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# ANALYZING THE SIGNIFICANCE OF TRANSITIONAL HOUSING PROGRAMS

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**Analyzing the Significance of Transitional Housing Programs**

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## **Introduction**

Homelessness has been an ongoing issue in Florida for decades. According to Dunkel (2012) homelessness is a problem for thousands of children and their families annually, that live in Florida. Transitional housing programs are temporary housing developments for the homeless population. This includes working class homeless families and their children whom earn minimal wages and are not able to afford long-term housing. However, transitional housing is deemed as a transition for residents into permanent, affordable and sustainable housing. Moreover, transitional housing programs have gained media attention over the past decade, especially in South Florida.

There have been few homeless resource centers, known as transitional housing facilities, that have opened and are fully operational and consequently they become filled rapidly. So, the research in this proposal aims to link homelessness, student reading, academic performance and transitional housing programs, and these facets impact homeless students that live in and out of transitional housing programs. Over the past decade homeless students living in transitional housing programs/facilities seem to be performing significantly better in standardized tests for reading and math, in Florida (Dunkel, 2012). But the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted the lives of homeless and transitional student learners. So, as a part of this research proposal the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic should be analyzed and assessed to gain a better perspective on this issue.

## **Problem Statement**

Homeless students across Florida that do not live in traditional or stable housing are not performing as well academically as homeless students living in transitional housing programs (Dunkel, 2012). Research included in this proposal/study, aims to establish cause and effect pertaining to reading and math academic performance of homeless students that live in and outside of transitional housing programs. Also, this research aims to express the importance and significance of analyzing the differences in standardized test scores of homeless students that live in transitional housing programs and homeless students that do not live in transitional housing programs.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this research is to examine how homeless students that live in transitional housing and out of transitional housing programs in Florida, perform academically on the standardized reading and math tests. Therefore, the purpose of this research also advocates for the implementation and development of additional transitional housing programs, in Florida to benefit child learners progression.

### **Central Research Question**

Do homeless students living in transitional housing programs perform better or worse academically in reading and math than homeless students not living in transitional housing programs?

### **The Potential Significance of the Study/Research**

The potential significance of this research highlights that students living in transitional housing programs are performing better on math and reading standardized tests. This research data has the potential to increase statewide funding for these types of programs for homeless families and student learners. Moreover, continued research would be needed to further examine the academic progress for reading and math performance of students living in transitional housing programs due to homelessness and for homeless students not living in transitional housing programs.

### **Limitations**

Limitations for data collection could be inclusive of the potential for bias in research data, loss of participants and families living in transitional housing programs, time constraints as well as racial bias. Further research would be needed in the future to determine additional limitations for data collection based on other variables that impact homeless families that live in and out of transitional housing programs. Also, further limitations in analyzing the standardized math and reading scores could include; not accounting for most of the homeless students that are test takers and living in and out of transitional housing programs. Therefore, managing potential limitations in this data could be successfully done by identifying the specific limitations that impact research data and developing ways to avoid these limitations during the research process.

## **Literature Review**

### **Transitional Housing Programs for Homeless Families**

Fleary, Joseph, Zhang & Quirion (2019) provided a thorough analysis of residents' perspectives, the important role of transitional housing programs and described them as providing a supportive, empathetic, empowering, and home-like environment, that gives residents "back that dignity" and prepares them emotionally as well as physically to successfully transition to permanent housing. Additionally, Maghsoodi, Feller, Kataoka, Washington, Altman & Gelberg (2016) highlighted the implications for understanding mental illness in homeless veteran families, that live in and out of transitional housing programs. Maghsoodi et al. (2016) also spotlighted the significance of the long-term benefits of transitional housing programs for veteran families and their children. Literature by Wang, Mott, Magwood et al. (2019) examined mental illness, maladaptive behavior traits and poor academic performance of homeless children from unstable families, that are not living in transitional housing programs and the long-term benefits of transitional housing programs for homeless students overall academic success.

### **Homeless and Vulnerably Housed Children**

Bassuk, Richard & Tsertsvadze (2014) discussed homeless children that do not live in stable or transitional housing programs as well as how they suffer from severe forms of mental illness, in juxtaposition with children that do live in stable housing. Maghsoodi, Ryan, Kataoka, Lester & Gelberg (2019) discussed family homelessness as a crisis and implicated the ways that homelessness has an overall impact on every facet of life. This literature also examined specific causes as well as effects, pertaining to family homelessness. Finally, this literature aligns with the research proposal because it highlighted and discussed the loss of self-worth, depression, mental illness, poor behavioral traits in school age children and risk factors for these behaviors, as well as the role of transitional housing in the lives of homeless families.

### **Research Design**

Causal-Comparative/Quasi-experimental research is the specific research design. Causal-Comparative/Quasi-experimental research aims to establish cause-effect relationships among the variables. Specifically, quasi-experimental research studies are not randomly assigned, the subjects are. Furthermore, in causal-comparative/quasi-experimental research conclusions are based on determining causes and the effect of the study and or research. Causal-Comparative/Quasi-experimental research is beneficial because this specific research design does not utilize random sampling in constructing experimental and control groups. In this research proposal the control groups and research groups are not randomly assigned and were already in and out of transitional housing programs. Therefore, not utilizing random sampling methods in this research design to construct the experimental and control groups, increases the potential for low internal validity. However, this type of research design cannot eliminate the possibility of confounding bias, as research progresses.

### **Sampling Method and Data Collection Process**

The sampling method utilized in this research study will be inclusive of sampling 200 students that live in Florida and attend the 4th- 8th grade. Specifically, this sampling method will collect descriptive data to test the standardized math and reading scores at the start of the school year and end of the school year, for 100 students that are homeless and living in transitional housing programs as well as for 100 homeless students that do not live in transitional housing programs. Furthermore, the control group of transitionally housed homeless students and research group of homeless students not living in transitional housing, could be selected for research studies by Florida state social workers.

### **Data Analysis**

The descriptive data that will be utilized in this research is based on gender, ethnicity and the SES of transitionally housed students and students that are not living in transitional housing programs. However, students in transitional housing, on average had higher developmental scale scores on the standardized reading and math scoring scale, than students not living in transitional housing programs (Dunkel, 2012).

### **Ensuring Research Quality**

Internal threats to this research would be inclusive of; history effects and that threat could become prevalent with the passage of time and changes that may occur within the protocols of transitional housing programs. Moreover, other internal threats that could potentially occur would be inclusive of experimental mortality, which could occur when families leave the transitional housing programs. Also, external threats to validity could be inclusive of history effects and maturation, which are common threats that may occur within the research progress for homeless families that are vulnerably and or transitionally housed. Identifying threats to external and internal validity prior to research, will facilitate the success of ensuring research quality.

### **Ethical Considerations**

Ethical considerations for this research could be inclusive of voluntary participation, maintaining family anonymity and promoting a safe environment for research. In research, voluntary participation is specific to fully informing participants about the procedures and risks involved in research and obtaining their consent to participate. Therefore, maintaining family anonymity is specific to securing and protecting family research data, as well as encrypting research information when utilizing online sources. Lastly, promoting a safe environment for research consists of the appropriate development and implementation of protocols for researchers and participants.

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