Evaluating the Impact of Shelter Home Services on the Well-Being and Satisfaction of Residents in Pakistan

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Abstract: Shelter homes are vital in combating homelessness by providing temporary accommodation and essential services, including food, healthcare, and, in certain instances, education and transportation. The government of Pakistan has initiated the "Panah Gah" programme to assist the homeless population in multiple cities. This study evaluates the effectiveness of the Panah Gah initiative in Lahore, with a specific focus on service provision and resident satisfaction. Data were collected from 150 homeless individuals living in five majors Panah Gahs situated at Data Darbar, Railway Station, Thokar Niaz Baig, Badami Bagh, and Lorri Adda. A structured and pre-tested questionnaire facilitated primary data collection, which was subsequently analysed using Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) through SPSS. The results indicate that shelter quality and service quality are significantly and positively correlated with resident satisfaction, with coefficients of 0.92 and 0.46, respectively. In the context of shelter quality, the staying experience emerged as a significant factor (0.42), while resident control did not demonstrate significance (0.04). For service quality, reliability (0.99) and responsibility (0.79) were key contributors. The study recommends more flexible entry timings, dedicated spaces for homeless women with female staff, and expansion of the program to other districts to enhance its overall effectiveness and reach.

Key Words: Panah Gah, Homelessness, Shelter Home, Poverty Elevation, Structural Equation Model

Introduction

Homelessness is a persistent global issue that has affected societies throughout human history. It arises when individuals are unable to access or maintain secure and stable housing due to a complex interplay of socioeconomic, psychological, and structural factors. These include poverty, unemployment, and lack of affordable housing, mental or physical illness, substance use disorders, and breakdowns in social or familial support systems (Fiorati et al., 2016). The 11th sustainable development goal emphasizing on the access for all the adequate, safe and affordable housing services. Despite the advancement of modern urban infrastructure and social policies, homelessness remains prevalent in both developed and developing countries, often manifesting in the form of people living on streets, underpasses, parks, railway stations, and other public spaces. underpasses, parks, railway stations, and other public spaces.

The number of homeless people is increasing day by day; for instance, in Australia, it increased more than 13% from 2011 to 2016 (Munir et al., 2020). Similarly, Canadians are also facing the same issue with an increasing trend (Gaetz et al., 2014). Benjaminson (2018) also explored the increasing numbers that were more than 6000 in Denmark. Patten (2017) worked in the same context in New Zealand and found an increase of four per cent from the years 2014-2015. In the UK, more than four thousand people were found sleeping on the roads (Terry, 2019). Rahman and

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Hasan (2023) contributed their work in Bangladesh and found that the increasing urbanization and migration are the major causes of homelessness.

Provision of temporary housing was also adopted by many developing countries; for example, in India, many night shelters are found in Allahabad, Varanasi, Lucknow and Agra (Goel et al., 2017). Ghosh et al. (2020) exhibited the dissatisfaction of people from the night shelter inhabitants in Delhi by complaining about the limited space, inadequate health services and poor quality of services. Goel et al. (2017) addressed the less availability of basic amenities at night shelters in the main states of India. Speak and Tripple (2006) also explored that people in India and South Africa also feel reluctant to live in shelter homes, perceiving them as unsafe and insecure.

Due to the increasing trends in homelessness, researchers identified three different strategies to tackle this problem. 1-Primary 2-Secondary 3-Tertiary. At the primary level it was aimed at identifying the root causes of the problem. It focused on the reduction of poverty, ensuring access to affordable housing and increasing household incomes. At the secondary level it addressed the people who were at risk of homelessness. They were provided housing subsidies and assistance to pay for mortgage or utility services. Finally, at the tertiary level, people are providing opportunities for long-term stability (Montgomery et al., 2013). However, Evans et al. (2016) emphasized that the most important strategy is the crisis of accommodation or transitional housing services.

Substance use, particularly drugs and alcohol, is often both a cause and consequence of homelessness. Moreover, access to essential services such as healthcare and psychosocial support remains severely limited for many homeless individuals, particularly in under-resourced settings (Mcvakar et al., 2015). The scarcity of targeted outreach services and lack of adequately funded support institutions mean that a significant proportion of homeless individuals remain disconnected from systems that could aid in their rehabilitation and reintegration. In numerous societies, homelessness is mistakenly viewed exclusively as a result of individual failure instead of being recognised as a product of systemic inequities. This misunderstanding promotes stigmatisation and hinders efforts for effective policy reform (Premsingh et al., 2013). Homelessness impacts individuals and imposes a burden on public resources, while also contributing to wider social instability.

Pakistan is suffering from a gargantuan homelessness issue with over 200 million citizens. Unchecked urbanization, internal migration, and inadequate social protection systems typically worsen the problem. The Government of Pakistan in the present administration has undertaken a massive policy initiative to transform the nation into a welfare state to meet rising issues. The Panah-Gah program was launched with an aim to provide shelter, food, and minimal healthcare facilities to homeless and marginalized individuals across the country. The program was launched in Lahore and later spread to other cities such as Rawalpindi, Islamabad, and Peshawar. The centers are intended to provide protection from harsh weather and a place of safety for individuals who live in chronic homelessness or are occasionally homeless due to mobility or financial issues (Hameed et al., 2025).

Lahore, being a city of high culture, undergoing rapid urbanization, having high rates of internal migration, and lacking adequate social safety nets, typically worsens the condition. The Government of Pakistan, led by the incumbent government, has taken a major policy move to make the country a welfare state in response to increasing issues. The Panah-Gah program was initiated to provide shelter, nutrition, and primary healthcare facilities to vagrants and poor citizens across the country. The project was started in Lahore and within no time spread across cities like Rawalpindi, Islamabad, and Peshawar. The shelters are supposed to offer cover to those from harsh weather and a sanctuary for chronically homeless or temporarily homeless persons because they are in transit or experiencing money problems. Pakistan has over 200 million residents and the country has a significant homelessness problem.

This research assesses the quality of services offered in shelter homes in Lahore in terms of accessibility, care quality, safety, hygiene, food and health care availability, and overall user satisfaction. An assessment of the experiences and perceptions of the shelter residents towards these services will inform future policymaking and ensure interventions truly meet the needs of the homeless.

Materials and Methods

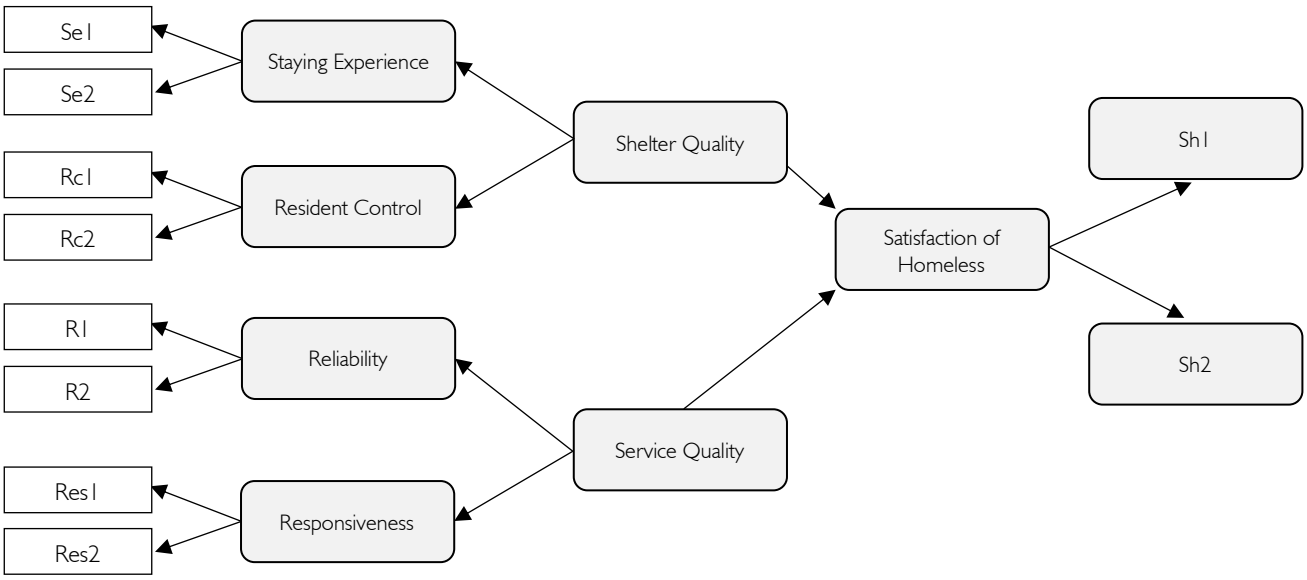
This study was conducted by gathering primary data from persons residing in shelter homes in Lahore. The process began with the careful creation of a questionnaire, since the quality of the instrument was very important to the research's reliability. A 40-item questionnaire was developed after a thorough examination of research papers, journal articles, theses, and other studies, ensuring conformity with the objectives of this project. The questionnaire included both open-ended and closed-ended questions to obtain comprehensive replies. Before starting the actual data collecting, a pre-testing phase was done in the area of the study. Twenty respondents were randomly chosen, and their feedback was utilized to enhance the instrument by removing extraneous questions and integrating new, contextually significant topics. The pre-testing phase was advantageous since it confirmed that the questionnaire gathered pertinent and significant data for the study. Data collection was conducted via purposive and respondent-driven sampling methods at designated shelter homes in Lahore, specifically those situated near the Railway Station, Lorri Adda, Data Sahab, Thokar Niaz Baig, and Badami Baagh. In-person interviews were carried out with participants to enhance data reliability and fulfill the study's objectives. The questionnaire, initially crafted in English for academic objectives, was administered in Urdu and, when required, Punjabi, to guarantee understanding and precise answers. Inquiries encompassed various categories, including food quality, bedding, medical facilities, entertainment, entry and exit schedules, social aid, security, and social characteristics of shelter homes. The researcher, along with a trained team of five, individually gathered data from 150 respondents over a span of 15 to 20 days. Fieldwork presented problems, including differing levels of collaboration and partial responses; however, attempts were undertaken to maximize respondent engagement. All interviews were recorded in the standardized questionnaire in English and subsequently converted to digital format. Subsequent to data collection, the interview schedules were meticulously examined to ensure precision. Each questionnaire was consecutively numbered and meticulously revised. The data were coded, inserted into Excel spreadsheets, and subsequently exported to SPSS for statistical analysis. A computer-based structural equation model (SEM) was employed on the dataset to obtain the intended results, assuring methodological rigor and analytical depth.

Structural Equation Model

Structural equation models are used to develop a better understanding of the relationship between a dependent variable and a set of independent or explanatory variables. It is usually impossible to assign "cause" to any observed relationships between a dependent variable and an explanatory variable, except in the case of well-designed controlled and randomized experiments. With this caution in mind, a great deal can be learned from applying structural equation models to the observed data obtained from shelter homes surveys (Subramanian et al., 2014).

Figure 1

Quality Factors Effecting on Satisfaction of Residents of Panah-Gah (Conceptual Measurement Model)



In the aforementioned path diagram, ovals denote factors, sometimes referred to as latent variables, unobserved variables, or unmeasured variables in Structural Equation Modeling (SEM). These are theoretical constructs that can be deduced but not explicitly quantified. Rectangles denote qualities, also referred to as measured variables, observable variables, or manifest variables.

Single-headed arrows indicating the direction from one latent variable to another illustrate proposed causal links, such as the influence of Traditional on Brand Equity, the dependent variable in this study. These can be likened to regression coefficients. The single-headed arrows running from the latent variables to the attributes are equivalent to loadings in Factor Analysis.

The numbers adjacent the arrows are the regression coefficients and factor loadings. In SEM, regression coefficients are normally smaller than factor loadings (Shah et al., 2006).

Measurement Model – Validity and Reliability

Validity is the extent to which a particular item relates to other items consistent with theoretically derived hypotheses concerning the variables that are being measured (Borsboom et al., 2004). In this paper, exploratory factor analysis was conducted to determine the number of constructs and the loadings of items on the corresponding construct. It is to test the convergent validity and discriminant validity of latent variables. Convergent validity refers to the degree to which a measure is correlated with other measures that it is theoretically predicted to correlate with. It has been assessed by checking loadings to see whether the items measuring the same construct correlate highly among themselves. Discriminant validity describes the degree to which the operationalization does not correlate with other operationalization that it theoretically should not be correlated with. It has been assessed by checking whether the items loaded more strongly on their intended construct rather than other constructs. Furthermore, any item with a factor loading smaller than 0.35 was not considered for further analysis as it did not measure a specific construct (Shah et al., 2006).

Results and Discussion

Structural Equation Model

Table 1

Exploratory Factor Analysis Of Conceptual Model

Construct	Variables of Shelter Homes		Factor Loadings 0.856
Staying experience	Se1	Project information	0.856
	Se2	Panah Gah's information comparison	0.878
Resident control	Rc1	Communication with the management	0.734
	Rc2	Easiness to make complains	0.887
Reliability	R1	Record's accuracy	0.890
	R2	Shelter security	0.871
Responsiveness	Res1	Services delivery speed	0.705
	Res2	Staff attitude towards residents	0.841
Resident satisfaction	Rs1	Services delivery speed	0.890
	Rs2	Staff's attitude	0.856

This table shows the test of convergent validity and discriminant validity of latent variables. Convergent validity refers to the degree to which a measure is correlated with other measures that it is theoretically predicted to correlate with. It was assessed by checking loadings to see whether the items measuring the same construct correlate highly among themselves. Discriminant validity describes the degree to which the operationalization does not correlate with other operationalization that it theoretically should not be correlated with. It was assessed by checking whether the items loaded more strongly on their intended construct rather than other constructs.

Furthermore, any item with a factor loading smaller than 0.35 was not considered for further analysis as it did not measure a specific construct (Shah et al., 2006).

Table 2

Construct Correlations, Discriminant Validity, and Reliability Of Conceptual SEM

Constructs	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	Staying Experience	Resident Control	Reliability	Responsiveness	Homeless satisfaction
Staying Experience	0.798	0.8532	1				
Resident Control	0.767	0.8798	-0.009	1			
Reliability	0.854	0.7236	0.065	-0.009	1		
Responsiveness	0.776	0.776	0.6548	0.035	-0.006	0.756	1
Homeless Satisfaction	0.876	0.7897	0.256	-0.056	0.45	0.145	1

Table above shows the correlations between constructs, composite reliability, Cronbach's Alpha and the average variance (AVE) extracted of each construct. AVE is utilized to assess the discriminant validity, the square root of which should be larger than the correlations between constructs (Chin, 1998). The results showed that all items meet the requirement. The reliability or internal consistency was assessed through Cronbach's alpha coefficient and composite reliability. As suggested by Nunally (1978), a value greater than 0.70 showed good reliability for newly developed constructs. Measurement scales for all constructs were greater than 0.70, which means all of them had adequate reliability.

Table 3

Fit indices for Conceptual Model

	x^2 (df)	Normed x^2	CFI	RMSEA (% CI)	IFI
Model	54.575(35)	1.521	0.986	0.075	0.987

The proposed structural equation model was tested and the fit indices of them are shown in Table 4.20 Values in this table show that the structural equation model applied is reliable.

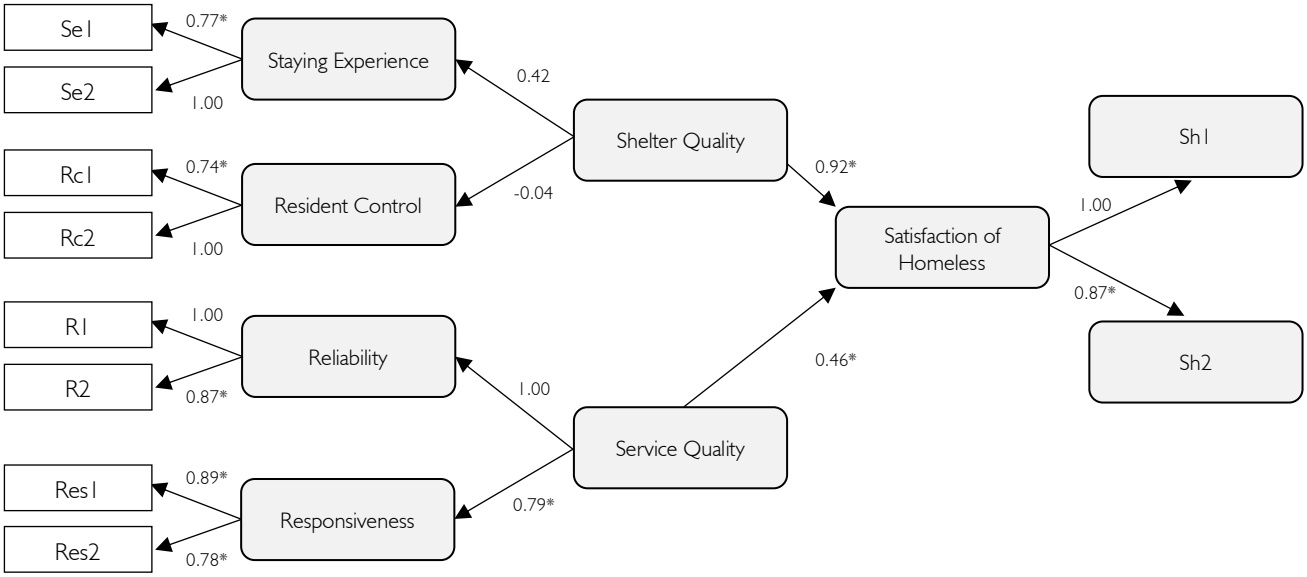
Table 4

Description of Fit indices (Source: Shah and Goldstein, 2006).

Fit index	Description	Suggested cut- off
x^2/df	Normed chi-square: chi-square divided by degree of freedom	(0.009, 5.57)
CFI	Comparative fix index compares the model fit with a baseline model	(0.97,1.00)
IFI	Incremental fix index: group of goodness of fit indices that assesses how well a specified model fits relative to some alternative baseline model	(0.98, 0.13)
RMSEA	Root means square error of approximation	(0.00, 0.20)

The above table shows description of fit indices. It reflects that chi-square, comparative fit index, incremental fit index and root mean square error of approximation are within the suggested cut-off. It shows the reliability of the model is within the limits.

Figure 2



Results for Resident Satisfaction through Structural Equation Model

Figure shows the AMOS result of the Structural Equation Model (SEM) on resident's satisfaction. Both H1 and H2 are supported by set of data. Both shelter quality and service quality are positively related to resident satisfaction. The coefficient between shelter quality and resident satisfaction is significant with a value of 0.92 ($p < 0.001$). It means that high shelter quality is strongly associated with high customer's satisfaction. The coefficient between service quality and customer satisfaction is also significant with a value of 0.46 ($p < 0.01$). This means that high service quality is also associated with high resident's satisfaction. Moreover, the second order latent variable model indicates that shelter quality is constructed only by staying experience (with a coefficient value of 0.42 and $p < 0.001$). Resident control was not supported to formulate shelter quality, with a coefficient value of 0.04. As for the service quality, both reliability and responsibility are supported to forming the shelter quality with coefficient value of 0.99 and 0.79 respectively (Shah et al., 2006).

Conclusion and Suggestions

It is concluded that among the shelter-related factors, **staying experience** emerged as a key contributor, whereas **resident control** had a negligible impact. In terms of service quality, **reliability** and **responsibility** were found to be the strongest predictors of satisfaction. These findings highlight the importance of consistent, dependable services and a dignified living environment in improving the outcomes of shelter programs for the homeless. **It is suggested to** modify shelter access policies to allow more accommodating and humane entry timings, particularly to serve individuals with irregular work hours. **Resident Feedback Mechanism** should also be introduced to regularize to monitor resident satisfaction and identify areas for improvement. It is also suggested to establish **separate spaces** for homeless women, equipped with **female staff** to ensure safety, privacy, and a supportive environment.

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