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The link between self-stigma and self-efficacy toward the reintegration process of people experiencing homelessness in Malta.



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1 Abstract

In Malta, Homelessness is a mostly invisible issue that is influenced by strong cultural values including social acceptability, family honor and religious beliefs. This causes people who live in unstable circumstances to be concealed from the public. The relationship between self-stigma and self-efficacy in the reintegration process of people experiencing homelessness in Malta is explored in this study, with particular attention to how internalized stigma affects a person's confidence in their capacity to regain stability and independence.

The internalized Stigma of Homelessness Scale (ISHS) and the General Self-Efficacy Scale (GSE) were used in a mixed-method study to gather quantitative data from 10 participants at one of YMCA Malta's shelters, Dar Niki Cassar. A moderately high mean score ($M= 3,15$, $SD=0,70$) was observed when stigma resistance was assessed independently, suggesting the presence of psychological resilience. The findings showed a strong negative correlation between self-efficacy and self-stigma, indicating that people who have higher levels of self-efficacy also generally reported lower levels of self-stigma. Overall self-efficacy scores were relatively high, raising the question of whether the invisibility of homelessness might contribute to the lower levels of self-stigma.

Three main themes emerged from the qualitative data collected from seven of the participants: (1) Social perceptions and Self-stigma, (2) Misunderstandings of homelessness, and (3) Sources of motivation and recovery. While several participants showed resistance to internalizing these prejudices, others reported feeling criticized or misunderstood. Personal strength, faith, family, career goals, and support from shelters were all motivating factors. These results imply that many of the participants maintained a strong feeling of agency even in the face of societal shame. A small, predominantly male sample and language barriers that prevented wider participation are two of the study's limitations.

Even though participants self-efficacy levels seemed higher than expected the invisibility of homelessness in Malta remains a significant barrier to systemic change. Government action is unlikely to occur in the absence of increased public awareness and knowledge of the

problem, and the required structural adjustments may never be called for. Increasing awareness of homelessness is important to achieving these changes and enhancing the long-term possibilities for people experiencing homelessness.

2 Introduction

Homelessness in Malta remains a complex and often invisible social issue that is closely linked with cultural values, social stigma and personal struggles. While the Mediterranean island is often celebrated for its strong familial ties, religious traditions, and close-knit communities, these very characteristics can also contribute to the silencing of marginalized groups (Scerri, Sammut, & Agius, 2023b; Satariano & Curtis, 2018). Although it is uncommon to see individuals sleeping on the streets, homelessness persists out of public view, hidden in abandoned structures, garages or cars (Micallef, 2019, Vakili-Zad, 2006).

During the researchers stay in Malta, they frequently encountered surprise when they mentioned their placement at a homeless shelter. Responses such as, “Homeless people in Malta?” were common in interaction with locals as well as tourists. In interaction with Maltese people, this question was often followed by another question regarding whether the people experiencing homelessness were Maltese or foreigners. When the researcher clarified that the population was approximately equally divided, locals often expressed even greater surprise. There seems to be an assumption that homelessness mainly affects non-Maltese individuals. These personal observations raise the question on how aware the society in Malta is of the situation of homelessness.

At the forefront of addressing this hidden problem is YMCA Malta, a non-governmental, non-profit Catholic organization founded in Valletta in 1976. YMCA Malta, a member of the international YMCA network, works to promote social justice and inclusivity by providing tailored support to disadvantaged and vulnerable individuals, particularly those experiencing homelessness. Through a multifaceted approach including outreach, prevention, residential support, community engagement, and aftercare services, YMCA Malta seeks to empower individuals to regain independence and reintegrate into society. Key facilities such as the Hamrun Drop-in Centre and the Dar Niki Cassar homeless shelter serve as essential pillars in their work, offering support to roughly 1200 to 1500 individuals per month (YMCA Malta, n.d.)

However, the road to reintegration is rarely straightforward. Individuals experiencing homelessness must face a complex network of emotional and psychological barriers, where

self-stigma may act as a barrier to self-efficacy, as previous studies have suggested (Corrigan, Watson, & Barr, 2006). In Malta's cultural context, where honor and family reputation are highly valued, homelessness can lead to profound social exclusion and concealment, increasing the difficulty of recovery (Satariano & Curtis, 2018; Vakili-Zad, 2006).

This study examines the relationship between self-stigma and self-efficacy in the reintegration process of people experiencing homelessness in Malta. Based on existing literature and in consideration of Malta's distinct sociocultural environment, this research aims to understand how internalized stigma impacts personal beliefs in the ability to pursue stable, independent living. The research will adopt a mixed-method approach. To answer the research question: "What is the link between self-stigma and self-efficacy in the reintegration process of people experiencing homelessness in Malta?", two main quantitative surveys will be utilized; the Internalized Stigma of Mental Illness (ISMI) scale and the General Self-Efficacy Scale (GSE). These instruments will be adapted to specifically focus on how people experiencing homelessness perceive self-stigma and self-efficacy in relation to reintegration and recovery.

The study's importance lies in its potential to further knowledge of the relationship between self-stigma, self-efficacy and recovery among people experiencing homelessness in Malta, while also estimating the presence of societal stigma in Malta.

The thesis will be structured as follows:

- Introduction: this part provides an overview of the research, including the research question, the significance of the study, and the methodology used to conduct the research.
- The organization: this part will introduce the reader to YMCA Malta, the organization central to this research, and its role in supporting people experiencing homelessness in Malta.
- Homelessness & stigma in Malta: this part will provide an in-depth background on homelessness and stigma in Malta, discussing cultural and societal factors that shape the experience of homelessness on the island.

- Literature study: the researcher reviews the relevant literature on the intersections of homelessness, self-stigma, and self-efficacy, with unique challenges faced by people experiencing homelessness in Malta.
- The interculturality of homelessness: the research will include an exploration of homelessness in other countries like Hungary, America and Germany, comparing the situation in Malta with global perspectives.
- Methodology: this part outlines the research design, including the mixed method approach, the quantitative instruments (ISMI and GSE scales), the three additional qualitative questions, and the data collection procedures.
- Results: the findings from the quantitative surveys and qualitative responses will be presented.
- Discussion: the findings from the results are interpreted, considering the implications for people experiencing homelessness, the role of stigma and the reintegration process. This part also discusses potential strategies for addressing the issues identified through the research and mentions potential limitations to the study.
- Conclusion: this final part summarizes the key findings of the study and offers recommendations for future research.

3 YMCA Malta

YMCA Malta, established in 1976 in Valletta, is a non-governmental, non-profit, catholic organization committed to fostering a fair and inclusive society. As part of the global YMCA network, their mission is to provide support to disadvantaged and vulnerable individuals, with a primary focus on addressing homelessness in Malta. They aim to help individuals regain independence through various forms of assistance and reintegration programs (YMCA Malta, n.d.).

Their efforts include outreach, prevention, residential support, community involvement, and aftercare services. The Hamrun Drop-in Centre serves as a crucial hub, assisting approximately 1200 to 1500 individuals monthly by addressing their immediate needs and providing guidance (YMCA Malta, n.d.).

In the YMCA's DNC shelter, individuals of all genders between the age range of 0 to 69 are welcomed. At Dar Niki Cassar, residents including families can stay for up to 1,5 years while receiving guidance toward independent living. To receive this maximum amount of guidance in the shelter, the individual must adhere to the care plan. This means that they are actively seeking housing opportunities and looking for a job, and therefore an income. Additionally, people with an addiction must provide proof that they have followed a program. At the Dar Niki Cassar shelter, each resident is assigned to work with a Social Support Mentor who helps them transition into independent living. After their stay at the shelter, these people can still get support from the Drop-in Center as well as the aftercare services mentioned above (Z., Bernath, personal communication, May 1, 2024).

The YMCA team consists of professionals, including psychotherapists, social workers, youth workers, psychologists, and counselors. Their interventions are multifaceted and tailored to individual needs, circumstances and available resources (Z., Bernath, personal communication, May 1, 2024). YMCA Malta is also committed to inclusivity and ensures that their services are accessible to all, regardless of factors such as age, gender, ethnicity, nationality, religion, sexual orientation or political beliefs. They also engage in partnerships

with government entities, religious organizations and private sectors to maximize their impact within the community (YMCA Malta, n.d.).

By fostering spiritual, intellectual, social and physical well-being, YMCA Malta continues to make a significant difference in the lives of those in need, advocating for social justice and empowering individuals to lead better lives (YMCA Malta, n.d.).

4 Homelessness & stigma in Malta

Homelessness is not solely defined by the absence of shelter or a permanent residence but involves deprivation in multiple areas. These include physical discomfort or lack of warmth (psychological), absence of love or joy (emotional), lack of personal space or privacy (territorial), a sense of disconnection or rootlessness in the world (sense of belonging), and a loss of hope or purpose (spiritual) (Thomas & Dittmar, 1995 as cited in Somerville, 2013). This shows that homelessness goes beyond merely lacking physical shelter.

The simplest definition of homelessness is being without a roof over one's head, but it also includes those in homeless shelters, individuals with insecure housing and those at risk of losing their homes (Pickvance, 2003 as cited in Mifsud, 2009). Homelessness is both a personal experience and a concept shaped by the perceptions of others, such as policymakers, scholars, and the public (Somerville, 2013). Although financial instability was once the primary risk factor for homelessness, nowadays, a mix of personal and institutional factors can lead to the loss of housing. These factors include housing costs, one's mental and physical health, nationality, domestic violence or unstable employment. This suggests that the intersection of individual challenges with broader socio-economic shifts is fueling the rise in homelessness (as cited in Attard, 2023).

European scholars are also rethinking homelessness, framing it because of overlapping social issues while recognizing individual agency and decision making. This approach balances structural and personal factors, but offers a more detailed understanding, acknowledging that homelessness arises not from a single cause but from clusters of shared experience and trajectories (Pleace, 2016 as cited in Attard, 2023).

Malta's central location in the Mediterranean Sea and its history of governance by Arabic, Central and Southern European powers have influenced its evolution into the nation it is today, with Mediterranean values deeply ingrained. Key aspects of this culture, such as family support, honor, religion, shame and strong family bonds play a significant role in shaping overall wellbeing (Scerri et al., 2023b). In Mediterranean societies, honor plays a crucial role in shaping social interactions within neighborhoods. Pitt-Rivers (1966, p. 21) defines honor as "the value of a person in his eyes, but also in the eyes of society. It is the estimation of his

own worth, his claim to pride.” Thus, an individual's sense of honor is closely tied to the societal norms and expectations of their community. Conversely, falling short of these expectations can lead to shame, which stands as the opposite of honor. A social process closely linked to shame is stigma (Satariano & Curtis, 2018). The link between Maltese cultural and societal norms and public attitudes toward mental health raises concerns, especially in efforts to reduce stigmatizing behaviors (Scerri et al., 2023b). Malta is well-known for its tightly knit and intimate social and cultural context, where everyone knows one another. Kinship ties and patronage heavily influence relationships, contributing to the unique nature of shame and stigma associated with homelessness within this context (Attard, 2023).

The situation of homelessness in Malta is different from other countries where the homeless are visibly sleeping on the streets, in gardens and on doorsteps. In Malta it is rare to see people sleeping in the streets. Still, the YMCA Malta and other organizations working in the social sector are aware that homelessness is on the increase. However, Malta still does not have official statistics showing how many individuals and families are homeless. The existing numbers do not portray the severity of the situation (YMCA Malta, 2022). This reduced visibility may be attributed to the island's small size, where social familiarity and the cultural emphasis on homeownership can create a sense of shame for those sleeping rough (Micallef, 2019).

Social problems are the main cause of homelessness in Malta. These include domestic violence, difficult childhood experiences, childhood homelessness (such as out-of-home placements and others), dysfunctional marriages, the loss of loved ones (such as parents), unhealthy family relationships, financial debt, addiction (either personal or within the family), mental health challenges and the lack of stable housing after leaving care (Mifsud, 2009 as cited in Micallef, 2019). These factors not only increase the likelihood of homelessness but also extend its duration. Research underscores the critical role of immediate family in offering support and stability in Maltese society (as cited in Micallef, 2019). Consequently, the lack of family support appears to be a major risk factor for homelessness, as strong family ties and supportive networks are vital for breaking free from homelessness. Evidence shows that many people experiencing homelessness in Malta either lack or have lost these essential support systems (as cited in Micallef, 2019).

The public in Malta shares the belief that homelessness is not an issue in the country. The problem remains concealed behind the strong family ties, community cohesion and the perceived benevolence of the state (Vakili-Zad, 2006). In the context of the sociology of knowledge, it could be understood why the Maltese might deny the existence of homelessness, as it contradicts their ideal social “reality” which is shaped by Catholic social teachings, especially the principle of “subsidiarity”. It also challenges the idealization of Maltese generosity and a protective state. Maltese scholars often describe Malta as a united community, where people are always ready to help each other in times of need (as cited in Vakili-Zad, 2006). While homelessness is often regarded as a “hidden” social issue, primarily because it is difficult to quantify and assess, in Malta it is deliberately concealed to avoid shame. Social stigma and the fear of encountering acquaintances often lead people experiencing homelessness to live as squatters in places like WWII bomb shelters, garages or cars (YMCA, 2002 as cited in Vakili-Zad, 2006). Chelimsky (1991) highlights that when there is fear or shame associated with a certain characteristic, the urge to conceal it becomes stronger (as cited in Vakili-Zad, 2006). Ironically, the fact that homelessness is hidden makes it easier for the government to overlook the issue. This creates a dilemma because to survive, the homeless in Malta must remain ‘hidden’, which at the same time allows authorities to deny that homelessness even exists (Vakili-Zad, 2006).

5 Literature review

This study will answer the question: “What is the link between self-stigma and self-efficacy in the reintegration process of people experiencing homelessness in Malta?”. To gain a deeper understanding of the research question, it will be addressed through a set of sub-questions that aim to define the key concepts. These sub-questions break down the main question into more manageable, targeted studies, which will be integrated into the methodology.

5.1 What is self-efficacy?

Self-efficacy is a concept that refers to an individual’s perception of their ability to successfully accomplish a task in a specific situation. It can be defined as a person’s judgement of their capability to structure and carry out courses of action required to attain appointed types of performances (Bandura, 1986 as cited in Waddington, 2023). Self-efficacy is based on beliefs about one’s perceived ability or inability to perform a task, rather than on actual performance or abilities (as cited in Waddington, 2023).

To understand how self-efficacy beliefs develop, Bandura (1977, 1997) identified four key sources:

- a. Mastery experiences: an individual’s recollection of their own past achievements in similar tasks
- b. Vicarious experiences: observing or hearing about the successes of others
- c. Verbal persuasion: feedback or encouragement from others
- d. Psychological and affective states: how a person interprets psychical and emotional responses to a situation

Strong self-efficacy beliefs can motivate individuals to tackle challenges and remain focused on their goals, while weak beliefs can lead to avoidance behaviors and negative emotions, negatively impacting both performance and overall well-being (as cited in Waddington, 2023).

Social cognitive theorists argue that self-efficacy beliefs play a crucial role in emotional regulation. These beliefs influence thoughts and behaviors in ways that help individuals select and apply effective strategies to manage their emotions (Bandura, 1997 as cited in Caprara et

al., 2022). There is substantial evidence demonstrating how beliefs about one's ability to regulate negative emotions and express positive emotions impact various aspects of successful development and social adaptation (as cited in Caprara et al., 2022). For instance, studies have shown that confidence in managing negative emotions can reduce depression and delinquency while promoting life satisfaction (Caprara et al., 2020 as cited in Caprara et al., 2022). Similarly, belief in one's ability to express positive emotions is linked to higher self-esteem, optimism, prosocial behaviors, emotional stability, happiness, and contentment in daily life (as cited in Caprara et al., 2022). Numerous studies have highlighted how greater emotional self-efficacy is associated with better well-being across various age groups (Busseri, 2018 as cited in Caprara et al., 2022), as well as successful adaptation (as cited in Caprara et al., 2022).

5.2 How does self-efficacy affect the reintegration process of people experiencing homelessness?

Homelessness significantly impacts individuals' sense of independence and self-efficacy, as both are often eroded by the systemic challenges of their situation (Rivlin & Moore, 2001, as cited in Welsh et al., 2018). People experiencing homelessness with higher self-efficacy demonstrate a greater effort toward housing and employment and show lower rates of depression (Epel et al., 1999 as cited in Welsh et al., 2018). The findings of the Shier, Jones, & Graham (2010) study clearly indicate that increased self-efficacy helps reduce the factors contributing to homelessness. A strong belief in one's own abilities and resources fosters greater motivation to work towards a positive future as defined by the individual. This self-confidence is crucial for achieving goals and making meaningful changes. In contrast, individuals who lack trust in their capacity to influence events tend to have little motivation to plan for the future or set long-term objectives. They are more likely to adopt a fatalistic view of their daily lives. Research by Epel, Bandura, and Zimbardo (1999) further supports this, showing that people experiencing homelessness with higher self-efficacy are more proactive in seeking housing and employment, spend less time in shelters, and are less likely to delay acting while residing in a shelter. Conversely, those with lower self-efficacy often find reasons to extend their stay in a shelter (Mikulec et al., 2019).

5.3 What is stigma?

Stigma refers to a mark, condition or status that society devalues or looks down on (Goffman 1963, Hinshaw 2006, Sartorius 2007, as cited in Pescosolido & Martin, 2015). Stigmatization, on the other hand, is the social process through which this mark influences the lives of those it belongs to. Both stigma and stigmatization rely on four fundamental components (Link & Phelan 2001, as cited in Pescosolido & Martin, 2015):

- a. Distinguishing and labeling differences
- b. Associating human differences with negative attributions or stereotypes
- c. Separating “us” from “them”
- d. Experiencing status loss and discrimination

(a) Distinguishing and labeling differences & (b) Associating human differences with negative attributions or stereotypes

This paragraph discusses the first and second components. A social selection of human differences needs to be present for there to be stigma. The differences perceived as relevant or significant are labeled and tend to be linked to stereotypes. For example, if we see four drunken homeless men, we tend to link homelessness to alcohol abuse. It is worth noting that some labeled differences are linked to positive stereotypes. These are not a part of stigma (Andersen et al., 2022).

(c) Separating “us” from “them”

The third component of stigma involves using a label to establish a distinction between “us” and “them”. The linking of labels to undesirable features becomes a reason for believing that negatively labeled persons are fundamentally different from those who don’t share the label (Link & Phelan, 2001, as cited in Andersen et al., 2022). The bearers of the label are thought to “be” the thing they are labeled (Estroff, 1989, as cited in Andersen et al., 2022). For example, one may speak of “schizophrenics” rather than describing them as having schizophrenia. This “naming” creates a basis for separating the stigmatization from others (Andersen et al., 2022).

(d) Experiencing status loss and discrimination

The last component combines status loss and discrimination. Status loss occurs when negative labeling and stereotyping result in a person's lower placement within societal hierarchies, based on socially significant differences like weight or income (Link & Phelan, 2001, as cited in Andersen et al., 2022). However, this status loss is not always a guaranteed outcome. For instance, an individual may experience status loss in one area while gaining it in another, which complicates the idea that status loss is always a necessary consequence of stigma. The second part of this component, namely discrimination, occurs when stigmatized individuals are treated differently based on their label (Andersen et al., 2022).

5.4 What is self-stigma?

Self-stigma arises within the framework of public stigma, which refers to society's reactions toward individuals based on specific traits and includes three elements: stereotypes, prejudice, and discrimination (as cited in Bathje & Marston, 2014). In this sense, stigma can be understood as a form of prejudice. Self-stigmatization is the process by which an individual recognizes public stigma, accepts the associated stereotypes, and internalizes them, applying these views to themselves (Corrigan, Larson, & Kuwabara, 2010, as cited in Bathje & Marston, 2014).

The effects of self-stigma include reduced self-esteem, decreased self-efficacy, and lower confidence in one's future (Corrigan, 1998, as cited in Bathje & Marston, 2014). Other typical manifestations of self-stigma involve experiencing shame, avoiding social interactions, and hesitating to pursue employment or other legitimate opportunities in life (as cited in Tucker, Hammer, Vogel, Bitman, & Wade, 2013). Discrimination in the workplace and during job searches leads to feelings of shame and self-stigma among people experiencing homelessness. This often results in discouragement and hopelessness when attempting to find employment. Consequently, these individuals may feel compelled to change their appearance for interviews or become reluctant to pursue job opportunities and submit applications (Canham et al., 2024).

5.5 How does self-stigma influence self-efficacy?

The influence of self-stigma extends to self-esteem, psychological well-being, and self-efficacy, which in turn affects behavioral objectives. Studies indicate that self-stigma can hinder adherence to evidence-based interventions (as cited in Corrigan et al., 2006). Additionally, self-stigma may obstruct efforts to achieve rehabilitation goals, such as living independently or securing competitive employment. For instance, a study by Link (1982) revealed that individuals with reduced self-efficacy due to self-stigma were less inclined to seek employment or independent living. Participants in the study had internalized stigma, believing they were incapable of working or living outside institutional settings. Furthermore, low self-efficacy and self-esteem are linked to difficulties in establishing social networks for leisure activities (Perlick et al., 2001, as cited in Corrigan et al., 2006).

5.6 How do individuals experiencing homelessness relate to or resist stigma?

When talking about the stigmatization of people experiencing homelessness, it is important to make a distinction between two groups: one group embraces the homeless identity, and one resists it (M., Quattromani, personal communication, December 18, 2024).

Some people who experience homelessness adopt the homeless identity as part of their self-concept. This often occurs after spending prolonged periods on the streets, where the homeless identity becomes a dominant feature of their social and personal identity. Snow and Anderson's (1987) research suggests that people who are homeless for longer periods tend to embrace this identity, which then influences their interactions with others and their self-esteem. For these individuals, social ties with other homeless people become stronger, as they develop habits that are aligned with their status as homeless, such as helping others who are homeless or maintaining sobriety. These actions, alongside acceptance of the homeless identity, can lead to a more positive self-view despite the stigma associated with homelessness (Snow & Anderson, 1987, as cited in Parker, 2012). This embrace of the homeless identity helps to foster a sense of belonging and meaning, which supports their psychological well-being (Parker, 2012).

On the other hand, individuals who resist identifying as homeless often do so to maintain a sense of self-worth and dignity. Snow and Anderson (1987) found that those who are

homeless for a shorter period are more likely to distance themselves from this identity. This distancing can take several forms, including associational distancing, where individuals reject the company of other homeless people. There's also role distancing, where they reject the label of being homeless altogether. These individuals often cling to a more positive self-concept by avoiding behaviors and associations that would reinforce the homeless identity, such as distancing themselves from homeless service organizations or resisting stereotypical behaviors associated with homelessness (Snow & Anderson, 1987, as cited in Parker, 2012).

The factors influencing these identity patterns include personal history, social connections, and the length of time spent in homelessness. For example, individuals with little family support or those who have spent extensive periods without stable housing are more likely to adopt the homeless identity as a central aspect of their self-concept. This identity is more likely to be linked with low self-esteem and a diminished sense of self-efficacy (Snow & Anderson, 1987, as cited in Parker, 2012). On the contrary, those who resist adopting the homeless identity may attempt to maintain their pre-homeless identities or pursue other strategies that reinforce their self-worth (Parker, 2012).

Ultimately, as Snow and Anderson (1987) suggest, the homeless identity is not fixed but rather evolves over time based on experiences and personal choices. Those who embrace it are often more entrenched in their situation, while those who distance themselves continue to strive for a different, more stable self-concept. This dynamic process of identity construction highlights the psychological challenges that people face and how their sense of self fluctuates with their lived experiences on the streets (Parker, 2012).

6 The interculturality of Homelessness

Homelessness is a widespread problem that affects both developed and developing countries (Bakar et al., 2024).

In Hungary, homelessness reflects the crisis the country has faced since the fall of communism, a problem it has struggled to address. Support institutions are overwhelmed by the scale of the issue and must operate under a largely uncooperative government. Cultural factors such as pessimism, a strong need for certainty, and widespread feelings of insecurity and mistrust contribute to prejudicial attitudes (as cited in Ertl, 2017). Udvarhelyi (2014) argues that the insecurity resulting from this crisis fosters negative perceptions of the homeless. According to the theories of prejudice, people experiencing homelessness are often seen as a societal threat, triggering collective negative emotions. Many people are unaware that there are not enough shelters to house all the homeless (Hajléktalanokért, 2012, as cited in Ertl, 2017) and that, despite their willingness to work, securing employment is nearly impossible without stable housing and income (Breitner et al., 2010, as cited in Ertl, 2017). Initially, there was a widespread sympathy for the homeless when mass homelessness emerged in the 1990s. However, over time, “compassion fatigue” took hold, leading to growing public frustration and fear being directed at them. Today, people experiencing homelessness face arrests and fines for activities such as begging, searching through trash, or sleeping in public spaces. Politicians and the media often portray them as dangerous (Udvarhelyi, 2014, as cited in Ertl, 2017), or as an unsightly presence that disrupts the urban landscape. Efforts are continuously made to remove them from public spaces in the capital (as cited in Ertl, 2017). People often underestimate the challenges of homelessness, mistakenly believing it is a personal choice. Even those who empathize with the homeless may see political leaders avoiding any public association with the issue of maintaining voter approval. Additionally, authority figures may discriminate against people experiencing homelessness simply to conform to job expectations (The City is for All, 2013, as cited in Ertl, 2017). Overall, politicians, government policies, media portrayals, and public misconceptions reinforce one another, perpetuating a harmful societal norm. However, just as a negative cycle exists, a positive societal norm (such as those seen in Scandinavian countries) could

create a self-reinforcing system of support and inclusion (Lasen & Dejgaard, 2013, as cited in Ertl, 2017).

People experiencing homelessness in the USA fare better than those in Hungary, but they still face criminalization in some cities (NLCHP, 2014, as cited in Ertl, 2017). Public attitudes toward them are ambivalent, with both sympathy and resentment present (as cited in Ertl, 2017). American values emphasizing individual rights, freedom, and personal responsibility contribute to the belief that while the homeless deserve some support, they are ultimately responsible for their situation and should be relocated if disruptive (as cited in Ertl, 2017). Some argue that the homeless receive more sympathy than the poor due to media portrayal (Guzewicz & Takooshian, 1992, as cited in Ertl, 2017), while others suggest they face more stigma due to their visibility and associations with other marginalized groups (Phelan et al., 1997). Research also has shown that attitudes towards the homeless are generally less compassionate in the USA compared to several European countries, though a large majority of people in all countries are willing to pay higher taxes to support them (Toro et al., 2007 as cited in Ertl, 2017).

In a comparison between the USA and Germany, Tompsett et al. (2003) rejected the notion of compassion fatigue in the USA, acknowledging that Americans are more compassionate and informed than typically assumed. However, they still found Germans to be more compassionate than Americans. The authors suggested that the difference could be attributed to Germany's stronger emphasis on social harmony and a more extensive welfare system compared to the USA, where the value of self-reliant individualism prevails. In Germany, the universal right to state assistance reduces concerns over who deserves aid (as cited in Ertl, 2017). Additionally, Germans might encounter more empathetic depictions of homelessness in popular media compared to Americans, possibly because German media presents people experiencing homelessness as victims of uncontrollable circumstances more frequently. Moreover, cultural differences, such as Germany's more collectivist values versus the United States' emphasis on individualism, could influence how each country's citizens perceive and form attitudes toward marginalized groups (Bagozzi & Lee, 2002 as cited in Tompsett et al., 2003).

7 Methodology

7.1 Research design

This study will adopt a mixed-method approach to explore the relationship between self-stigma and self-efficacy in the reintegration process of people experiencing homelessness in Malta. To answer the research question, two main quantitative surveys will be utilized: the internalized Stigma of Mental Illness (ISMI) scale (Ritsher & University of California, San Francisco, z.d.) and the General Self-efficacy Scale (GSE) (Schwarzer & Jerusalem, 1995). These instruments will be adapted to specifically focus on the experiences of people experiencing homelessness and their perceptions of self-stigma and self-efficacy in the context of reintegration and recovery.

The ISMI scale will be titled ISHS (Internalized Stigma of Homelessness Scale). The scale includes four subscales: Alienation, stereotype Endorsement, Perceived Discrimination, and Social Withdrawal. Each subscale captures a different aspect of internalized stigma, and higher scores indicate higher levels of self-stigma. The Stigma Resistance subscale reflects individuals' ability to maintain a positive self-image despite the stigma they face. In the survey distributed to participants, the questions from the ISHS scale will be deliberately presented in a randomized order, rather than grouped according to the original subscales. This will be done to reduce response bias and minimize the likelihood of participants detecting patterns in the questionnaire, thereby encouraging more honest and spontaneous responses.

The General Self-Efficacy Scale will be adopted to focus on the self-efficacy beliefs of people experiencing homelessness, specifically in relation to their ability to recover and reintegrate into society. This adapted version will examine their confidence in overcoming barriers and achieving personal goals related to housing, employment, and social inclusion.

The full versions of the General Self-Efficacy Scale (GSE) and the Internalized Stigma of Homelessness Scale (ISHS) can be found in Appendix A and Appendix B.

The research will collect quantitative data through these two surveys, which will be administered to a sample of people experiencing homelessness in Malta. Data analysis will aim to explore correlations between the levels of self-stigma and self-efficacy, and how these factors may influence the recovery and reintegration process.

7.2 Participants and Sampling

Participants were recruited from Dar Niki Cassar, a homeless shelter located in Msida, Malta. The sample consisted of 10 people who are experiencing homelessness and met the inclusion criteria:

- Currently experiencing homelessness or residing in a shelter
- Aged 18 and above
- Able to provide informed consent

A convenience sampling method was used due to the accessibility of participants through the shelter's services. Participation was voluntary.

7.3 Data Collection Procedure

The surveys will be administered in person at the shelter in a quiet and comfortable setting to ensure that participants feel at ease while completing the questionnaire. If needed, a trusted Maltese staff member will be present to assist with translation for participants who prefer to respond in Maltese. However, the survey has already been simplified into basic, easily understandable English to accommodate the participants' literacy levels.

Participants will have the opportunity to ask questions or request clarification if needed. Assistance will be provided to those who require help reading or understanding the survey items.

To protect participant privacy, they will be given the option to remain anonymous if they do not wish to disclose their identity. No personally identifiable information will be collected unless the participant voluntarily provides it. Participants will also be informed that their responses will be kept confidential and used solely for research purposes.

Before completing the survey, each participant will be asked to provide informed consent, ensuring that they understand the purpose of the study, their rights, and the voluntary nature of their participation.

In addition to the quantitative surveys measuring self-efficacy and internalized stigma, there will be a few open-ended qualitative questions to gather more in-depth insights into the participants' personal experiences, particularly regarding societal stigma and its influence on their self-perception. These questions aim to explore participants' views of how society perceives homelessness and how this affects their own sense of self-worth, motivation, and hope in the recovery process.

The qualitative questions will include:

- How do you feel that society views homeless individuals, and how does this affect the way you see yourself?
- What gives you hope or motivation to move forward in your recovery process?
- What do you wish people understood about experiencing homelessness?

The responses will be analyzed using thematic analysis, following Braun and Clarke's (2006) approach. The analysis will involve reading responses multiple times, generating initial codes, and grouping them into broader themes. Attention will be given to both content and context to ensure the meaning is preserved. Thematic analysis will help highlight shared experiences while capturing individual differences in how participants understand stigma, identity, and recovery.

7.4 Data analysis

The collected data will be analyzed using quantitative statistical methods to examine the relationship between self-stigma and self-efficacy among people experiencing homelessness in Malta. Since the survey responses are based on a Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 4 = Strongly Agree), the data will be treated as ordinal.

7.4.1 Descriptive Statistics

First, descriptive statistics will be used to summarize the data, such as mean (M) and standard deviation (SD) for ISHS and GSE scores to assess overall trends in self-stigma and self-efficacy levels.

7.4.2 Correlation Analysis

To examine the relationship between self-stigma and self-efficacy, Spearman's rank correlation coefficient (ρ) will be used. Spearman's correlation is appropriate because the data is ordinal and may not be normally distributed. This analysis will indicate:

- Whether there is a negative correlation (higher self-stigma is associated with lower self-efficacy)
- The strength of the relationship (weak, moderate, or strong correlation)

7.4.3 Interpreting the Relationship

If a negative correlation is found, it suggests that higher self-stigma is associated with lower self-efficacy, meaning that individuals who feel more stigmatized may have less confidence in their ability to recover and reintegrate into society. If a strong correlation is detected, interventions aimed at reducing self-stigma could potentially improve self-efficacy and support the recovery process.

8 Results

This section will present the findings of the study with the data collected. Descriptive statistics will summarize participants' responses to the ISMI and GSE scales, followed by correlation to examine the relationship between self-stigma and self-efficacy. The qualitative data will consist of three open-ended questions regarding the subject.

8.1 Quantitative data

This sample consisted of 10 participants (7 males, 3 females) with ages ranging from 26 to 58 years ($M = 39,6$, $SD = 11,3$). The time participants had spent in Malta ranged from 6 months to lifelong residency, and the duration of homelessness varied from less than 6 months to more than 3 years.

For each participant, a composite score for the General Self-Efficacy (GSE) scale was calculated by averaging their responses to the 10 GSE items (all rated 1–4). Similarly, a composite score for the Internalized Stigma of Homelessness Scale (ISHS) was calculated by averaging 25 ISHS items (also rated 1–4), excluding the stigma resistance items as they represent resilience rather than internalized stigma. This approach ensures that both scales are on the same metric, regardless of the number of items, and makes them directly comparable for correlation analysis.

Participant	GSE	SS
1	3	2,38
2	2,6	3,14
3	4	1,85
4	3,4	2,00
5	3,7	1,47
6	3,5	1,70
7	3,2	2,61
8	3,6	1,70
9	4	1,57
10	3,8	1,47

The mean self-efficacy score was 3.48 (SD = 0,45), and the mean self-stigma score was 1.99 (SD = 0,54).

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation
Self-efficacy	3,48	0,45
Self-Stigma	1,99	0,54

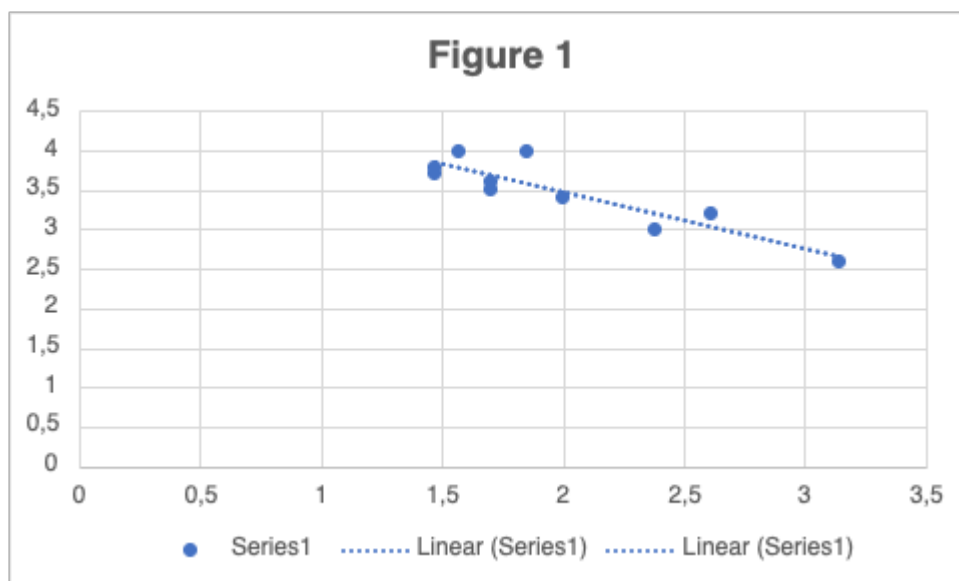
Spearman's rank correlation coefficient was chosen for this analysis because the variables under investigation, levels of self-stigma and self-efficacy, were measured using ordinal Likert-type scales. Additionally, preliminary inspection of the data suggested that the assumptions required for parametric tests (such as Pearson's correlation) were not fully met, particularly with regard to normality. Spearman's method is therefore more appropriate for identifying potential monotonic relationships in small or non-normally distributed datasets.

Participant	GSE Rank	SS Rank	d	d ²
1	2	8	-6	36
2	1	10	-9	81
3	9,5	6	3,5	12,25
4	4	7	-3	9
5	7	1,5	5,5	30,25
6	5	4,5	0,5	0,25
7	3	9	-6	36
8	6	4,5	1,5	2,25
9	9.5	3	6,5	42,25
10	8	1,5	6,5	42,25

The result yielded a correlation coefficient of $R_s = -0,767$ based on a sample of 10 participants (Song & Park, 2020). This value indicates a strong negative correlation, suggesting that higher levels of self-stigma are strongly associated with lower levels of self-efficacy. When compared against the critical value for significance at the 5% significance level ($\alpha=0.05\alpha$), which is

± 0.564 for $n=10$ (Gauthier, 2001), this correlation exceeds the threshold, indicating that the relationship is statistically significant. This finding supports the hypothesis that internalized stigma negatively impacts individuals' confidence in their ability to manage their reintegration process.

A scatterplot of self-stigma and self-efficacy scores is presented in Figure 1. The plot displays a clear downward trend, consistent with the strong negative association observed. While the trend is visible, the data points show some variability, and the relationship is not perfectly linear. No extreme outliers are apparent, although most participants cluster around higher self-efficacy and lower self-stigma scores, which may reflect shared experiences or characteristics within this sample. The fitted trend line visually reinforces negative correlation. However, the limited sample size ($n=10$) should be considered when generalizing these results, and further research with larger samples is recommended to confirm these findings.



In addition to the self-stigma items, the Internalized Stigma of Homelessness Scale (ISHS) includes a subscale comprising four items designed to assess stigma resistance, the individual's ability to reject or remain unaffected by stigmatizing attitudes. Although these items were excluded from the composite self-stigma score due to their conceptual distinction, they were analyzed separately to provide further insight into participants' resilience. The

stigma resistance scores ranged from 1.75 to 4.00, with a mean of 3.15 and a standard deviation of 0.70, suggesting a generally moderate to high level of stigma resistance among participants. This result may reflect underlying protective attitudes that could play a role in supporting psychological resilience or recovery, despite the presence of internalized stigma. Further research could investigate the interaction between stigma resistance and other recovery-related factors such as self-efficacy and service engagement.

8.2 Qualitative data

To better understand the lived experiences of people experiencing homelessness in Malta, the 10 participants were asked open-ended questions regarding self-stigma, societal perception and sources of self-efficacy and motivation in their recovery journey. Seven participants completed the three questions. Thematic analysis revealed three overarching themes: (1) Social Perceptions and Stigma, (2) Misunderstandings of Homelessness, and (3) sources of hope and motivation.

Quotes have been lightly edited for grammar and clarity, without altering meaning, in order to improve readability.

8.2.1 Theme 1: Social perceptions and self-stigma

(Related to Q1: "How do you feel that society views homeless individuals, and how does it affect the way you see yourself?")

Participants expressed that societal views toward the homeless include negative stereotypes, which sometimes affect how they view themselves. Some felt judged or devalued by others, though not all internalized these views.

"Normal I guess, but when looking at myself it makes me feel uncomfortable because of that certain stereotype." (Participant 1)

"I feel bad when society views homeless individuals as "bad" or when they say it is their fault, because everyone can end up homeless." (Participant 4)

"It doesn't affect me, but sometimes people who are though make me feel like I am nothing." (Participant 6)

Others explicitly resisted internalizing societal judgments:

“Some people think negatively about homeless people, assuming that they ended up homeless because they are criminals, drunk or lazy people. This doesn’t affect how I see myself, as I know that the reason I became homeless was out of my control.” (Participant 10)

8.2.2 Theme 2: Misunderstandings of homelessness

(Related to Q2: “What do you wish people understood about experiencing homelessness?”)

A recurring theme was the desire for the public to understand the complexity and emotional weight of homelessness. Several participants wished people would see beyond surface-level assumptions.

“That everyone can end up in this situation (...) people that experience homelessness are not happy with their situation” (Participant 4)

“I wish they put their feet in our shoes and experience what we are suffering from because it’s not easy to go through.” (Participant 6)

“It’s not a disease or description of a person (...).” (Participant 9)

One participant highlighted the importance of direct contact and volunteering to bridge the understanding gap:

“I wish that people volunteered more with homeless people, so that they can understand our lived realities, and hopefully this would make them understand that homeless people are not inferior to them.” (Participant 10)

8.2.3 Theme 3: Sources of motivation and recovery

(Related to Q3: “What gives you the hope or motivation to move forward in your recovery process?”)

Participants shared various sources of self-efficacy and motivation. These included personal values, family, spiritual beliefs, work, and the support received from the YMCA shelter.

"(..) I believe if I keep moving forward with work, I can afford rent." (Participant 1)

"To be positive and never lose hope. Self-determination is very important." (Participant 3)

"My job, my kids (...) my mental strength. I am fully focusing on priorities and reaching the goals." (Participant 5)

Others drew strength from their faith or the support system around them:

"Being one with God." (Participant 3)

"I have all the support and opportunities to start a life I love (...)" (Participant 9)

These findings illustrate that while societal stigma is present, many individuals retain a strong sense of self-worth and find motivation through internal and external sources. Participants expressed a clear need for greater public empathy and understanding, as well as recognition that homelessness is not a defining or individual failure.

9 Conclusion

This thesis investigated the link between self-stigma and self-efficacy in the reintegration process of people experiencing homelessness in Malta, a context where homelessness is often concealed and cultural values around family honor and reputation influence both public perception and personal experience. While prior research and social narratives frequently emphasize the undermining effects of self-stigma, the findings of this study reveal a more hopeful and nuanced reality.

The quantitative results demonstrate that, although self-stigma is present among participants, levels of self-efficacy are notably higher. This suggests that many individuals experiencing homelessness in Malta maintain a strong belief in their capacity to overcome adversity and work toward reintegration, despite the internal and external challenges they face. The strong negative correlation found between self-stigma and self-efficacy indicates that these two factors are closely linked: individuals with higher self-efficacy tend to report lower self-stigma, and vice versa. However, this relationship does not imply causation. Self-stigma does not necessarily cause a reduction in self-efficacy, nor does one factor inevitably undermine the other in every case.

Qualitative insights further illuminate this dynamic. While participants described the pain of social exclusion and the weight of societal misconceptions, particularly in a culture where homelessness is often misunderstood or rendered invisible, they also mentioned powerful sources of motivation. Support from organizations like YMCA Malta, personal resilience, and the desire to reunite with family or regain independence emerged as critical drivers of recovery. These factors not only buffer the effects of stigma but actively foster a sense of agency and hope.

In conclusion, this study does not deny the impact self-stigma can have on recovery but rather adds nuance by highlighting how its presence and intensity may depend on cultural and societal context. Even though the participants showed resilience, visibility and acknowledgment are necessary for long-term improvement.

10 Discussion

This study set out expecting to find evidence of internalized stigma among individuals experiencing homelessness in Malta. However, what emerged was quite the opposite: participants displayed relatively high levels of self-efficacy and did not strongly internalize negative social narratives. One possible explanation lies in the relative invisibility of homelessness in Malta, unlike in the United States, Hungary or even Germany where public visibility has often led to increased stereotyping, criminalization and social distancing (Ertl, 2017; Tompsett et al., 2003). The lack of representation may have paradoxically protected individuals from intense societal stigma. While this does not imply the absence of stigma entirely (as participants still faced barriers and judgment), it may suggest a less internalized form of stigma, in part because Maltese society has not constructed a strong public “homeless identity” through media, policy or language. The structural silence surrounding homelessness may in that sense reduce exposure to stigmatizing narratives, although it may also limit advocacy and awareness.

In contrast, Hungarian and American contexts are characterized by strong visibility, often linked to criminalization or welfare debates, which intensifies public stereotyping. In Germany, where social support systems are more integrated and inclusive, visibility is paired with less moral judgment, but the stigma remains present in subtle ways. Malta’s case appears unique, with invisibility on the one hand, without full social integration on the other.

It is important to interpret these findings considering several limitations. The sample size was small, primarily because of the specific composition in the shelter: five residents were children, and a significant proportion of the adult residents were non-Maltese nationals with a limited ability to speak and understand English. This linguistic barrier made it difficult to conduct interviews or distribute surveys effectively. As a result, the participants included in this study may not be fully representative of the broader homeless population in Malta.

Additionally, three of the participants were Maltese who lacked fluency in English. They were assisted by Maltese shelter staff who translated the questions and their responses. While this support enabled participation, it may have influenced their answers due to a lack of full anonymity. Furthermore, those who were interviewed may have had higher levels of functioning or integration, as they were willing and able to participate in the study. It is

possible that individuals experiencing more severe psychological distress, or who internalize stigma more profoundly, did not engage with the research process, which may have biased the findings toward more resilient narratives.

Moreover, the sample consisted of mostly men (7 out of 10 participants) and was skewed toward middle aged and older adults, ranging from 26 to 58 years old. No major differences in responses were observed across gender or age in this group, but the small sample size limits any firm conclusions.

Another limitation relates to the design of the survey itself. It was observed that the questionnaire took a considerable amount of time to complete. This suggests it may have been too lengthy or demanding for some individuals, which could have affected response quality and completeness. Additionally, participant 6 responded to several statements with the word 'depends,' possibly indicating difficulty in choosing between the provided options. These responses could not be quantified and were therefore excluded from the calculation of mean scores, which may have impacted the representativeness of the results.

Despite these limitations, the findings offer valuable insight into the psychological strengths of certain people experiencing homelessness in Malta. The presence of self-efficacy and the absence of deep self-stigma among this group suggests that strengths-based interventions rather than deficit-focused models may be particularly effective. Supporting personal agencies, goal setting, and identity reconstruction should remain central to any reintegration program.

At the societal level, there is a need for greater public awareness and discussion around homelessness to foster empathy, understanding, and policy engagement. Avoiding invisibility should not come at the cost of increasing stigma. Instead, a balanced, rights-based narrative that presents the homeless as individuals with potential and dignity could be a vital next step in addressing homelessness in Malta.

Future research could benefit from including variables such as current employment status and duration to find out which factors contribute to a possible higher level of self-efficacy.

Employment is often closely tied to self-efficacy, offering structure, purpose, and societal validation. If data on employment had been collected, it might have shed light on whether those with higher self-efficacy in this study were also those who had regained some sort of stability. It would be valuable to research the factors contributing to self-efficacy in general.

In sum, this study offers a rare window into the lived experience of homelessness in Malta, revealing the psychological resilience that can exist even in the face of systemic marginalization. Future work should continue to amplify these voices while pushing for structural change.

Suggestions for future practice

Based on the findings of this thesis and insights gained during the researcher's time at YMCA Malta, a potential follow-up initiative is proposed to support ongoing stigma reduction and awareness-raising efforts. A meaningful suggestion would be to invite future interns to collect and document personal stories of individuals experiencing homelessness, highlighting their diverse life paths and professional backgrounds. As observed during the internship, the shelter hosts people from a wide range of professions, including former doctors, bankers, athletes, and others. Sharing these narratives could serve to humanize their experiences and challenge public stereotypes, thereby contributing to stigma reduction.

These stories could be compiled into a booklet or digital publication aimed at raising awareness among the public and specific target audiences. An initial step might be to distribute the publication within university settings, starting with faculties that are likely to be receptive, such as Social Work or Psychology. In addition, YMCA Malta's existing networks could facilitate broader distribution, both in physical spaces and online.

To ensure sustainability, this initiative could take the form of an ongoing or annual project, where each group of interns contributes to the growing collection. This evolving narrative could provide a valuable and authentic representation of people experiencing homelessness. While the project is feasible and potentially impactful, its sustainability would require clear structure, institutional support, and integration into the organization's broader educational or outreach goals.

11 Appendices

11.1 Appendix A: GSE scale

General Self-Efficacy Scale (regarding reintegration process)

General information:

Please answer the following questions:

1. What is your gender?

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female
- ☐ Non-binary/other
- ☐ Prefer not to say

2. How old are you?

(Please specify your age in years: _____)

3. How long have you been in Malta: _____

4. How long have you been experiencing homelessness?

- ☐ Less than 6 months
- ☐ 6 months to 1 year
- ☐ 1-3 years
- ☐ More than 3 years

Instructions:

The following statements are about your confidence in overcoming challenges and improving your situation, especially in regard to re-integrating into society and achieving stability. Please read each statement carefully and indicate how much you agree or disagree using the following scale:

1 = Strongly Disagree

2 = Disagree

3 = Agree

4 = Strongly Agree

	1	2	3	4
1. I can find solutions to challenges I face in improving my living situation.				
2. If I need help, I am confident that I can find someone to assist me.				
3. I believe I can take the necessary steps to re-integrate into society.				
4. Even when things get tough, I can find ways to move forward.				
5. I can learn new skills or adapt to new circumstances to improve my life.				
6. I can overcome setbacks and continue to work towards stability.				
7. I am confident in my ability to secure a job or other means of financial support.				
8. I believe I can access housing or shelter options when I put effort into finding them.				
9. If a plan doesn't work, I can think of another way to reach my goals.				
10. I am capable of building positive relationships that will support my recovery and reintegration				

11.2 Appendix B: ISHS scale & open-ended questions

Internalized Stigma of Homelessness Scale (ISHS)

Instructions:

The statements below explore how you feel about yourself and your experiences as someone facing homelessness. For each question, please mark whether you strongly disagree (1), disagree (2), agree (3) or strongly agree (4).

Please be aware that the following statements are designed to capture **your personal experiences and feelings** related to homelessness, stigma, and self-perception. These statements are **not a reflection of what the researcher believes**. They are simply meant to help us understand how homelessness may impact your sense of self and how others perceive you. Your honest responses are greatly appreciated and will contribute to a better understanding of this important issue.

Alienation

	1	2	3	4
1. I feel out of place in the world because I am experiencing homelessness.				
2. Experiencing homelessness has ruined my life.				
3. I am embarrassed or ashamed about experiencing homelessness.				
4. I am disappointed in myself for experiencing homelessness.				
5. I feel less than others who have stable housing.				

Stereotype endorsement

	1	2	3	4
6. Stereotypes about homeless people apply to me				
7. People can tell that I experience homelessness from the way I look.				
8. People experiencing homelessness tend to be violent.				

9. Because of my situation, I need others to make some decisions for me.				
10. People experiencing homelessness cannot live a good, rewarding life.				
11. People experiencing homelessness can't contribute anything to society.				

Perceived discrimination

	1	2	3	4
11. People treat me unfairly because I am experiencing homelessness.				
12. Others think I can't achieve much in life because I am experiencing homelessness.				
13. People ignore me or take me less seriously because of my situation.				
14. People often treat me like a child just because I am experiencing homelessness.				
15. Because of my situation no one would be interested in getting close to me.				

Social withdrawal

	1	2	3	4
16. I don't talk a lot about myself with others because I don't want to burden them with my situation.				
17. I don't socialize as much as I used to because of my situation.				
18. Negative stereotypes about homelessness keep me isolated from the 'normal' world.				
19. I sometimes worry that my situation is a burden to my family and friends.				
20. I avoid getting close to people who have stable housing to avoid rejection.				

Stigma resistance

	1	2	3	4
21. In general, I am able to live life the way I want to.				
22. I can have a good, fulfilling life despite my situation.				
23. My situation has made me stronger.				
24. I am capable of changing my situation for the better.				

Scoring:

- Higher scores in Alienation, Stereotype Endorsement, Perceived Discrimination and Social Withdrawal reflect higher levels of self-stigma
- Higher rates in Stigma resistance indicate a stronger ability to resist internalizing stigma and maintain a positive self-view.

Qualitative questions

- How do you feel that society views homeless individuals, and how does this affect the way you see yourself?
- What do you wish people understood about experiencing homelessness?
- What gives you hope or motivation to move forward in your recovery process?

11.3 Appendix C: completed surveys

11.3.1 Participant 1

SURVEYS

General Self-Efficacy Scale (regarding reintegration process)

General information:

Please answer the following questions:

1. What is your gender?
☒ Male
☐ Female
☐ Non-binary/other
☐ Prefer not to say
2. How old are you?
(Please specify your age in years: 30)
3. How long have you been in Malta: 4 yrs
4. How long have you been experiencing homelessness?
☐ Less than 6 months
☐ 6 months to 1 year
☒ 1-3 years
☐ More than 3 years

Instructions:

The following statements are about your confidence in overcoming challenges and improving your situation, especially in regard to re-integrating into society and achieving stability. Please read each statement carefully and indicate how much you agree or disagree using the following scale:

1 = Strongly Disagree

2 = Disagree

3 = Agree

4 = Strongly Agree

	1	2	3	4
1. I can find solutions to challenges I face in improving my living situation.			✓	
2. If I need help, I am confident that I can find someone to assist me.			✓	
3. I believe I can take the necessary steps to re-integrate into society.			✓	
4. Even when things get tough, I can find ways to move forward.			✓	
5. I can learn new skills or adapt to new circumstances to improve my life.			✓	
6. I can overcome setbacks and continue to work towards stability.			✓	
7. I am confident in my ability to secure a job or other means of financial support.			✓	
8. I believe I can access housing or shelter options when I put effort into finding them.			✓	
9. If a plan doesn't work, I can think of another way to reach my goals.			✓	
10. I am capable of building positive relationships that will support my recovery and reintegration.			✓	

Internalized Stigma of Homelessness Scale (ISHS)

Name: _____

Instructions:

The statements below explore how you feel about yourself and your experiences as someone facing homelessness. For each question, please mark whether you strongly disagree (1), disagree (2), agree (3) or strongly agree (4).

Please be aware that the following statements are designed to capture **your personal experiences and feelings** related to homelessness, stigma, and self-perception. These statements are **not a reflection of what the researcher believes**. They are simply meant to help us understand how homelessness may impact your sense of self and how others perceive you. Your honest responses are greatly appreciated and will contribute to a better understanding of this important issue.

	1	2	3	4
Because of my situation no one would be interested in getting close to me.		✓		
I can have a good, fulfilling life despite my situation.			✓	
Experiencing homelessness has ruined my life.		✓		
Stereotypes about homeless people apply to me		✓		
I am disappointed in myself for experiencing homelessness.		✓		
I feel less than others who have stable housing.		✓		
I am capable of changing my situation for the better.				✓
I feel out of place in the world because I am experiencing homelessness.			✓	
People ignore me or take me less seriously because of my situation.		✓		
I sometimes worry that my situation is a burden to my family and friends.			✓	
I am embarrassed or ashamed about experiencing homelessness.		✓		
People experiencing homelessness cannot live a good, rewarding life.			✓	
My situation has made me stronger.			✓	
People treat me unfairly because I am experiencing homelessness.		✓		
I avoid getting close to people who have stable housing to avoid rejection		✓		
I don't socialize as much as I used to because of my situation.			✓	

In general, I am able to live life the way I want to.			✓	
Because of my situation, I need others to make some decisions for me.		✓		
I don't talk a lot about myself with others because I don't want to burden them with my situation.			✓	
People often treat me like a child just because I am experiencing homelessness.		✓		
People experiencing homelessness tend to be violent.			✓	
Negative stereotypes about homelessness keep me isolated from the 'normal' world.			✓	
People experiencing homelessness can't contribute anything to society.			✓	
People can tell that I experience homelessness from the way I look.			✓	
Others think I can't achieve much in life because I am experiencing homelessness.		✓		

Qualitative Research

- How do you feel that society views homeless individuals, and how does this affect the way you see yourself?

Normal I guess but when coming to look at myself it ticks a bit due that certain stereotypes. As certain questions asked make me feel uncomfortable but it helped I appreciate that I found YHCA shelter.

- What do you wish people understood about experiencing homelessness?

The fact that we work & strive to aim for the best that we can. As we are trying to find/invent for our future to not stay homeless.

- What gives you the hope or motivation to move forward in your recovery process?

The fact that I don't smoke or drink I believe that if I keep moving forward with work I can afford rent. But in all I have always been respected in here & family environment. Ever since I have been in here I have learnt how to maintain better for myself, learn more for myself & who I want to be in life.

11.3.2 Participant 2

SURVEYS

General Self-Efficacy Scale (regarding reintegration process)

Name: _____

General information:

Please answer the following questions:

1. What is your gender?

- ☒ Male
- ☐ Female
- ☐ Non-binary/other
- ☐ Prefer not to say

2. How old are you?

(Please specify your age in years: 42)

3. How long have you been in Malta: Lifelong

4. How long have you been experiencing homelessness?

- ☐ Less than 6 months
- ☐ 6 months to 1 year
- ☒ 1-3 years
- ☐ More than 3 years

Instructions:

The following statements are about your confidence in overcoming challenges and improving your situation, especially in regard to re-integrating into society and achieving stability. Please read each statement carefully and indicate how much you agree or disagree using the following scale:

1 = Strongly Disagree

2 = Disagree

3 = Agree

4 = Strongly Agree

	1	2	3	4
1. I can find solutions to challenges I face in improving my living situation.			✓	
2. If I need help, I am confident that I can find someone to assist me.		✓		
3. I believe I can take the necessary steps to re-integrate into society.			✓	
4. Even when things get tough, I can find ways to move forward.			✓	
5. I can learn new skills or adapt to new circumstances to improve my life.		✓		
6. I can overcome setbacks and continue to work towards stability.			✓	
7. I am confident in my ability to secure a job or other means of financial support.			✓	
8. I believe I can access housing or shelter options when I put effort into finding them.		✓		
9. If a plan doesn't work, I can think of another way to reach my goals.			✓	
10. I am capable of building positive relationships that will support my recovery and reintegration.		✓		

Internalized Stigma of Homelessness Scale (ISHS)

Name: _____

Instructions:

The statements below explore how you feel about yourself and your experiences as someone facing homelessness. For each question, please mark whether you strongly disagree (1), disagree (2), agree (3) or strongly agree (4).

Please be aware that the following statements are designed to capture **your personal experiences and feelings** related to homelessness, stigma, and self-perception. These statements are **not a reflection of what the researcher believes**. They are simply meant to help us understand how homelessness may impact your sense of self and how others perceive you. Your honest responses are greatly appreciated and will contribute to a better understanding of this important issue.

	1	2	3	4
Because of my situation no one would be interested in getting close to me.				✓
I can have a good, fulfilling life despite my situation.				✓
Experiencing homelessness has ruined my life.	✓			
Stereotypes about homeless people apply to me.				✓
I am disappointed in myself for experiencing homelessness.	✓			
I feel less than others who have stable housing.				✓
I am capable of changing my situation for the better.				✓
I feel out of place in the world because I am experiencing homelessness.				✓
People ignore me or take me less seriously because of my situation.				✓
I sometimes worry that my situation is a burden to my family and friends.	✓			
I am embarrassed or ashamed about experiencing homelessness.				✓
People experiencing homelessness cannot live a good, rewarding life.	✓			
My situation has made me stronger.				✓
People treat me unfairly because I am experiencing homelessness.				✓
I avoid getting close to people who have stable housing to avoid rejection.				✓
I don't socialize as much as I used to because of my situation.				✓

In general, I am able to live life the way I want to.	✓			
Because of my situation, I need others to make some decisions for me.				✓
I don't talk a lot about myself with others because I don't want to burden them with my situation.				✓
People often treat me like a child just because I am experiencing homelessness.				✓
People experiencing homelessness tend to be violent.	✓			
Negative stereotypes about homelessness keep me isolated from the 'normal' world.				✓
People experiencing homelessness can't contribute anything to society.	✓			
People can tell that I experience homelessness from the way I look.				✓
Others think I can't achieve much in life because I am experiencing homelessness.				✓

11.3.3 Participant 3

SURVEYS

General Self-Efficacy Scale (regarding reintegration process)

Name: _____

General information:

Please answer the following questions:

1. What is your gender?

- ☒ Male
- ☐ Female
- ☐ Non-binary/other
- ☐ Prefer not to say

2. How old are you?

(Please specify your age in years: _____) 36

3. How long have you been in Malta: _____ 18 yrs

4. How long have you been experiencing homelessness?

- ☒ Less than 6 months
- ☐ 6 months to 1 year
- ☐ 1-3 years
- ☐ More than 3 years

Instructions:

The following statements are about your confidence in overcoming challenges and improving your situation, especially in regard to re-integrating into society and achieving stability. Please read each statement carefully and indicate how much you agree or disagree using the following scale:

- 1 = Strongly Disagree
- 2 = Disagree
- 3 = Agree
- 4 = Strongly Agree

	1	2	3	4
1. I can find solutions to challenges I face in improving my living situation.				✓
2. If I need help, I am confident that I can find someone to assist me.			✓	
3. I believe I can take the necessary steps to re-integrate into society.			✓	
4. Even when things get tough, I can find ways to move forward.			✓	
5. I can learn new skills or adapt to new circumstances to improve my life.			✓	
6. I can overcome setbacks and continue to work towards stability.			✓	
7. I am confident in my ability to secure a job or other means of financial support.			✓	
8. I believe I can access housing or shelter options when I put effort into finding them.			✓	
9. If a plan doesn't work, I can think of another way to reach my goals.			✓	
10. I am capable of building positive relationships that will support my recovery and reintegration			✓	

Internalized Stigma of Homelessness Scale (ISHS)

Name: _____

Instructions:

The statements below explore how you feel about yourself and your experiences as someone facing homelessness. For each question, please mark whether you strongly disagree (1), disagree (2), agree (3) or strongly agree (4).

Please be aware that the following statements are designed to capture **your personal experiences and feelings** related to homelessness, stigma, and self-perception. These statements are **not a reflection of what the researcher believes**. They are simply meant to help us understand how homelessness may impact your sense of self and how others perceive you. Your honest responses are greatly appreciated and will contribute to a better understanding of this important issue.

	1	2	3	4
Because of my situation no one would be interested in getting close to me.		✓		
I can have a good, fulfilling life despite my situation.		✓		
Experiencing homelessness has ruined my life.	✓			
Stereotypes about homeless people apply to me	✓			
I am disappointed in myself for experiencing homelessness.	✓			
I feel less than others who have stable housing.	✓			
I am capable of changing my situation for the better.				✓
I feel out of place in the world because I am experiencing homelessness.	✓			
People ignore me or take me less seriously because of my situation.		✓		
I sometimes worry that my situation is a burden to my family and friends.				✓
I am embarrassed or ashamed about experiencing homelessness.	✓			
People experiencing homelessness cannot live a good, rewarding life.		✓		
My situation has made me stronger.				✓
People treat me unfairly because I am experiencing homelessness.		✓		
I avoid getting close to people who have stable housing to avoid rejection		✓	✓	
I don't socialize as much as I used to because of my situation.				✓

In general, I am able to live life the way I want to.		✓		
Because of my situation, I need others to make some decisions for me.	✓			
I don't talk a lot about myself with others because I don't want to burden them with my situation.				✓
People often treat me like a child just because I am experiencing homelessness.	✓			
People experiencing homelessness tend to be violent.	✓			
Negative stereotypes about homelessness keep me isolated from the 'normal' world.	✓			
People experiencing homelessness can't contribute anything to society.	✓			
People can tell that I experience homelessness from the way I look.	✓			
Others think I can't achieve much in life because I am experiencing homelessness.				✓

Qualitative Research

- How do you feel that society views homeless individuals, and how does this affect the way you see yourself?

1 It depends on the position ~~the~~ the homeless individual puts itself.

2 any situation that doesn't kill a man makes him or ~~to~~ her stronger. I keep determined without Relenting.

- What do you wish people understood about experiencing homelessness?

To be positive and never to lose hope, Self determination is very important

- What gives you the hope or motivation to move forward in your recovery process?

Because ONE WITH GOD IS MEJORITY,

11.3.4 Participant 4

SURVEYS

General Self-Efficacy Scale (regarding reintegration process)

Name: _____

General information:

Please answer the following questions:

1. What is your gender?
 - ☐ Male
 - ☒ Female
 - ☐ Non-binary/other
 - ☐ Prefer not to say
2. How old are you?
(Please specify your age in years: 36)
3. How long have you been in Malta: Born here
4. How long have you been experiencing homelessness?
 - ☒ Less than 6 months
 - ☐ 6 months to 1 year
 - ☐ 1-3 years
 - ☐ More than 3 years

Instructions:

The following statements are about your confidence in overcoming challenges and improving your situation, especially in regard to re-integrating into society and achieving stability. Please read each statement carefully and indicate how much you agree or disagree using the following scale:

- 1 = Strongly Disagree
- 2 = Disagree
- 3 = Agree
- 4 = Strongly Agree

	1	2	3	4
1. I can find solutions to challenges I face in improving my living situation.	✓			
2. If I need help, I am confident that I can find someone to assist me.				✓
3. I believe I can take the necessary steps to re-integrate into society.				✓
4. Even when things get tough, I can find ways to move forward.		✓		
5. I can learn new skills or adapt to new circumstances to improve my life.			✓	
6. I can overcome setbacks and continue to work towards stability.			✓	
7. I am confident in my ability to secure a job or other means of financial support.			✓	
8. I believe I can access housing or shelter options when I put effort into finding them.				✓
9. If a plan doesn't work, I can think of another way to reach my goals.				✓
10. I am capable of building positive relationships that will support my recovery and reintegration				✓

Internalized Stigma of Homelessness Scale (ISHS)

Name: _____

Instructions:

The statements below explore how you feel about yourself and your experiences as someone facing homelessness. For each question, please mark whether you strongly disagree (1), disagree (2), agree (3) or strongly agree (4).

Please be aware that the following statements are designed to capture **your personal experiences and feelings** related to homelessness, stigma, and self-perception. These statements are **not a reflection of what the researcher believes**. They are simply meant to help us understand how homelessness may impact your sense of self and how others perceive you. Your honest responses are greatly appreciated and will contribute to a better understanding of this important issue.

	1	2	3	4
Because of my situation no one would be interested in getting close to me.		✓		
I can have a good, fulfilling life despite my situation.	✓			
Experiencing homelessness has ruined my life.			✓	
Stereotypes about homeless people apply to me	✓			
I am disappointed in myself for experiencing homelessness.	✓			
I feel less than others who have stable housing.				✓
I am capable of changing my situation for the better.				✓
I feel out of place in the world because I am experiencing homelessness.	✓			
People ignore me or take me less seriously because of my situation.			✓	
I sometimes worry that my situation is a burden to my family and friends.			✓	
I am embarrassed or ashamed about experiencing homelessness.			✓	
People experiencing homelessness cannot live a good, rewarding life.	✓			
My situation has made me stronger.				✓
People treat me unfairly because I am experiencing homelessness.			✓	
I avoid getting close to people who have stable housing to avoid rejection			✓	
I don't socialize as much as I used to because of my situation.			✓	

In general, I am able to live life the way I want to.				✓
Because of my situation, I need others to make some decisions for me.				✓
I don't talk a lot about myself with others because I don't want to burden them with my situation.				✓
People often treat me like a child just because I am experiencing homelessness.				✓
People experiencing homelessness tend to be violent.		✓		
Negative stereotypes about homelessness keep me isolated from the 'normal' world.	✓			
People experiencing homelessness can't contribute anything to society.	✓			
People can tell that I experience homelessness from the way I look.	✓			
Others think I can't achieve much in life because I am experiencing homelessness.			✓	

Qualitative Research

- How do you feel that society views homeless individuals, and how does this affect the way you see yourself?

I feel bad when society view homeless people as "bad" individual or when they say it is their fault because everyone condemn it the situation of homeless.

- What do you wish people understood about experiencing homelessness?

That everyone can end up in this situation because people that are experience homeless are not happy with their situation.

- What gives you the hope or motivation to move forward in your recovery process?

She do her best and keep going.

11.3.5 Participant 5

SURVEYS

General Self-Efficacy Scale (regarding reintegration process)

Name: 

General information:

Please answer the following questions:

1. What is your gender?
 - ☐ Male
 - ☒ Female
 - ☐ Non-binary/other
 - ☐ Prefer not to say
2. How old are you?
(Please specify your age in years: 37)
3. How long have you been in Malta: 28 years
4. How long have you been experiencing homelessness?
 - ☒ Less than 6 months
 - ☐ 6 months to 1 year
 - ☐ 1-3 years
 - ☐ More than 3 years

Instructions:

The following statements are about your confidence in overcoming challenges and improving your situation, especially in regard to re-integrating into society and achieving stability. Please read each statement carefully and indicate how much you agree or disagree using the following scale:

- 1 = Strongly Disagree
- 2 = Disagree
- 3 = Agree
- 4 = Strongly Agree

	1	2	3	4
1. I can find solutions to challenges I face in improving my living situation.				✓
2. If I need help, I am confident that I can find someone to assist me.			✓	
3. I believe I can take the necessary steps to re-integrate into society.				✓
4. Even when things get tough, I can find ways to move forward.				✓
5. I can learn new skills or adapt to new circumstances to improve my life.				✓
6. I can overcome setbacks and continue to work towards stability.				✓
7. I am confident in my ability to secure a job or other means of financial support.				✓
8. I believe I can access housing or shelter options when I put effort into finding them.			✓	
9. If a plan doesn't work, I can think of another way to reach my goals.			✓	
10. I am capable of building positive relationships that will support my recovery and reintegration				✓

Internalized Stigma of Homelessness Scale (ISHS)

Name: XXXXXXXXXX

Instructions:

The statements below explore how you feel about yourself and your experiences as someone facing homelessness. For each question, please mark whether you strongly disagree (1), disagree (2), agree (3) or strongly agree (4).

Please be aware that the following statements are designed to capture **your personal experiences and feelings** related to homelessness, stigma, and self-perception. These statements are **not a reflection of what the researcher believes**. They are simply meant to help us understand how homelessness may impact your sense of self and how others perceive you. Your honest responses are greatly appreciated and will contribute to a better understanding of this important issue.

	1	2	3	4
Because of my situation no one would be interested in getting close to me.		✓		
I can have a good, fulfilling life despite my situation.			✓	
Experiencing homelessness has ruined my life.		✓		
Stereotypes about homeless people apply to me		✓		
I am disappointed in myself for experiencing homelessness.				✓
I feel less than others who have stable housing.			✓	
I am capable of changing my situation for the better.				✓
I feel out of place in the world because I am experiencing homelessness.	✓			
People ignore me or take me less seriously because of my situation.	✓			
I sometimes worry that my situation is a burden to my family and friends.	✓			
I am embarrassed or ashamed about experiencing homelessness.	✓			
People experiencing homelessness cannot live a good, rewarding life.	✓			
My situation has made me stronger.				✓
People treat me unfairly because I am experiencing homelessness.	✓			
I avoid getting close to people who have stable housing to avoid rejection.	✓			
I don't socialize as much as I used to because of my situation.	✓			

	1	2	3	4
In general, I am able to live life the way I want to.				✓
Because of my situation, I need others to make some decisions for me.	✓			
I don't talk a lot about myself with others because I don't want to burden them with my situation.			✓	
People often treat me like a child just because I am experiencing homelessness.	✓			
People experiencing homelessness tend to be violent.	✓			
Negative stereotypes about homelessness keep me isolated from the 'normal' world.	✓			
People experiencing homelessness can't contribute anything to society.	✓			
People can tell that I experience homelessness from the way I look.	✓			
Others think I can't achieve much in life because I am experiencing homelessness.	✓			

Qualitative Research

- How do you feel that society views homeless individuals, and how does this affect the way you see yourself?

Sometimes people judge homeless person, I personally don't have that problem because my goals are way to higher than their opinion so I am only focus on the success.

- What do you wish people understood about experiencing homelessness?

Fear of being rejected, left alone and insecurity level with high pressure of mixed personal emotions.

- What gives you the hope or motivation to move forward in your recovery process?

My job, my kids, and huge motivation for my better future is my mental strenght. I am fully focus on priority and the reaching the goals.

11.3.6 Participant 6

SURVEYS

General Self-Efficacy Scale (regarding reintegration process)

Name:  _____

General information:

Please answer the following questions:

1. What is your gender?

- ☒ Male
- ☐ Female
- ☐ Non-binary/other
- ☐ Prefer not to say

2. How old are you?

(Please specify your age in years: 29.)

3. How long have you been in Malta: All my life

4. How long have you been experiencing homelessness?

- ☐ Less than 6 months
- ☐ 6 months to 1 year
- ☐ 1-3 years
- ☒ More than 3 years

In general, I am able to live life the way I want to.					✓
Because of my situation, I need others to make some decisions for me.		✓	✓		
I don't talk a lot about myself with others because I don't want to burden them with my situation.			✓		
People often treat me like a child just because I am experiencing homelessness.		✓			
People experiencing homelessness tend to be violent.		not always - it depends			
Negative stereotypes about homelessness keep me isolated from the 'normal' world.		✓			
People experiencing homelessness can't contribute anything to society.		✓			
People can tell that I experience homelessness from the way I look.	✓				
Others think I can't achieve much in life because I am experiencing homelessness.	✓				

Instructions:

The following statements are about your confidence in overcoming challenges and improving your situation, especially in regard to re-integrating into society and achieving stability. Please read each statement carefully and indicate how much you agree or disagree using the following scale:

1 = Strongly Disagree

2 = Disagree

3 = Agree

4 = Strongly Agree

	1	2	3	4
1. I can find solutions to challenges I face in improving my living situation.			✓	
2. If I need help, I am confident that I can find someone to assist me.				✓
3. I believe I can take the necessary steps to re-integrate into society.			✓	
4. Even when things get tough, I can find ways to move forward.				✓
5. I can learn new skills or adapt to new circumstances to improve my life.			✓	
6. I can overcome setbacks and continue to work towards stability.			✓	
7. I am confident in my ability to secure a job or other means of financial support.			✓	
8. I believe I can access housing or shelter options when I put effort into finding them.				✓
9. If a plan doesn't work, I can think of another way to reach my goals.				✓
10. I am capable of building positive relationships that will support my recovery and reintegration.				✓

Internalized Stigma of Homelessness Scale (ISHS)

Name: _____

Instructions:

The statements below explore how you feel about yourself and your experiences as someone facing homelessness. For each question, please mark whether you strongly disagree (1), disagree (2), agree (3) or strongly agree (4).

Please be aware that the following statements are designed to capture **your personal experiences and feelings** related to homelessness, stigma, and self-perception. These statements are **not a reflection of what the researcher believes**. They are simply meant to help us understand how homelessness may impact your sense of self and how others perceive you. Your honest responses are greatly appreciated and will contribute to a better understanding of this important issue.

	1	2	3	4	
Because of my situation no one would be interested in getting close to me.		✓			
I can have a good, fulfilling life despite my situation.			✓		
Experiencing homelessness has ruined my life.	✓				
Stereotypes about homeless people apply to me		not Always			
I am disappointed in myself for experiencing homelessness.	✓				
I feel less than others who have stable housing.			✓		
I am capable of changing my situation for the better.				✓	
I feel out of place in the world because I am experiencing homelessness.	✓				
People ignore me or take me less seriously because of my situation.		not always it depends what people are			
I sometimes worry that my situation is a burden to my family and friends.			✓		
I am embarrassed or ashamed about experiencing homelessness.	✓				
People experiencing homelessness cannot live a good, rewarding life.	✓				
My situation has made me stronger.				✓	
People treat me unfairly because I am experiencing homelessness.		not always it depends			
I avoid getting close to people who have stable housing to avoid rejection		✓			
I don't socialize as much as I used to because of my situation.		✓			

Qualitative Research

- How do you feel that society views homeless individuals, and how does this affect the way you see yourself?

It doesn't affect me, But sometimes people who are tough make me feel like am nothing.

- What do you wish people understood about experiencing homelessness?

I wish them, that they put there shoes in our shoes and experiencing from what we are suffering from cause its not easy to go through.

- What gives you the hope or motivation to move forward in your recovery process?

To move forward, cause I have people to support me.

11.3.7 Participant 7

SURVEYS

General Self-Efficacy Scale (regarding reintegration process)

Name: _____

General information:

Please answer the following questions:

1. What is your gender?

- ☒ Male
- ☐ Female
- ☐ Non-binary/other
- ☐ Prefer not to say

2. How old are you?

(Please specify your age in years: 57)

3. How long have you been in Malta: 17 years

4. How long have you been experiencing homelessness?

- ☐ Less than 6 months
- ☒ 6 months to 1 year
- ☐ 1-3 years
- ☐ More than 3 years

Instructions:

The following statements are about your confidence in overcoming challenges and improving your situation, especially in regard to re-integrating into society and achieving stability. Please read each statement carefully and indicate how much you agree or disagree using the following scale:

1 = Strongly Disagree

2 = Disagree

3 = Agree

4 = Strongly Agree

	1	2	3	4
1. I can find solutions to challenges I face in improving my living situation.		✓		
2. If I need help, I am confident that I can find someone to assist me.				✓
3. I believe I can take the necessary steps to re-integrate into society.			✓	
4. Even when things get tough, I can find ways to move forward.				✓
5. I can learn new skills or adapt to new circumstances to improve my life.				✓
6. I can overcome setbacks and continue to work towards stability.				✓
7. I am confident in my ability to secure a job or other means of financial support.			✓	
8. I believe I can access housing or shelter options when I put effort into finding them.		✓		
9. If a plan doesn't work, I can think of another way to reach my goals.			✓	
10. I am capable of building positive relationships that will support my recovery and reintegration.			✓	

Internalized Stigma of Homelessness Scale (ISHS)

Name: _____

Instructions:

The statements below explore how you feel about yourself and your experiences as someone facing homelessness. For each question, please mark whether you strongly disagree (1), disagree (2), agree (3) or strongly agree (4).

Please be aware that the following statements are designed to capture **your personal experiences and feelings** related to homelessness, stigma, and self-perception. These statements are **not a reflection of what the researcher believes**. They are simply meant to help us understand how homelessness may impact your sense of self and how others perceive you. Your honest responses are greatly appreciated and will contribute to a better understanding of this important issue.

	1	2	3	4
Because of my situation no one would be interested in getting close to me.		✓		
I can have a good, fulfilling life despite my situation.			✓	
Experiencing homelessness has ruined my life.				✓
Stereotypes about homeless people apply to me				✓
I am disappointed in myself for experiencing homelessness.		✓		
I feel less than others who have stable housing.				✓
I am capable of changing my situation for the better.			✓	
I feel out of place in the world because I am experiencing homelessness.			✓	
People ignore me or take me less seriously because of my situation.			✓	
I sometimes worry that my situation is a burden to my family and friends.				✓
I am embarrassed or ashamed about experiencing homelessness.				✓
People experiencing homelessness cannot live a good, rewarding life.		✓		
My situation has made me stronger.				✓
People treat me unfairly because I am experiencing homelessness.				✓
I avoid getting close to people who have stable housing to avoid rejection		✓		
I don't socialize as much as I used to because of my situation.			✓	

In general, I am able to live life the way I want to.	✓			
Because of my situation, I need others to make some decisions for me.		✓		
I don't talk a lot about myself with others because I don't want to burden them with my situation.				✓
People often treat me like a child just because I am experiencing homelessness.				✓
People experiencing homelessness tend to be violent.	✓			
Negative stereotypes about homelessness keep me isolated from the 'normal' world.			✓	
People experiencing homelessness can't contribute anything to society.	✓			
People can tell that I experience homelessness from the way I look.				✓
Others think I can't achieve much in life because I am experiencing homelessness.				✓

Qualitative Research

- How do you feel that society views homeless individuals, and how does this affect the way you see yourself?

LESSE R HUMAN BEINGS
WASTERS
JUNKIES

- What do you wish people understood about experiencing homelessness?

STRUGGLES
NOT BEING BELIEVED
NOT BEING TRUSTED
MIS JUDGEMENT

- What gives you the hope or motivation to move forward in your recovery process?

BEING CLOSER TO MY FAMILY

11.3.8 Participant 8

SURVEYS

General Self-Efficacy Scale (regarding reintegration process)

Name: _____

General information:

Please answer the following questions:

1. What is your gender?

- ☒ Male
- ☐ Female
- ☐ Non-binary/other
- ☐ Prefer not to say

2. How old are you?

(Please specify your age in years: 58)

3. How long have you been in Malta: 45 years

4. How long have you been experiencing homelessness?

- ☐ Less than 6 months
- ☒ 6 months to 1 year
- ☐ 1-3 years
- ☐ More than 3 years

Instructions:

The following statements are about your confidence in overcoming challenges and improving your situation, especially in regard to re-integrating into society and achieving stability. Please read each statement carefully and indicate how much you agree or disagree using the following scale:

1 = Strongly Disagree

2 = Disagree

3 = Agree

4 = Strongly Agree

	1	2	3	4
1. I can find solutions to challenges I face in improving my living situation.			✓	
2. If I need help, I am confident that I can find someone to assist me.				✓
3. I believe I can take the necessary steps to re-integrate into society.				✓
4. Even when things get tough, I can find ways to move forward.			✓	
5. I can learn new skills or adapt to new circumstances to improve my life.				✓
6. I can overcome setbacks and continue to work towards stability.				✓
7. I am confident in my ability to secure a job or other means of financial support.				✓
8. I believe I can access housing or shelter options when I put effort into finding them.				✓
9. If a plan doesn't work, I can think of another way to reach my goals.			✓	
10. I am capable of building positive relationships that will support my recovery and reintegration			✓	

Internalized Stigma of Homelessness Scale (ISHS)

Name: _____

Instructions:

The statements below explore how you feel about yourself and your experiences as someone facing homelessness. For each question, please mark whether you strongly disagree (1), disagree (2), agree (3) or strongly agree (4).

Please be aware that the following statements are designed to capture **your personal experiences and feelings** related to homelessness, stigma, and self-perception. These statements are **not a reflection of what the researcher believes**. They are simply meant to help us understand how homelessness may impact your sense of self and how others perceive you. Your honest responses are greatly appreciated and will contribute to a better understanding of this important issue.

	1	2	3	4
Because of my situation no one would be interested in getting close to me.	✓			
I can have a good, fulfilling life despite my situation.	✓			
Experiencing homelessness has ruined my life.			✓	
Stereotypes about homeless people apply to me			✓	
I am disappointed in myself for experiencing homelessness.			✓	
I feel less than others who have stable housing.	✓			
I am capable of changing my situation for the better.	✓			
I feel out of place in the world because I am experiencing homelessness.			✓	
People ignore me or take me less seriously because of my situation.			✓	
I sometimes worry that my situation is a burden to my family and friends.			✓	
I am embarrassed or ashamed about experiencing homelessness.			✓	
People experiencing homelessness cannot live a good, rewarding life.	✓			
My situation has made me stronger.	✓			
People treat me unfairly because I am experiencing homelessness.			✓	
I avoid getting close to people who have stable housing to avoid rejection	✓			
I don't socialize as much as I used to because of my situation.	✓			

In general, I am able to live life the way I want to.				✓
Because of my situation, I need others to make some decisions for me.		✓		
I don't talk a lot about myself with others because I don't want to burden them with my situation.			✓	
People often treat me like a child just because I am experiencing homelessness.	✓			
People experiencing homelessness tend to be violent.				✓
Negative stereotypes about homelessness keep me isolated from the 'normal' world.	✓			
People experiencing homelessness can't contribute anything to society.	✓			
People can tell that I experience homelessness from the way I look.	✓			
Others think I can't achieve much in life because I am experiencing homelessness.	✓			

11.3.9 Participant 9

SURVEYS

General Self-Efficacy Scale (regarding reintegration process)

Name: _____

General information:

Please answer the following questions:

1. What is your gender?
 - ☐ Male
 - ☒ Female
 - ☐ Non-binary/other
 - ☐ Prefer not to say
2. How old are you?
(Please specify your age in years: 37)
3. How long have you been in Malta: 6 MONTHS
4. How long have you been experiencing homelessness?
 - ☒ Less than 6 months
 - ☐ 6 months to 1 year
 - ☐ 1-3 years
 - ☐ More than 3 years

Instructions:

The following statements are about your confidence in overcoming challenges and improving your situation, especially in regard to re-integrating into society and achieving stability. Please read each statement carefully and indicate how much you agree or disagree using the following scale:

1 = Strongly Disagree

2 = Disagree

3 = Agree

4 = Strongly Agree

	1	2	3	4
1. I can find solutions to challenges I face in improving my living situation.				✓
2. If I need help, I am confident that I can find someone to assist me.				✓
3. I believe I can take the necessary steps to re-integrate into society.				✓
4. Even when things get tough, I can find ways to move forward.				✓
5. I can learn new skills or adapt to new circumstances to improve my life.				✓
6. I can overcome setbacks and continue to work towards stability.				✓
7. I am confident in my ability to secure a job or other means of financial support.				✓
8. I believe I can access housing or shelter options when I put effort into finding them.				✓
9. If a plan doesn't work, I can think of another way to reach my goals.				✓
10. I am capable of building positive relationships that will support my recovery and reintegration				✓

Internalized Stigma of Homelessness Scale (ISHS)

Name: _____

Instructions:

The statements below explore how you feel about yourself and your experiences as someone facing homelessness. For each question, please mark whether you strongly disagree (1), disagree (2), agree (3) or strongly agree (4).

Please be aware that the following statements are designed to capture **your personal experiences and feelings** related to homelessness, stigma, and self-perception. These statements are **not a reflection of what the researcher believes**. They are simply meant to help us understand how homelessness may impact your sense of self and how others perceive you. Your honest responses are greatly appreciated and will contribute to a better understanding of this important issue.

	1	2	3	4
Because of my situation no one would be interested in getting close to me.	✓			
I can have a good, fulfilling life despite my situation.				✓
Experiencing homelessness has ruined my life.	✓			
Stereotypes about homeless people apply to me	✓			
I am disappointed in myself for experiencing homelessness.	✓			
I feel less than others who have stable housing.		✓		
I am capable of changing my situation for the better.				✓
I feel out of place in the world because I am experiencing homelessness.	✓			
People ignore me or take me less seriously because of my situation.		✓		
I sometimes worry that my situation is a burden to my family and friends.			✓	
I am embarrassed or ashamed about experiencing homelessness.		✓		
People experiencing homelessness cannot live a good, rewarding life.	✓			
My situation has made me stronger.				✓
People treat me unfairly because I am experiencing homelessness.	✓			
I avoid getting close to people who have stable housing to avoid rejection		✓		
I don't socialize as much as I used to because of my situation.		✓		

In general, I am able to live life the way I want to.				✓
Because of my situation, I need others to make some decisions for me.	✓			
I don't talk a lot about myself with others because I don't want to burden them with my situation.			✓	
People often treat me like a child just because I am experiencing homelessness.		✓		
People experiencing homelessness tend to be violent.		✓		
Negative stereotypes about homelessness keep me isolated from the 'normal' world.		✓		
People experiencing homelessness can't contribute anything to society.	✓			
People can tell that I experience homelessness from the way I look.	✓			
Others think I can't achieve much in life because I am experiencing homelessness.	✓			

Qualitative Research

- How do you feel that society views homeless individuals, and how does this affect the way you see yourself?

ALL PEOPLE STRUGGLE TO A DEGREE IN THEIR LIFE. SOMETIMES THOSE WHO HAVE A ROOF - STRUGGLE MORE THAN THOSE WHO LIVE IN SHELTERS.

I FEEL TAKEN CARE OF AND SUPPORTED BY STAYING IN A SHELTER IN MALTA, THAN ~~BEING~~ ACTUALLY BEING SUPPORTED BY MY FAMILY.

- What do you wish people understood about experiencing homelessness?

IT IS NOT A DEGREE OR DESCRIPTION OF A PERSON OR THEIR SITUATION. EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS ACTUALLY HAS HELPED ME TO ADDRESS THE ROOT CAUSE, HEAL AND REDISCOVER MY WORTH AND PURPOSE IN LIFE.

- What gives you the hope or motivation to move forward in your recovery process?

IT CAN'T GET ANY LOWER THAN THIS. I HAVE ALL THE SUPPORT AND OPPORTUNITIES TO START A LIFE | LOW. FROM A NEW BEGINNING.

11.3.10 Participant 10

SURVEYS

General Self-Efficacy Scale (regarding reintegration process)

Name: _____

General information:

Please answer the following questions:

1. What is your gender?
 - ☒ Male
 - ☐ Female
 - ☐ Non-binary/other
 - ☐ Prefer not to say
2. How old are you?
(Please specify your age in years: 44)
3. How long have you been in Malta: 44yrs
4. How long have you been experiencing homelessness?
 - ☐ Less than 6 months
 - ☐ 6 months to 1 year
 - ☐ 1-3 years
 - ☒ More than 3 years

Instructions:

The following statements are about your confidence in overcoming challenges and improving your situation, especially in regard to re-integrating into society and achieving stability. Please read each statement carefully and indicate how much you agree or disagree using the following scale:

1 = Strongly Disagree

2 = Disagree

3 = Agree

4 = Strongly Agree

	1	2	3	4
1. I can find solutions to challenges I face in improving my living situation.			✓	
2. If I need help, I am confident that I can find someone to assist me.				✓
3. I believe I can take the necessary steps to re-integrate into society.				✓
4. Even when things get tough, I can find ways to move forward.				✓
5. I can learn new skills or adapt to new circumstances to improve my life.				✓
6. I can overcome setbacks and continue to work towards stability.				✓
7. I am confident in my ability to secure a job or other means of financial support.				✓
8. I believe I can access housing or shelter options when I put effort into finding them.			✓	
9. If a plan doesn't work, I can think of another way to reach my goals.				✓
10. I am capable of building positive relationships that will support my recovery and reintegration				✓

Internalized Stigma of Homelessness Scale (ISHS)

Name: _____

Instructions:

The statements below explore how you feel about yourself and your experiences as someone facing homelessness. For each question, please mark whether you strongly disagree (1), disagree (2), agree (3) or strongly agree (4).

Please be aware that the following statements are designed to capture **your personal experiences and feelings** related to homelessness, stigma, and self-perception. These statements are **not a reflection of what the researcher believes**. They are simply meant to help us understand how homelessness may impact your sense of self and how others perceive you. Your honest responses are greatly appreciated and will contribute to a better understanding of this important issue.

	1	2	3	4
Because of my situation no one would be interested in getting close to me.			✓	
I can have a good, fulfilling life despite my situation.				✓
Experiencing homelessness has ruined my life.		✓		
Stereotypes about homeless people apply to me	✓			
I am disappointed in myself for experiencing homelessness.	✓			
I feel less than others who have stable housing.	✓			
I am capable of changing my situation for the better.				✓
I feel out of place in the world because I am experiencing homelessness.				✓
People ignore me or take me less seriously because of my situation.	✓			
I sometimes worry that my situation is a burden to my family and friends.	✓			
I am embarrassed or ashamed about experiencing homelessness.	✓			
People experiencing homelessness cannot live a good, rewarding life.			✓	
My situation has made me stronger.			✓	
People treat me unfairly because I am experiencing homelessness.	✓			
I avoid getting close to people who have stable housing to avoid rejection	✓			
I don't socialize as much as I used to because of my situation.	✓			

In general, I am able to live life the way I want to.			✓	
Because of my situation, I need others to make some decisions for me.	✓			
I don't talk a lot about myself with others because I don't want to burden them with my situation.	✓			
People often treat me like a child just because I am experiencing homelessness.	✓			
People experiencing homelessness tend to be violent.			✓	
Negative stereotypes about homelessness keep me isolated from the 'normal' world.	✓			
People experiencing homelessness can't contribute anything to society.	✓			
People can tell that I experience homelessness from the way I look.	✓			
Others think I can't achieve much in life because I am experiencing homelessness.			✓	

Qualitative Research

- How do you feel that society views homeless individuals, and how does this affect the way you see yourself?

Some people think negatively about homeless people, assuming that they ended up homeless because they are criminals, drunks, or lazy people.

This doesn't affect how I see myself, as I know that the reason I became homeless was out of my control.

- What do you wish people understood about experiencing homelessness?

I wish that people volunteer more with homeless people, so that they are able to understand our lived realities, and hopefully ~~for~~ this would make them understand that homeless people are not inferior to them.

- What gives you the hope or motivation to move forward in your recovery process?

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