

Risk Factors of Homeless Veterans

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Introduction

In this study, we will measure the homeless veteran population in Chattanooga, Tennessee with a verbal interview that will be given at the Chattanooga Veteran Center with their permission. We will use a 6-question survey with 4 to 6 follow-up questions underneath the main topic. The items covered will help assess what the risk factors for returning veterans becoming homeless later in life are. We will keep information confidential and will have it taken and stored in a filing system with the staff as the only individuals who are able to look at the answered material.

Quantitative Methods

Sampling and Recruitment

We plan to sample the whole population of Chattanooga, Tennessee because it will provide a bigger number for the team to gather information. The homeless population will not entirely consist of veterans, so it is better to get as many individuals screened as possible. In order for them to qualify for the interview they must meet all of the requirements: served in a military branch and retired from it, live in the Chattanooga area, becoming homeless sometime after serving, and receiving VA benefits. There will also be individuals who have been homeless in the past and now have a stable income that may be interviewed as well; they qualify as well to participate. Because the whole population is to be sampled, we will be using a non-random sampling method to find our volunteers.

Measurements

There is no specific way to numerically measure experiences. Because we wanted to study their experiences and understand different risk factors, we designed our survey

questionnaire in a format of interviewing. We listed out questions such as “how long have you been homeless?” and “what caused you to be homeless?” These may seem like personal questions, but if the veterans are willing to share their experiences, maybe less veterans could be homeless when they return from service.

During the interview, we are asking the question of which branch of military they serve in. We would like to measure this aspect to see if certain veterans are experiencing something different than the other branches of military. Because some wars are more detrimental than others, we would like to know if their war experiences have relations with the risk factors they are experiencing back home in the States.

We will measure demographics by using the survey questions. Studying demographics can help researchers identify what kinds of societal issues participants are likely to face. We are still debating whether the researchers will conduct the interview or the case worker of VA. We kept in mind that caseworkers have established relationships with the veterans and know their experiences better than us. If researchers were the ones conducting the interview, researchers can obtain the information they are looking for.

The appendix will have all of the questions listed out for the interview, the informed consent, and the measurement table.

Procedures for Data Collection

Qualitative Methods

Sampling and Recruitment

For this part of our research, we have decided to sample the entire population just as we did with the quantitative approach. Every veteran who currently resides in Chattanooga, Tennessee and who are also connected with and receiving benefits from the VA clinic will have

the opportunity to participate in this study. This is a completely voluntary study but will be opened to the entire population. Those eligible for this study must fit certain criteria. In order to be eligible, one must be a current citizen of the United States, have served in a war as a U.S. soldier, experienced homelessness upon returning from war, must currently live in Chattanooga Tennessee, and must also be registered at the Chattanooga VA clinic and receiving those VA benefits. These are the individuals we will be sampling from for this research study on what risk factors contribute to homelessness among U.S. veterans.

In order to get our recruitment numbers up, we have set up a plan to have individuals volunteer to participate in this study. We plan on going down to the VA clinic and educating the staff there on our plan. We plan on hanging up and having staff members distributing posters/flyers to those who are eligible when they visit the clinic. This flyer can be found in the appendix. We will also be offering an incentive to those who participate. Every eligible volunteer will receive a \$10 Walmart gift card that will be available for pick up from the VA clinic one month after their interview is complete. VA staff will also have a prompt to read to each eligible individual to provide the person with more information on our study. This can also be found in the appendix. Our research team would cover the cost of transportation for those who are unable to get to the VA clinic. Free child care would also be provided to the children of these eligible veterans for the length of their interview.

Procedures for Data Collection

When looking into how we wanted to collect our qualitative data, our research team agreed on holding individual face to face narrative interviews with these eligible individuals. This would only be held once for approximately one hour. These interviews will be structured in a way that allows the veteran to tell their story and be heard. The interviews that will be

performed will be in depth using a semi-structured interview guide that will be available in the appendix. Each participant will be informed that the interview will be recorded for the purposes of us going back and making sure we have the correct data. Only our research team will have access to their recordings and will be the only ones listening. Each participant will only have to be interviewed once. Each interview will be processed by our research team and later analyzed.

Trustworthiness

We will be spending an hour for each interview. This will give us adequate time to ask the questions and to hear different stories if they choose to tell us. Having an hour for the interview also gives us time to explain what the study is about and answer any questions if they have any. We will be having as much time for interviews as needed.

In total, we expect to have about two-hundred participants. We will be only interviewing four people a day so that the professional that is working with us, and we will not get burnt out over asking the same questions(?). We will be having multiple people observe and collect the data so that it is not just one person gaining the information. It's a way for us to avoid research bias. We will also be checking our peer's work when we are going over the data, so we know that the information that is given was accurate during the observation. We will be recording everything we do as well as the interview, take some notes, and keep track of the transcripts of the discussions. Of course, we will keep the clients' names confidential. After each interview, we will be journaling the conversation we had with our peers, and what we said during the meeting, so we can keep track what was said with our peers. If any bias is disclosed, we will write it in our notes.

Protection of Human Subjects / Research Participants

For this research, we will be getting approval from the Chattanooga Veteran Center. The reason that we need support is that we are going to be interviewing the homeless clients that came and see them(?). To obtain consent and permission, we will be sending out a letter explaining the study and the reasoning behind why we are studying the risk factors of homelessness among U.S. veterans living in Chattanooga. When it comes to the protection and privacy of the participants, we will not be sharing their names. Instead, we will be using numbers to resemble their names so that we can keep confidentiality and we will not release anything they don't feel comfortable being shared in our research project. A risk that the participants will face is emotional distress, and we might have some who don't want to talk about the past and the different factors that contributed to them becoming homeless.

Appendix

Recruitment Script

Hello _____. I would like to inform you of a research study that you may be interested in getting involved with. A research team has come together to study what risk factors contribute to homelessness among United States veterans living in Chattanooga Tennessee. This data will be collected by having one face to face hour long interview with a team member. These interviews will be completely confidential. They will also be recorded and only reviewed by the research team for purposes of their study. The interviews will be held here at the VA clinic. Every individual who participates will be given a \$10 Walmart gift card a month after completion. Transportation and child care will be provided, if needed. Does this sound like something of interest to you? The dates are April 1st to April 30th, when can I sign you up for? Thank you so much for your willingness to participate.

Interview Guide: Homeless Veterans

Opening/Introduction: Good morning/afternoon/evening. My name is _____. Thank you for taking the time to sit down and do this interview with me. The purpose of this study is to learn about what risk factors contribute to homelessness among United States Veterans. One of the goals of this study is to better understand your experience and what led to you becoming homeless for the time that you were. Everything we discuss here will be confidential and kept between me and my team, expect if you mention abuse to a child, imminent threat to someone else, or wanting to harm yourself. With your permission, may I record this interview so that I may accurately reflect on what you have shared. Do you have any questions?

1. Let's discuss your background, tell me about your time in service.
 - a. What branch of the military did you serve in?
 - b. What war did you serve in?
 - c. How old were you when you enlisted?
 - d. How long were you in service?
 - e. What year did you leave service?
2. When you returned from services, what was your life like?
 - a. Were you employed?
 - b. Where did you live?
 - c. What was your social life like?

- d. How was your home life?
 - e. What was your income?
 - f. Did you immediately connect with the VA?
 - g. How was your mental health?
3. Now, let's dive in to your support systems and how that has influenced your life after returning from service.
- a. Who/what did you have to support you upon returning?
 - b. What type of support system did you have before serving?
 - c. How, if all, did that change upon returning?
 - d. Who do you have in your life currently that you can lean on?
 - e. Are you married or have a partner?
 - f. Do you have any children or dependents?
4. I'd like to discuss what led to and contributed to you becoming homeless?
- a. Was it PTSD?
 - b. Substance abuse?
 - c. Gender difference?
 - d. No support system?
 - e. Any other factors that you have witnessed?
5. Now, let's discuss what your experience with homelessness has been like.
- a. How long have you been homeless? How long were you homeless?
 - b. How old were you when you first experienced homeless upon returning from the war?
 - c. How long have you been receiving VA benefits?
 - d. What is your definition of homelessness?
6. (Does not apply to all) Looking at your life currently, what was it like coming out of homelessness?
- a. What steps did you take to get out of homelessness?
 - b. How long did this process take?
 - c. What helped you the most?
 - d. How much assistance did the VA and government provide you?

Closing: Thank you so much for your participation in this interview. The input you have provided will help us to build knowledge on what risk factors contribute to homelessness in the Chattanooga area. We will be writing up our results and findings from this study, would you like to read it, when it is ready, and provide us with feedback on whether we properly reflected your experiences?

Gift Card: At the end of the month, a \$10 Walmart gift card will be available for you to pick up at the VA clinic. It will be under your name and require your signature in order to obtain. Thank you again for your participation.

Informed Consent

Risk Factors of Homelessness Among US Veterans Living in Chattanooga TN
Researchers: Tiffany Yi, Leslie Hakuna, Jocelyn Shear, Karissa Goodman

Introduction and Purpose

You are invited to participate in a research study of the causes of homelessness of US veterans. With your help and participation, it will help us understand how we can prevent more veterans from experiencing homelessness. We are Social Work students at Southern Adventist University working on an assignment for our class called Research Methods. This form will explain what will be expected from the participants and researchers. Please read it carefully and feel free to contact anyone at the bottom or our supervisor Dr. Nina Nelson any questions before you make a decision of participating.

Who Can Participate in this Study?

You can participate in this study if you meet the following criteria:

1. You are a veteran.
2. You live in Chattanooga, TN.
3. You have been homeless after returning from service.
4. You are receiving VA benefits.

Study Procedure

This study will involve a face-to-face interview with the researchers. We will ask questions according to your experiences of being homeless or previously been homeless. If you would like to participate, you may speak to any of the case workers at the VA. The case workers will then coordinate the interview schedule and will contact one of us accordingly. Each interview will be audio – recorded to make sure we gather the appropriate information, and we will take notes. If you do not feel comfortable with the recordings, please let us know before the interview. The interview time would be about 50-60 minutes long.

Voluntary Participation

Participating in this study is voluntary. You may stop at any time with no consequences. Please do let us know if you decide to stop. There is no right or wrong answer and you can request to skip the questions according to your preference.

Benefits of Participation

This study will give you an opportunity to share your experiences of homelessness. With your help, we are able to better understand how we can reach to the homeless veteran population to prevent more veterans to becoming homeless.

Possible Risks of Participation

The risk of participating in this interview is low. There may be questions asked that may remind you of past experiences. Counseling referrals will be provided, if needed.

Costs

There will be no cost in participating. Rides will be provided to those who need help getting to the clinic. Free child care will also be provided.

Payment

In appreciation for your participation in this study, you will receive a \$10 Walmart gift card in one month after you complete the interview. Please provide a signature to obtain the gift.

Confidentiality of Records

All information shared with us will not be shared with those outside of the VA or the research group. The audio recordings will only be heard by our research group. The results will be enclosed in our research assignment but no names and any information that can identify you will be mentioned.

The only exception of confidentiality is if you are at risk of harming yourself or others, or in imminent danger, or information of direct child abuse has been shared. We are required by law to make reports to authority.

Contact Persons

If you have any questions or concerns, you may contact any of the researchers down below:

Karissa Goodman kgoodman@southern.edu

Leslie Hakuna lhakuna@southern.edu

Tiffany Yi tyi@southern.edu

Jocelyn Shear jshear@southern.edu

This study has been approved by the Social Work Department at Southern Adventist University and in collaboration with the Chattanooga Veteran Center. If you have questions or concerns with your rights as participants, you may contact our supervisor, Nina Nelson at nnelson@southern.edu or your case worker at the VA.

Measurement Table

RQ Constructs	Variables	Measure (and response options)	Frequency/Time	Measurement level
Duration of homelessness	Length of homelessness	2 questions: How long have you been homeless? How long have you been in Chattanooga?	once	Interval/Ratio
Reason for homelessness	Causes	1 question: What caused you to become homeless?	once	Nominal
VA benefits		1 question: How long have you been receiving VA benefits?	once	Ordinal
Demographic and	Variables	Measure (and response options)		

Control Constructs				
Age	Age	3 questions: How old are you? How old were you when you became homeless? How old were you when you were enlisted?	once	Nominal
Ethnicity	Latino/a or Hispanic ethnicity	1 question: Are you Latino/a or Hispanic? (yes/no)	once	Nominal
	Race	1 question: Are you White/Caucasian, Black/African American, Asian, Pacific Islander, etc.?	once	Nominal
Service	Branch of military/duration	4 questions: Which war did you serve in? How long were you in service? What branch of military did you serve in? When did you return to the States?	once	Nominal/ordinal
Marital/family status	Marital status	2 questions: Are you married? (yes/no) Do you have a partner? (yes/no)	once	Nominal
	Children/dependents	2 question: Do you have any children? Dependents? (yes/no)	once	Nominal
Support system	Pre- and post-support systems	2 questions: Do you have support	once	Nominal

		systems? (yes/no) How has your support system changed before and after returning from service?		
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Chattanooga VA Clinic

April 1st - April 30th

Schedule an appointment today!

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY



Homeless VA Study

Take a minute to tell us your story of what risk factors contributed to your homelessness after serving this country!



Eligibility

- Current U.S. Citizen
- Served in the army
- Homeless after returning



\$10 Gift Card

Those who participate will receive a \$10 gift card to Walmart!

JKTL RESEARCH GROUP

Southern Adventist University
Research Methods
Dr. Nina Nelson