and out research, education training, and employment, community awareness and coordinated response, and finally zoning, urban design, and land use) which one would you say has been implemented to support the homeless youth?
5. What would you say is the main reason youth become homeless: family conflict, substance abuse, sexual orientation, school problems, and affordable housing?
6. How do homeless youth describe the events that led to homelessness?
7. How do these events affect their experiences in school and at work?
8. What coping strategies have different homeless youth developed to deal with problems since becoming homeless?
9. What support systems do the homeless youth describe as beneficial?