

# Life Satisfaction and its Impact on Attitudes towards Homelessness in the General Public in Dublin

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## Abstract:

The main aim of this research was to investigate attitudes towards homelessness to establish whether satisfaction with life has a relationship with attitudes towards homelessness. The total number of participants in this study was 258 members of the public in Dublin. The research did not support the hypothesis that satisfaction with life was correlated with attitudes towards homelessness. However across both ages and sexes participants retained a generally good attitude towards homelessness.

## Introduction:

The definition of homelessness is greatly debated both in Ireland and internationally. There are many different ways to conceptualise homelessness using different perspectives. The issue of homelessness cannot be looked at in isolation, it needs to be examined and placed in its correct context. In order to gain such perspective it is necessary to look at wider society. Toro et al. propose there is a link between policy and public opinion. Traditionally homeless policy in Ireland was based on the functionalist perspective, with a view that homelessness was a personal predicament more recently policy has adopted an increasingly more conflict perspective with initiatives that look to identify the structural causes of homelessness. The Attitudes towards Homelessness Inventory (ATHI) is a multidimensional questionnaire with four dimensions. These dimensions that measure the attitudes towards homelessness are: personal causes of homelessness, the societal causes of homelessness, whether homelessness can be solved and the disposition to affiliate with homeless people. Wei, Liao, Ku and Shaffer (2011) found that there was a positive correlation between empathy and subjective well being amongst participants. It was predicted that those who score high on the satisfaction with life questionnaire should have a more favourable attitude towards homelessness.



*Homelessness in Dublin*

## Method:

Quantitative analysis was conducted with a non-experimental, correlational design. The direction of this correlation was predicted. It was predicted that there would be a positive correlation between the predictor variable and the criterion variable, that there should be a positive correlation between satisfaction with life scores and attitudes towards homelessness scores. The higher the satisfaction with life score should correlate with a more positive attitude towards homelessness.

The total number of participants in this study was 258 members of the general public in Dublin City. Mean age was 35.98. With 162 women and 90 men (6 did not specify gender). Participants were obtained through Survey Monkey and on the street participants.

Attitudes towards homelessness were measured using the Attitudes Towards Homelessness Inventory (ATHI) (Kingree & Daves, 1997), There were four subscales within this questionnaire, these subscales are personal causes, societal causes, solutions and affiliation. The satisfaction with life questionnaire (Diener, Emmons, Larsen & Griffin, 1985) was used to measure satisfaction with life. Questions were answered on a five point Likert scale.

## Results:

There was actually a very small non-significant negative correlation between satisfaction with life and attitudes towards homelessness.

There was a very small but significant negative correlation between societal causes and personal causes of homelessness.

Participants had generally high scores on the ATHI scale, this shows that participants had a generally non-stigmatising attitude towards the homeless.

There were no significant differences between males and females for attitudes towards homelessness. There were no significant differences in ATHI scores due to the age of participants.

## Discussion:

Life satisfaction was not found to be correlated with attitudes towards homeless in this research, however, it was found that participants from the general public in Dublin had a generally non-stigmatising attitude towards the homeless, with little differences found in attitudes towards homelessness due to either the age or the sex of the participants.

## References:

- Kingree, J. B., & Daves, W. F. (1997). Preliminary validation of the Attitudes Toward Homelessness Inventory. *Journal Of Community Psychology*, 25(3), 265-288.
- Diener, E., Emmons, R. A., Larsen, R. J., & Griffin, S. (1985). The Satisfaction With Life Scale. *Journal Of Personality Assessment*, 49(1), 71.