Abstract

The aim of this study was to examine the increase of families becoming homeless in Ireland and the effect on child wellbeing. A qualitative research design was used and 5 people who worked with the homeless services were interviewed using semi structured interviews. The findings indicated structural economic factors, insufficient policies and strategies from the Irish government are factors in contributing to the increase of homelessness in Ireland. The findings also highlighted the need for more services to be made available to the homeless especially families with children due to the negative effect which homelessness was having on their physical and mental health.

Introduction

It is difficult to find a coherent acceptable definition of homelessness although common themes such as personality problems, discrimination, and vulnerability to exclusion, an inability to purchase or rent a place to live in the medium or long term, or locate temporary accommodation in the short term somewhat define the problem (Edgar, 2009, p.7).

There have been many studies and reports on homelessness been done to asses the factors in which people become homeless however little has been examined on families becoming homeless in Ireland and the effects on the family and child well being.

Maslow referred to the hierarchy of needs amongst human beings, he mentioned “safety” (Maslow, 1943, p. 370) where individuals have basic nutrition, shelter and safety. The homeless do not possess that sense of safety, currently the homeless people in Ireland require a great need for the fundamental basic needs such as shelter, food and warmth.

Method

Design

The qualitative research design was chosen as the most appropriate approach to assess the factors as to why there is an increase of families becoming homeless in Ireland and the effects on child wellbeing. Semi-structured interviews were selected as the most suitable tool to collect rich, in-depth data from the 5 consenting participants and Nvivo 10 was used to aid thematic analysis.

Participants

The sample size comprised of 5 participants, 3 males and 2 females aged 32 – 44 years who were working within organizations for the homeless in Dublin.

Procedure

The researcher had arranged with each participant to meet in a quiet, confidential place which was convenient for the participant and the average length of each interview was between 60 and 30 minutes in length.

Ethics

Only people whom over 18 and working within the homeless organisations were interviewed. The researcher assured the participants of full confidentiality as means of signed consent forms which are stored on a password protected computer, additionally the data collected was viewed and approved by the Dublin Business School Ethics board.

Results

The researcher identified 5 themes using thematic analysis: The changing face of homelessness, A place to call home, Loss, Impacts and effects, Volunteers strengths and weaknesses.

Discussion

Previous studies and research have indicated that there is a correlation between upbringing and the likelihood of homelessness but a very limited amount of research has found on the effects which homelessness has on children especially in Ireland. This illustrates that there is a gap in the knowledge and that the findings from this research will contribute to the previous research

However, this research did seem to suggest a new trend in the pattern of homelessness, namely the working homeless. This new subset of the homeless community has placed additional demands upon the already overwhelmed homelessness sections within the social welfare system.

References:
