Abstract

Qualitative and quantitative research on immigrants experiencing homelessness is quite rare. The aim of this study is to synthesize the available literature on the demographics, prevalence, risk factors, barriers, and recommendations regarding homelessness within the immigrant population.

Methods

A systematic literature search following databases: PubMed, Embase, and Google Scholar for articles published between January 1, 2001, and March 01, 2021 was conducted. This search was supplemented by cross-referencing references of the retrieved publications. Peer-reviewed studies written in English that examined homelessness within the immigrant community in various settings were included. A qualitative approach to synthesize the existing literature.

Results

18 studies were identified that met the inclusion criteria. Based on the study objectives and the available literature, the articles were grouped into four categories 1) demographic characteristics 2) prevalence 3) risk factors 4) barriers to escaping homelessness and recommendations. A qualitative literature analysis on the following themes was undertaken:

- Immigrant health
- Immigrant mental health
- Immigrant women
- Immigrants facing barriers to escaping homelessness
- Needs of this vulnerable population in the United States
- Alternative explanations
- Homelessness in other settings
- Homelessness is multifaceted
- Lack of legal status
- Limited access to affordable & safe housing
- Economic crises
- Financial resources
- Limited knowledge of support programs or institutional resources

Purpose

This literature analysis hopes to focus on the following three questions:

1. What are the factors that place immigrants at an increased risk for homelessness?
2. What are the barriers preventing homeless immigrants from leaving homelessness?
3. Are there any recommendations on how to address these issues?

Introduction

Homelessness in the United States

- Significant public health issue
- Multifaceted
- Affected by:
- Individual challenges
- Structural failings
- Economic collapse
- Natural disasters
- Immigrants rarely mentioned homelessness literature

Immigration in the United States

- 45 million immigrants in the U.S. (13.7% of US population)
- U.S. immigrant population ↑ 7.4% between 2010 - 2020

Homelessness among the Immigrant Population

Many unique features and challenges that differ from the native-born population

- Lower median income, lower paying jobs, higher likelihood of poverty
- Language barriers
- Trouble accessing federal and state services

Challenges immigrants face make homelessness a constant threat

Very little qualitative and quantitative research on immigrants experiencing homelessness

Systematic Review

Study design: Investigation limited to peer-reviewed studies examining homeless immigrants in various contexts

Databases used: PubMed, Google Scholar, Embase

Results

Overview of Articles

- Healthy immigrant effect
- Risk factors for homelessness
- Mental health & substance use
- Women
- Children
- Barriers to escaping homelessness
- Needs of this vulnerable population in the United States

Objective of this systematic analysis was to increase our understanding of homelessness in the immigrant population

- Six themes were identified
- Each theme provide invaluable information regarding homelessness immigrants, but important gaps remain

Conclusions

Living in the Shadows: Exploring Homelessness within the Immigrant Population

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