

Homelessness among the black and ethnic minority in the uk literature review

[Countries](#), [England](#)



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Literature Review

Literature review is the process of describing the relevant literature to a given topic or piece of work. It is beneficial because it gives the reader a glimpse of the existing, relevant theories and hypotheses including the methodologies useful in that field of work or topic. It makes use of secondary sources a representation that the research has no new information. In my literature review, I will discuss the different aspects of homelessness among blacks and ethnic minority groups in the UK.

My method of searching for relevant sources include a wide search of various websites among them, governmental departments, shelter England, inside housing, research reports and magazines. The literature review will focus on the experiences of the homeless blacks and ethnic minority in the UK, in the twenty first century. It will concentrate on the meaning of homelessness and its causes at the initial stage, which will include unemployment, low income, social exclusion, overcrowding, racial harassment and discrimination.

Secondly it will deal with the challenges faced by the homeless people in the UK, touching on emotional, educational, poverty, health and physical challenges. Lastly, it will focus on the various measures used to navigate their homelessness problem, for instance, the involvement of shelter providers like NASS and social movements and other organizations.

Introduction

Blackaby and Chahal (2000, p. 12) assert that homelessness is associated with those people living on the streets and sleeping rough, hence making them have a disconnection from relevant social networks. This is the best

definition accepted by the majority of the people, when in the real sense, only a small percentage of these people lack roofs over their heads.

Therefore, homelessness can be associated to those people who do not have secure or permanent accommodation of their own. Such people include those who have no option, but involuntarily live in temporary accommodation, and sleep on the streets. People who depend on other people while living in substandard housing conditions involuntarily are also considered homeless. The UK government passed a homelessness act in 1996 describing a homeless person as a person having no place to occupy. This can be either because they do not have the place or have it, but cannot secure as shown by Wilson (2013, p. 15). Therefore, the UK local authority has an obligation to provide accommodation to the genuinely homeless individuals. The local authorities in the UK are developing strategies for their local areas in order to support the homeless and prevent future incidences of homelessness.

Black and ethnic minority housing crisis represents a large percentage of homelessness problems in England. The UK 2001 census showed that black and ethnic minority make up 7% of the population of England as suggested by HHSD (2005, p. 17). At the end of 2004, the homeless percentage of blacks and ethnic minority had risen to about 20%. The principal ethnic minority groups in the country include Pakistanis, Indians, Caribbeans and Bangladeshis. Black African and Caribbean households often represent the greatest percentage of homeless individuals in the United Kingdom.

Homelessness among blacks and ethnic minority has increased disproportionately through the years as from 1996 in England.

Causes of Black and Ethnic Minority Homelessness

Social Exclusion and Overcrowding

Causes of homelessness among these populations in the UK are numerous among them the social exclusion of the communities. The groups are socially excluded because they suffer from problems like discrimination, high incidences of crime, unemployment, poor skills, low incomes and family breakdowns. Kennett and Marsh (1999, p. 26) show that overcrowding is rampant among black and ethnic minority communities as compared to the white community. For instance, Bangladeshis suffer from this problem with over half of their children living in overcrowded situations. Overcrowding occurs due to failure of housing organizations and legislation to recognize the need of large homes for extended families. Research on homelessness among blacks and ethnic minority in the UK, shows that it is contributed by the breakdown of the numerous, existing relationships. Deterioration of relationships between members of an extended family that can in turn be caused overcrowding can also cause homelessness as argued by Netto and Theo (2010, p. 21).

Low Income

Low income is another cause of homelessness among black and ethnic minority groups. Since their households struggle to cover their housing costs and bills, results can be either mortgage or rent arrears as explained by Inside Housing (2001). Arrears if not paid in time can result into eviction, thus homelessness. The UK local authorities have data showing instances of

black and ethnic minority rent arrears in the year 2003, which led to their eviction and current state of homelessness.

Unemployment

Unemployment among the Bangladeshi people is common, representing about 20%. Unemployment among youths is also common, however; the black and ethnic minority aged 25 years and below experience this problem more than the whites. In the years 2001 and 2002, about 40% of the black and ethnic minority in the UK were unemployed. Homelessness can be triggered by unemployment in the instance that it leads to mortgage repossession. Poor housing conditions can also lead to people being homeless. For example, in 2001, 3.8% of black and ethnic minority households lived in unfit housing and they were bound to remain homeless sooner or later if situations got worse as explained by Shelter England (2004, p. 14).

Racial Harassment and discrimination

Chahal (1999, p. 16) explains that limited opportunities for housing in the right locations can render the minority groups in England homeless. These people lack the affordable and appropriate housing needs in certain locations. There may be a lack of essential resources and facilities like schools and other support networks. Again black and ethnic minority households may not afford certain housings in a given location, thus rendering them homeless. Racial harassment and discriminations are extremely vital in causing homelessness. Blacks and ethnic minority face incidences of racial harassment and discrimination more than the whites in

the England. Racial harassment associated with residence can have negative impacts like homelessness on the lives of the victims.

Sexual harassment, domestic violence and family disputes

Other studies show that women and children were pushed into homelessness due to pregnancy. A family may decide to break its relationship with a female child because she is pregnant, for example, among Black Caribbeans. In this case, the local authorities gave such people priority since the homelessness is created through involuntary circumstance. Among the south Asians, homelessness among single, female headed households was majorly caused by forced marriages, family disputes and domestic violence as explained by Klinker et al (2000). The Irish population homelessness mainly resulted from financial difficulties and domestic violence as asserted by HHSD (2005, p. 20). Among the refugees in the UK, homelessness came about because of the ending of NASS accommodation. Racial discrimination, lack of service knowledge, social isolation and difficulty in communicating in English were also rendered refugees homeless.

Challenges of Homelessness

Most people in the UK are quite fortunate to have permanent housing unlike the black and ethnic minority households of the same region. Being homeless can be traumatic causing damage to the emotional and physical well-being of an individual. Homeless people having temporary accommodation or sleeping rough on the streets face challenges.

Temporary Accommodation- Health and Poverty Challenges

Temporary accommodations are often offered under the homelessness laws of the UK. The occupants must be eligible for the assistance, involuntarily homeless and in priority need of housing. Some of the homeless black and ethnic minorities in the UK are accommodated in these temporary housings as suggested by Shelter England (2010, p. 5). This can always last for uncertain long period, making the homeless live in this temporary condition for as long as one year. Homelessness can cause people to suffer high stress levels brought about by the lack of control over housing problem. The stress is also attributed to high levels of poverty and unfavorable living conditions. Temporary accommodation makes people feel isolated from their friends and local community. The conditions often remind the homeless of the tragic moments that caused their situations, for instance, relationship breakdown, domestic violence, mental health problems and running away from persecution. Surviving in temporary accommodation is rather hard since it causes damaging mental and physical health effects as asserted by Carter (1998, p. 11).

Rough Sleepers- Health, Poverty, Physical and Emotional Challenges

Those homeless individuals living on the streets and sleeping rough are always living in fear of attacks. They, therefore, avoid conspicuous locations due to fear of abuse, robbers and attack. They are often subjected to harassment from police, leading to unfair arrests searches and moving from one place to another. Shelter England (2010, p. 9) suggests that the rough sleepers are often subjects to both physical and health problems, for

example, hunger, cold and fear. These experiences disrupt their sleep, which in turn, damages their mental and physical systems. Lack of basic needs and essential facilities for personal care can cause health problems. In such places, drug and alcohol use is rampant and is often increased by the life on the streets.

Homeless Children- Health, Poverty, Education and Emotional Challenges

Inside Housing (2001) explains that children are the intensely affected individuals by homelessness. Their lives are often in chaos and the impacts can be long lasting. They always suffer the developmental and mental homelessness problems even after being rehoused. The health of such children in most cases deteriorates as they suffer from severe disabilities and ill health. Some of the homeless individuals miss the chance to attend school hence education. If they get the chance to go to school, they have no space for play or do homework which still reduces their education ability. Emotional well-being of homeless children is often affected as they always develop depression, behavioral problems and anxiety due to their next stop. Most homeless black and ethnic minority children in the UK are characterized by aggression, hyperactivity and disturbed sleep patterns as shown by Reisenberger et al (2010, p. 8). Most of them are unhappy and get distressed quickly. Life chances to the homeless are always minimal since they have less education and experience.

Stigmatization and Victimization

Homeless people are often subjects to stigma and victimization in many circumstances. Their living conditions subject the children to harassment in school or from friends. Such children are often stigmatized from the harsh treatment they receive from other children. Normally, homeless individuals are often victimized in cases of illegal activities. They are treated harshly and in case of an illicit act, they are the major suspects.

Corrective Measures to the Homelessness

Tackling black and ethnic minority homelessness requires an initial step of understanding the causes of homelessness and the barriers against its prevention. Serious research on homelessness must be done first before a satisfactory measure is decided on how to curb the problem. Issues regarding causes of homelessness like 'hidden homelessness' and statutory overcrowding should be studied intensively to help in decision making, about blacks and ethnic minority homelessness in the UK as explained by Pawson and Wilcox (2012).

Social organization movements and Black and Ethnic Minority Strategies

Black and minority ethnic homelessness organizations are required to address the key barriers experienced by the groups in efforts to access services. Forging strong links between black and minority ethnic and organizations working against homelessness should be encouraged. If possible, the two entities should form partnerships to widen access to substantial interventions on homelessness in the UK. Supporting the local

authorities for their practices in reducing this problem should be encouraged as argued by Netto and Theo (2010, p. 16). For instance, the homelessness and housing support directorate in the UK should address the issue of over-representation of black and ethnic minority groups among the households recognized as homeless. Curbing the problem should be a priority to the local authorities, and they should utilize the provided resources appropriately in implementing strategies, best practices and support innovation.

Shelter Providers

Increased research by the local authorities on the causes and effects of homelessness on black and ethnic minority households should be done. Proper strategies and assessments are required to serve and meet the desires of the homeless occupants in the UK. The strategies in place for eliminating homelessness, according to the local authorities, are culturally and racially sensitive to all the communities in the UK as shown by Carter (1998, p. 8). The national asylum support service is another way of reducing homelessness problems among ethnic minority households. The effect of NASS on black and ethnic minority homelessness require to be put across at both the local and national level. Suggestions have been made with regards to the asylum support amendment regulations of the year 2002. The suggestion elaborated an amendment of the regulation to allow a NASS accommodation of 28 days minimum rather than 7 days as the law stated⁸ as asserted by Kenneth and Marsh (1999, p. 18). It is also significant to avoid

crises caused by homelessness through informing the people accommodated by NASS about their rights and options when the support ends.

Conclusion

Homelessness is a major problem in the UK that requires government address and research. Curbing the problem among the black and ethnic minority households is a sensitive process requiring thorough research. Understanding the causes of homelessness among these groups often help in preventing the problem. It is clear that black and ethnic minority individuals in the UK face problems like unemployment, low income, social exclusion, and racial discrimination, which in most cases are the causes of homelessness. They also experience challenges that make their lives unbearable. Problems relating to education, health, stigma and victimization, physical and emotions are faced by the homeless in the UK. Preventive measures also help in reducing homelessness among the black and ethnic minority groups.

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