

The Unhoused in Navotas: A Point-In-Time Study of Prevalence and Narratives

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the extent, causes, and lived experiences of homelessness in Navotas City using a sequential explanatory mixed-method design. Quantitative findings identified that at least 136 homeless individuals reside in the city, with high concentrations in barangays Bagumbayan North, Tangos North, and Tangos South. Among the total respondents, 93 were surveyed and 43 were documented through observation. A total of 50 individuals, and 30 families were observed, with the families mostly comprising 2 members. Approximately 55% of the 93 surveyed individuals reported staying on sidewalks. 60% were male, while approximately 39% were female. Most participants were adults aged 35–64 years (62%), engaged in informal or unstable sources of income such as pedicab driving, or scavenging, if not unemployed. House fires, eviction, calamity, and unemployment stood out as main contributing factors to homelessness. Findings further indicated that homelessness in the city tends to be a long-term condition rather than a temporary setback. While qualitative narrative inquiry with five participants revealed four major themes, portraying how participants once lived modest yet meaningful lives, endured displacement, loss and other challenges, and how they sustain themselves through resilience, family ties, and faith. Overall, the study framed homelessness as a complex human experience and highlights the need for integrated, human-centered housing, livelihood, and sustainable and continuous data monitoring system for the unhoused population.

Keywords - Homelessness, prevalence, Point-In-Time (PIT) count, unhoused.

INTRODUCTION

Homelessness is a multifaceted phenomenon that transcends the mere absence of shelter. It encompasses the lack of access to secure, stable, and acceptable living conditions, often coupled with legal and social exclusion. Across various definitions, homelessness is understood not only in terms of rough sleeping but also as living in temporary, informal, or unsafe arrangements, highlighting its multidimensional nature (Konrady & Talarska, 2024; Fleury et al., 2021; Brown & Ballard, 2019) [1] [2] [3]. This phenomenon affects roughly 150 million people internationally (World Economic Forum, 2021) [4]. It is a critical issue affecting communities worldwide, closely tied to broader societal issues such as poverty, unemployment, the lack of affordable housing, and low wages (Meribole, 2020) [5].

In the Philippines, an estimated 4.5 million people are homeless—3.9% of the country's total population—with 3 million of them residing in Manila, the country's capital (World Population Review, 2024) [6]. This report makes Manila home to the largest unhoused population of any city in the world (Brown and Ballard, 2019) [3]. Navotas, a city geographically close to Manila, is also affected by the issue of homelessness. Although no comprehensive literature currently exists on the extent of homelessness in the area, the researchers have observed a notable presence of unhoused individuals and families throughout the city. Furthermore, upon visiting the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) office in Navotas, the researchers found that no official data on homelessness is available for the locality. This lack of information increases the risk of overlooking vulnerable subgroups within the community who may have specific needs and require targeted support. To address this gap, this study examined the size and demographic characteristics of the unhoused

population, identified prevalent causes of homelessness, and explored how individuals narrate their past, present, and future circumstances.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study employed a sequential explanatory mixed-method design to gain a comprehensive understanding of homelessness in Navotas City. This approach began with a quantitative phase, followed by a qualitative phase, where the second stage provided deeper context and meaning to the findings of the first. The quantitative phase used a descriptive approach to determine the number of unhoused individuals, their demographic profiles, and the most common causes of homelessness. A descriptive approach was appropriate as it allowed systematic collection and numerical summarization of population characteristics, producing essential objective data and guiding the qualitative phase (Creswell & Creswell, 2018) [7]. The second phase employed a narrative research design which explored how unhoused individuals in Navotas perceive and narrate their day-to-day lives in terms of their past, present, and envisioned future. As Clandinin and Connelly (2010) [8] emphasized, directing attention to temporality allows researchers to examine experiences across time, specifically how events are connected to the past, understood in the present, and projected into the future. This highlights that narrative inquiry intentionally captures how individuals make meaning of their lives through this temporal lens.

Research Participants

The study focused on the unhoused population across all barangays of Navotas City, Philippines. For the purposes of this study, homelessness was operationally defined based on the definitions of Konrady and Talarska (2024) [1], Fleury et al. (2021) [2], and Brown and Ballard (2019) [3]: Homelessness refers to the condition in which an individual or family lacks a permanent, secure, and adequate residence and is unable to provide or maintain a shelter that they can consider their own. This includes individuals living in streets, sidewalks, public spaces, vehicles, abandoned structures, makeshift shelters, and other places not intended for human habitation.

The study distinguished homelessness from housing insecurity and temporary shelter conditions. Housing insecurity referred to individuals living in overcrowded dwellings, at risk of eviction, or facing difficulty maintaining housing, but who still had access to a regular residence. Temporary shelter conditions referred to individuals staying in emergency accommodations, evacuation centers, transitional housing, or temporarily with relatives or friends while maintaining access to shelter. These groups were not included in the PIT count unless they were simultaneously living in places not meant for habitation.

The quantitative phase adopted a near-census through a Point-in-Time (PIT) count to identify all accessible individuals and families meeting the operational definition of homelessness during the designated observation period. Individuals who possessed a fixed and adequate residence, regardless of economic hardship, were excluded from the study. The count therefore focused specifically on the visibly unhoused population of Navotas City at the time of data collection. This strategy determined the population size without a specific sample. It is employed by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (US-HUD) as the primary mechanism for generating national homelessness estimates, as a key tool for understanding the scale and distribution of the population at a specific point in time (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, n.d.; National Alliance to End Homelessness, 2012) [9] [10]. Although PIT counts have limitations, such as the potential undercounting of hidden populations, they remain appropriate in homelessness research because they offer the most consistent and widely implemented baseline for prevalence estimation across communities (U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2021) [11].

For the qualitative phase, five participants were selected from the PIT count using convenience–purposive sampling. The convenience aspect pertained to the accessibility and availability of the participants, while the purposive component ensured that they met the established criteria relevant to the study’s objectives. The chosen sample size was consistent with narrative inquiry standards, which impose no fixed rule on the number of participants (National University Library, n.d.) [12]. Narrative research typically involves four to ten participants, and in some cases as few as one, depending on the study’s aims, as the focus is on depth and

meaning rather than generalizability (Dahal et al., 2024) [13]. Thus, five participants were deemed sufficient to capture diverse yet richly detailed personal narratives.

Research Instruments

To gather appropriate data, a total of four (4) instruments was created, validated, and utilized:

1. *Structured Survey Questionnaire*: Data for the quantitative phase were collected using a structured survey questionnaire adapted from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD-CPD) Model Interview-based Unsheltered Night of the Count Point-in-Time (PIT) Survey, with additional items contextualized for Navotas City. The 27-item instrument covered demographics, causes of homelessness, and health status, using open-ended, multiple choice, and Likert-scale formats. It was translated into Filipino and underwent content and language validation. Pilot testing through cognitive interviews with 11 participants assessed clarity and flow, resulting in minor revisions. Reliability testing showed high inter-rater agreement (~96%), moderate to strong test-retest stability (Pearson's $r = 0.555\text{--}0.680$; Spearman's $\rho = 0.548\text{--}0.656$; $p < 0.01$), and acceptable internal consistency (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.713\text{--}0.786$). Although some missing responses slightly affected estimates, overall instrument reliability remained satisfactory.

2. *Follow-up Structured Survey Form: Criteria for Qualitative Interview Participant*: A seven-item screening form was administered after the Point-in-Time (PIT) Count Survey to identify participants eligible for in-depth interviews. It combined observation and direct questions to assess eligibility, willingness, emotional readiness, and logistical feasibility, while minimizing intrusiveness. The form was presented in Filipino to ensure clarity, inclusivity, and participant comfort.

3. *Structured Observation Form*: When direct surveys were not possible due to participants' unwillingness, physical inability, or safety and ethical concerns, HUD-CPD's Observation-Based PIT Count Form was used as an alternative. This instrument included 10 open-ended descriptive items capturing observable features such as physical appearance, clothing, possessions, and unique identifiers. When researchers were familiar with the participant, demographic details such as age and gender were also recorded using close-ended items.

4. *Semi-structured Interview Questionnaire*: For the qualitative phase, data were collected through semi-structured interviews capturing the narratives of unhoused individuals. The guide was divided into past (pre-homelessness life and circumstances), present (daily realities, challenges, coping, and meaningful experiences), and future (hopes, aspirations, and recovery needs). Questions were developed in English and translated into Filipino, and were validated for content and language.

Data Collection Method

Prior to the data collection, researchers secured authorization from barangay offices and coordinated with social workers who supported the team. Then, the quantitative phase, Day of Count, was held on the 20th of September 2025. From 9:32 AM to 5:45 PM, a Point-in-Time near-census was performed to survey all unhoused individuals in Navotas City, collecting demographic and related information. Immediately after each survey, the Criteria for Qualitative Interview Participants form was utilized and identified potential qualitative participants.

The qualitative phase occurred four days later due to weather. Researchers explained the objective of the study, obtained consent for participation and audio recording, and conducted semi-structured interviews lasting 1 to 2 hours, covering narratives on past, present, and future. Field notes captured behaviors, interactions, and context, while audio recordings were transcribed verbatim. Two weeks later, follow-up interviews (member checking) verified narrative accuracy, enhancing credibility and trustworthiness.

Data Analysis

For the quantitative phase, the researchers used descriptive statistics to summarize and present the survey data systematically. Measures such as frequency counts and percentages described the demographic characteristics

of the unhoused population, such as age and gender, and illustrated the occurrence and patterns of the population in the area.

For the qualitative phase, narrative–thematic analysis was employed to examine the data from semi-structured interviews. This method captured both the individual storylines of participants and the recurring themes that emerged across cases, enabling a multidimensional understanding of homelessness in Navotas. By integrating narrative depth with thematic patterns, the analysis preserved the uniqueness of each account while systematically identifying shared experiences, challenges, and perspectives that inform broader social understanding.

Additionally, this study is guided by Life Course Theory and Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Systems Theory. Life Course Theory provides a framework for understanding how homelessness develops through the accumulation of experiences and disadvantages across different stages of life. Meanwhile, Bioecological Systems Theory explains how homelessness is influenced by interactions between individuals and the multiple environments in which they live, including family, community, institutions, and broader social structures. Together, these theories allow homelessness to be examined not merely as a housing issue but as a product of interconnected personal, social, economic, and environmental factors.

Ethical Considerations

Approval was obtained from barangay offices to conduct research involving the unhoused population in their proximity. To ensure safety and integrity, barangay social workers accompanied the researchers during data collection. Approvals and consents were secured and participants were informed of the study's purpose, their right to decline questions, and the option to withdraw at any time without penalty. Standardized observation forms were used for those unable or unwilling to respond. All data were collected with consent, kept confidential in compliance with the Data Privacy Act of 2012, and research procedures were fully documented to maintain transparency and accountability.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Guided by the research objectives, this section presents study's first phase—quantitative—findings, outlining the demographic characteristics of the unhoused population in Navotas City. It detailed the observed and surveyed data gathered during the Day of Count, highlighting the extent of homelessness, distribution across barangays, and their demographic profiles.

Quantitative Results

a. *The Unhoused Population in Navotas City*

During the Day of Count, the researchers were able to personally observe 43 homeless individuals and survey 93 unhoused respondents who were willing and able to participate in interview surveys. In total, 136 individuals were documented as part of the unhoused population within the specified timeframe.

Table 1. The Unhoused Population in Navotas City

City	Unhoused Population		Total Unhoused Population
	Surveyed	Observed	
Navotas City	93	43	136

b. *Distribution of Unhoused Population Among the Barangays in Navotas City*

Among the 18 barangays, Tangos North recorded the highest number of unhoused individuals with 24, followed by Tangos South with 18, and NBBS Kaunlaran with 14. These areas collectively account for a significant portion of the city's unhoused population. Meanwhile, Bagumbayan North reported 20 unhoused individuals, all of whom were observed but not surveyed. Moderate counts were recorded in North Bay Boulevard South

(NBBS) Proper (9), Navotas West (8), NBBS Dagat-dagatan (7), and Tanza 2 (7). Lower figures were found in San Rafael Village (5) and Navotas East (5), while North Bay Boulevard North (4), Daanghari (4), and San Roque (4) had similar smaller totals. The barangays of Bangkulasi, Sipac- Almacen, San Jose, and Tanza 1 reported minimal counts ranging from 1 to 3 unhoused individuals. Notably, Bagumbayan South recorded zero unhoused individuals during the period of observation. The population distribution suggests that homelessness in Navotas is geographically concentrated in densely populated areas, attributed to the availability of public spaces, proximity to informal settlements, and access to potential livelihood opportunities such as fishing and scavenging.

Table 2. Distribution of Unhoused Population Among Barangays in Navotas City

Barangay	Unhoused Population		Total Unhoused Population
	Surveyed	Observed	
San Rafael Village	5	0	5
NBBS* Proper	7	2	9
NBBS Kaunlaran	13	1	14
NBBS Dagat-dagatan	7	0	7
Bagumbayan South	0	0	0
Bagumbayan North	0	20	20
NBBN*	4	0	4
Bangkulasi	0	1	1
Navotas East	4	1	5
Navotas West	4	4	8
Sipac-Almacen	0	1	1
San Jose	2	1	3
Daanghari	2	2	4
San Roque	0	4	4
Tangos South	17	1	18
Tangos North	21	3	24
Tanza 1	0	2	2
Tanza 2	7	0	7
Total	93	43	136

*NBBS=North Bay Boulevard South, NBBN=North Bay Boulevard North

c. Estimated Number of Unhoused Individuals and Families in Navotas City

Results suggests that a total of 54 individuals and 30 families were identified as experiencing homelessness within the city. This pattern implied that family-based displacement—rather than individual migration—was a significant dimension of the city’s homelessness issue.

Table 3. Estimated Number of Unhoused Individuals and Families in Navotas City

City	Total Unhoused Population	
	Individuals	Families
Navotas City	54	30

d. Estimated Total Unhoused Families in Navotas City by Household Size

The data also revealed that the majority of unhoused families consist of two members (16 families), followed by three-member households (7 families) and four-member households (6 families). Only one family was recorded with five (5) members.

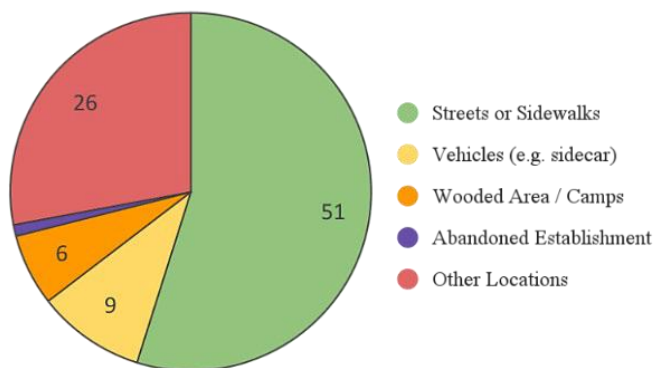
Table 4. Estimated Total Unhoused Families in Navotas City by Household Size

City	Household Size of Unhoused Families				Total
	Of 2	Of 3	Of 4	Of 5	
Navotas City	16	7	6	1	30
Total Number of Individuals	32	21	24	5	82

e. Demographic Profiles of the Unhoused Population in Navotas City

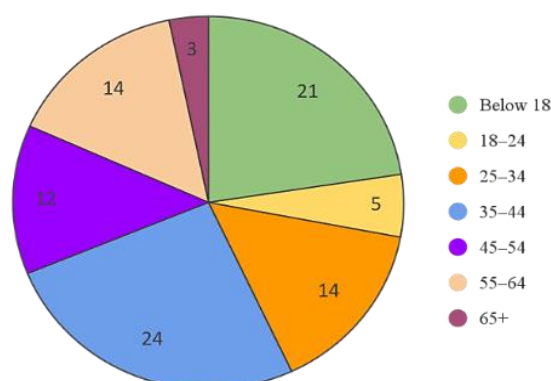
1. Place of Stay. The data on the reported place of stay among the 93 surveyed unhoused respondents in Navotas City reveal that a majority, specifically 51 individuals, were living on the streets or sidewalks, indicating that most of the city's homeless population occupy open public spaces. A smaller portion, nine (9) respondents, reported residing in vehicles such as sidecars or tricycles, while six (6) stayed in wooded areas or informal camps such as in Green Zone Park, and one (1) reported staying in an abandoned establishment. Meanwhile, 26 respondents identified staying in other locations as their place of stay. These included a variety of temporary or improvised shelters such as barangay halls, makeshift structures made of scrap wood and tarpaulin, dikes, basketball courts, and even schools. Some respondents also mentioned that their place of stay varied depending on the weather, suggesting a transient or mobile living condition without a fixed shelter. Such conditions illustrate the absence of formal emergency or transitional housing infrastructure within the locality.

Figure 1. Reported Place of Stay of The Unhoused Respondents



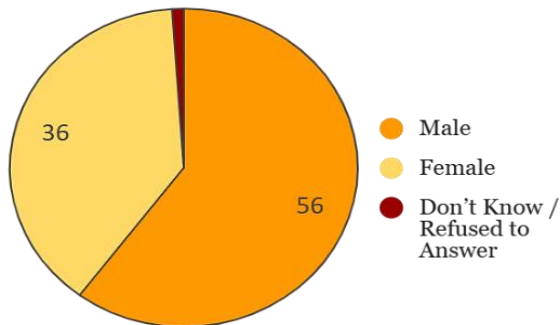
2. Age. The data on the age distribution of the 93 surveyed unhoused respondents in Navotas City showed that 24 respondents were aged 35–44, comprising the largest group. This was followed by 21 respondents aged below 18, 14 respondents aged 25–34, 12 respondents aged 45–54, and another 14 respondents aged 55–64. Meanwhile, five (5) respondents were aged 18–24, and three (3) respondents were 65 years old and above. This suggests that homelessness often occurs during an individual's productive working years, highlighting the intersection between unstable livelihood and housing insecurity.

Figure 2. Age Distribution Among the Unhoused Respondents



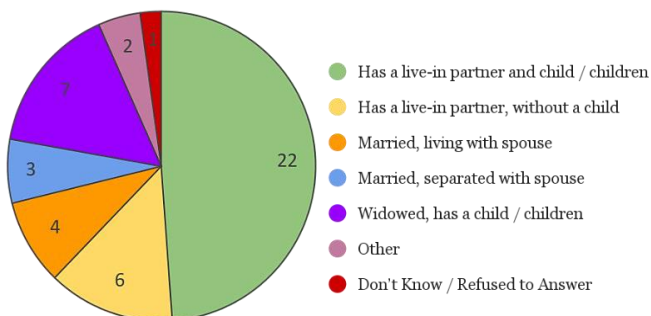
3. Gender. The data on the gender of the 93 surveyed unhoused respondents in Navotas City showed that 56 respondents identified as male, while 36 respondents identified as female. One (1) respondent declined to answer the question. This finding aligns with national trends where men are more likely to experience street-based homelessness due to labor migration and sociocultural expectations of independence.

Figure 3. Gender Distribution Among the Unhoused Respondents



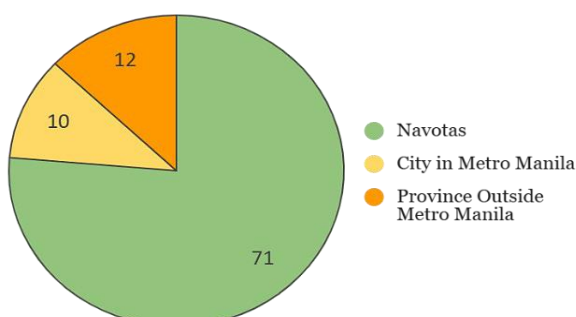
4. Civil Status. The data on the civil status of the 93 unhoused respondents in Navotas City showed that 22 respondents reported being with a live-in partner and with children, while six (6) respondents had a live-in partner but without children. Seven (7) respondents identified as widowed with children, and four (4) respondents were married and currently living with their spouse. Meanwhile, three (3) respondents reported being married but separated from their spouse, and two (2) respondents indicated other statuses, specifically having a child who is living with their ex-spouse. While one (1) respondent declined to answer the question, and none identified as widowed without children.

Figure 4. Civil Status of the Unhoused Respondents



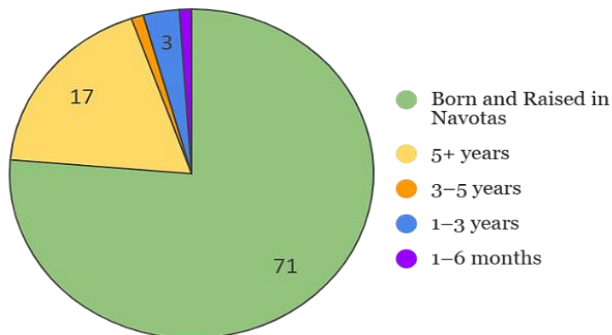
5. Geographic Origin. The data on the geographic origin of the 93 unhoused respondents in Navotas City show that the majority, or 71 respondents, were originally from Navotas City. Ten (10) respondents reported coming from other cities within Metro Manila, specifically Manila, Malabon, and Las Piñas. Meanwhile, 12 respondents indicated that they originated from provinces outside Metro Manila, including Tacloban, Masbate, Samar, Pangasinan, Bukidnon, Baliwag (Bulacan), Cebu, Bicol, and Nueva Ecija. This suggests that Navotas homelessness is largely a localized, generational issue rather than an influx of transient populations.

Figure 5. Reported Geographic Origin of the Unhoused Respondents



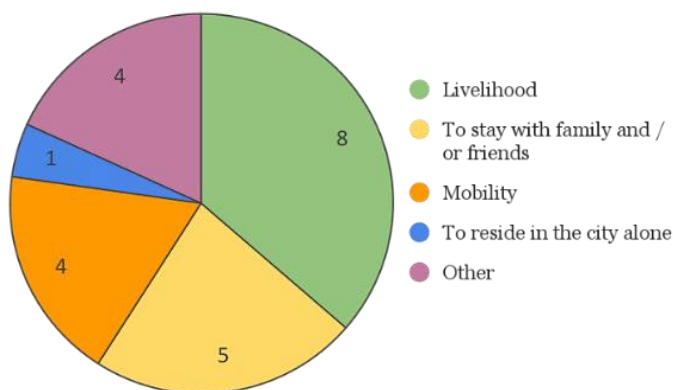
6. Length of Stay in Navotas. Findings revealed that the majority of the unhoused respondents, 71 out of 93, were born and raised in Navotas City, indicating long-term residency. 17 respondents reported living in the city for more than five years, while one (1) respondent had stayed for three to five years. Additionally, three (3) respondents indicated a stay of one to three years, and one (1) respondent reported having stayed in Navotas for one to six months. This indicates a deep-rooted connection to the place—where homelessness emerges mostly not from mobility but from entrenched poverty and insufficient housing support within their own community.

Figure 6. Reported Length of Stay in Navotas of the Unhoused Respondents



7. Reason for Staying in Navotas. Among the 22 unhoused respondents who were not originally from Navotas City, the primary reason for staying was work or livelihood, as stated by eight (8) individuals. Five (5) respondents reported staying to live with family or friends, while four (4) cited mobility as their reason for residence. Another four (4) respondents identified other reasons, which included homelessness due to a house fire (2), homelessness caused by family conflict (1), and having a spouse from Navotas (1). Additionally, one (1) respondent mentioned staying in the city to live alone. No participants declined to answer the question.

Figure 7. Reported Reason of Stay in Navotas of the Unhoused Respondents



8. Educational Attainment. Among the 93 unhoused respondents, the majority had low levels of formal education. A total of 23 respondents reported that they did not complete elementary education, while 15 had no formal education at all. Nine (9) respondents indicated that they had completed elementary school. In terms of secondary education, 14 respondents reported being undergraduates of junior high school, while six (6) had completed junior high school. Additionally, two (2) respondents stated they did not finish senior high school, and only one (1) successfully completed senior high school. Meanwhile, three (3) respondents were graduates of the Alternative Learning System (ALS), and two (2) indicated that they did not complete vocational or college-level studies, while three (3) others finished a vocational course. Notably, a total of seven (7) respondents provided other responses, which included those who were currently studying in elementary (6) and currently enrolled in senior high school (1). Another seven (7) respondents refused to answer the question. This educational gap significantly constrains the population's employability, therefore reducing their chances of obtaining stable or higher-paying work and limiting their social mobility. Additionally, the lack of basic literacy and vocational skills places them at the margins of the labor market, where only informal, low-skill, and often exploitative work remains accessible.

Table 5. Educational Attainment of the Unhoused Respondents

Options	Responses
Has no formal education	15
Finished daycare / kindergarten	1
Did not finish elementary	23
Finished elementary	9
Did not finish junior high school	14
Finished junior high school	6
Did not finish senior high school	2
Finished senior high school	1
Did not finish their vocational / college course	2
Finished a vocational course	3
Graduated in ALS	3
Other	7
Don't Know / Refused to Answer	7
Total	93

9. Source of Income. Among the 93 unhoused respondents, the majority, or 26 individuals, reported having no current source of income. An equal number of respondents— 19 each—indicated that they earned from part-time or casual jobs, and from informal work such as scavenging or other street-based activities. A smaller group of eight (8) respondents reported earning from self-employment, often through small-scale vending or service-based work, while four (4) individuals stated that they had regular or full-time jobs. Meanwhile, five (5) respondents mentioned begging as their primary means of livelihood, and one (1) respondent relied on government pension or benefits. Another five (5) identified other means of earning, while six (6) declined to answer the question. Those with regular or full-time jobs included individuals who oversee basketball court operations (1), work as tricycle drivers (1), and pedicab drivers (2). Respondents engaged in part-time or casual work performed roles such as fishermen (5), pedicab drivers (4), tricycle drivers (4), construction workers (2), dishwasher in a *carinderia* (1), fish seller (1), garbage collector (1), and soap seller (1). Meanwhile, those in self-employment typically engaged in small-scale enterprises like selling *siomai*, *palamig*, coffee, biscuits, and other goods, or provided personal services such as laundry work, barbering, and manual labor at the marketplace. In contrast, informal earners relied heavily on scavenging (16), cleaning jeepneys (2), and retrieving coins from canals (1) as their main sources of income. Some respondents described their means of living simply as “*diskarte*” (2) or “*pag-extra-extra*” (1) — informal terms that denote doing any available odd jobs to survive, which indicates that their livelihood is primarily anchored in the informal sector, which operates outside formal labor protections and social security systems.

Table 6. Source of Income of the Unhoused Respondents

Options	Responses
No current source of income	26
Regular / full-time jobs	4
Part-time / casual jobs	19
Informal work (e.g. scavenging)	19
Self-employment	8
Begging	5
Pension or benefits from government	1
Other	5
Don't Know / Refused to Answer	6
Total	93

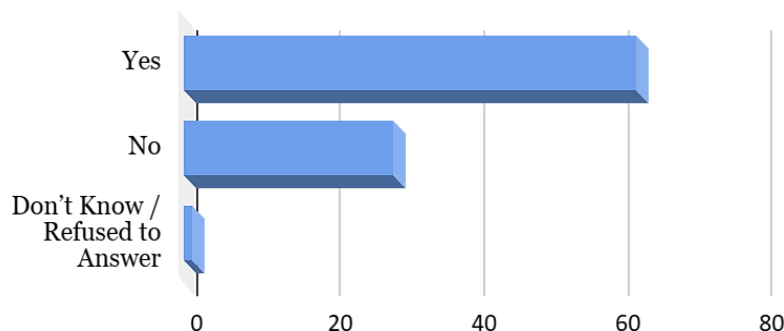
10. Length of Homelessness. Out of the 93 unhoused respondents, the highest number—24 individuals—reported being homeless for 1 to less than 5 years. This was followed by 18 respondents who had been unhoused for 5 to less than 10 years. Meanwhile, 12 respondents each indicated being homeless for 6 months or less, 10 to 19 years, and 20 years or more, showing that a significant portion of the population has experienced long-term homelessness. A total of 15 respondents refused to disclose the duration of their homelessness. These findings suggest that a substantial proportion of respondents experienced homelessness for extended periods.

Table 7. Reported Length of Homelessness of the Unhoused Respondents

Options	Responses
≤6 MONTHS	12
1 to <5 YEARS	24
5 to <10 YEARS	18
10 to 19 YEARS	12
≥20 YEARS	12
Don't Know / Refused to Answer	15
Total	93

11. Profile of Respondents According to Whether They Are First-Time Homeless. Findings revealed that a majority of the respondents, sixty-three (63) out of ninety-three (93), reported that this is their first experience of homelessness. Meanwhile, twenty-nine (29) respondents stated that they had previously experienced homelessness, indicating recurring displacement. Only one (1) respondent chose not to disclose an answer to this question.

Figure 8. Respondents' Profile According to Whether They are First-Time Homeless



12. Perceived Physical Health Condition. Out of the 93 unhoused respondents, nearly all rated their physical health positively. A total of 47 respondents described their health as *napakabuti* (very good), which means feeling strong and well, with no health problems. Meanwhile, 39 respondents considered it *mabuti* (good), defined as generally feeling well but sometimes getting sick or feeling weak. In contrast, three (3) respondents rated their health as *masama* (poor), referring to frequent sickness or weakness, and another three (3) respondents described it as *napakasama* (very poor), which means having serious health problems that affect daily living. Meanwhile, one (1) respondent refused to answer the question.

Table 8. Reported Physical Health Status of the Unhoused Respondents

Options	Responses
Very Good	47
Good	39
Poor	3
Very Poor	3
Don't Know / Refused to Answer	1
Total	93

13. Profile of Respondents According to Perceived Mental Health Condition. Among the 93 unhoused respondents, the majority reported a positive assessment of their mental health. A total of 52 respondents rated their mental well-being as *napakabuti* (very good), which means having a stable and healthy emotional and mental state. Meanwhile, 34 respondents described it as *mabuti* (good), defined as generally feeling fine on most days but occasionally experiencing emotional fluctuations. On the other hand, four (4) respondents indicated that their mental health was *masama* (poor), referring to frequent experiences of stress, anxiety, or emotional exhaustion, and one (1) respondent rated it as *napakasama* (very poor), meaning feeling extreme distress, hopelessness, and/or having a poor overall mental condition. Additionally, two (2) respondents chose not to answer the question. These findings may indicate a form of adaptive resilience, or social desirability bias, where respondents express optimism as a coping mechanism.

Table 9. Reported Mental Health Status of the Unhoused Respondents

Options	Responses
Very Good	52
Good	34
Poor	4
Very Poor	1
Don't Know / Refused to Answer	2
Total	93

f. Causes of Homelessness

Out of the 93 unhoused respondents, the leading causes of homelessness were house fire (17 respondents) and eviction from their residence (16 respondents). Twelve (12) respondents attributed their situation to natural calamities, while eleven (11) reported unemployment as a contributing factor. Additionally, nine (9) respondents cited family conflict, and three (3) experienced demolition of their homes. A notable nineteen (19) respondents indicated other causes, including being orphaned (3), property sold (1), born and raised unhoused (2), searching for their child (1), family homelessness (2), poverty (4), self-decision to leave home (5), and family's house being located in the province (1). Meanwhile, six (6) respondents refused to answer the question.

Table 10. Reported Causes of Homelessness of the Unhoused Respondents

Options	Responses
House Fire	17
Eviction	16
Calamity	12
Unemployment	11
Family Conflict	9
Demolition	3
Other	19
Don't Know / Refused to Answer	6
Total	93

Qualitative Results

This section presents the life stories of five participants, Participant 1 to Participant 5, each revealing a distinct face of homelessness in Navotas City. Beyond numbers and classifications, these narratives trace the participants' journeys through their past, present, and envisioned future, capturing the lived realities of struggle, endurance, and survival. Through their personal experiences, the narratives highlight how traumatic past, poverty, unstable livelihoods, and fragile social relations shape the daily survival and aspirations of those living without stable shelter.

a) **Participant 1:** Simeon “Onyok” Parientes, a 71-year-old male from Culaba, Biliran, traces the onset of his life instability to the loss of his mother at the age of five. What followed was a childhood marked by separation and constant movement, as he lived with different relatives across Leyte, Surigao, Bacolod, and Cebu. These repeated relocations disrupted his schooling and led him into informal labor at an early age. His experiences reflect not only physical displacement but also emotional strain, particularly in his relationship with his stepmother. As he recalled, “*Doon ko naisip, iba talaga ang tunay na nanay.*” This early combination of mobility, family instability, and limited education shaped a life trajectory constrained by reduced socioeconomic opportunities and cumulative disadvantage over time.

In early adulthood, he entered a short-lived relationship with a woman he met in Bacolod. However, they separated because her parents did not approve of their relationship, as Onyok did not yet have a stable livelihood.

On his own, he continued working as a porter in Divisoria before eventually relocating to Malibay, Pasay City. Malibay became his home for a decade. There, he rented a small space in a squatter area and earned a living working in a piggery. As he recalled, “*Naging maganda rin ang buhay ko sa Malibay, walang gulo.*” During this period, he met his live-in partner, with whom he later had a son. However, a fire destroyed their home and burned all their documents, leaving them with no choice but to move in with his partner’s parents and start over with almost nothing. Not long after, their relationship ended due to frequent conflict and misunderstandings.

After their separation, Tatay Onyok began a new journey, as a pedicab driver. Today, he lives inside his tricycle, parked along Guillermo Street in San Rafael Village, Navotas City. For more than 50 years, this has been his reality—living without permanent shelter while continuously working to sustain himself. He operates under an informal, unregistered tricycle driving arrangement through a *hulog-boundary* system. Recently, his employer, “*amo*”, finally offered him a rent-to-own agreement, where he pays PhP 150 daily within ten months to fully gain ownership of his home and livelihood: his tricycle. His income depends largely on the unpredictability of passenger demand and weather conditions. At the same time, he bears the full burden of operational costs, including fuel and repairs. When necessary, he turns to informal lending systems locally known as “*5/6*” to keep his vehicle running.

Despite physical strain, including *pasma* and recurring body numbness, Tatay Onyok continues to work each day. His persistence is grounded in a mindset of endurance, captured in his words: “*Hindi magpapatalo, hangga’t kaya, sige.*” Rather than seeking formal medical care, he relies on rest and personal resilience. His way of coping is shaped by discipline, religious faith expressed through daily prayer, and a quiet acceptance of hardship as part of everyday survival. Even in the face of precarity, he expresses a simple yet profound sense of contentment: “*Okay lang. At least nabubuhay ako.*”

Tatay Onyok also describes himself as “*colorum na tao*,” a term that reflects his lack of formal documentation and, consequently, his invisibility within institutional systems. This absence of recognition shapes not only his access to services, but also his sense of belonging.

Unlike other participants who continue to hope for relocation or change, Tatay Onyok has come to accept staying in Navotas as a permanent condition. As he stated, “*Hindi na ako lilipat-lipat.*” His aspirations are modest and grounded in immediate realities: to complete his *hulog-boundary* payments and fully own his tricycle, to eventually build or acquire a simple shelter or “*barong-barong*,” and to obtain a barangay ID.

As the interview ended, Tatay Onyok laughed and said his life could pass for a movie plot.

Beneath the humor, however, was a quiet truth — he does not seek grand wealth or fame, only recognition. What he wants is for his journey to be remembered, a simple proof that he lived, worked, and endured.

b) **Participant 2:** Victoria Romero, a 70-year-old woman currently living in NBBS Kaunlaran, Navotas, was born and raised in Samar. At the age of fourteen, she entered into marriage with a police sergeant assigned to Camp Crame. At the same age, she gave birth to her first child, marking the beginning of her role as a young wife and mother under challenging conditions.

Despite economic difficulty, she secured employment in a food corporation, working in coconut milk production and kitchen-related tasks for eleven years. During this period, she attempted to save for her family's future, but her expectations of financial stability were disrupted when her third child was born with a congenital heart condition, reflecting, "*Akala ko kapag nag-iipon ka, magiging magaan ang buhay... pero kahit anong ipon mo, mawawala rin kapag dumating ang sakuna.*" To support medical treatment, she mortgaged and eventually sold their home, and relocated. In Navotas, she borrowed money and purchased all prescribed treatments, yet the child did not survive. "*Ginawa ko na ang lahat... bakit nangyari ito?*" she expressed.

Subsequent losses followed. Her eldest child died of a heart attack, and shortly after, her husband succumbed to cancer in 2002. "*Magkakadikit lang silang lahat,*" she recalled. After these events, she began scavenging recyclable materials as her primary means of survival. She emphasized self-reliance, stating, "*Hindi ako nangungutang... kasi wala naman akong pambayad,*" and maintained ethical conduct: "*Hindi ako nagsha-shabu, hindi ako nagnanakaw. Basta trabaho lang.*"

Her vulnerability increased following a vehicular accident that resulted in partial blindness. Flooding episodes further weakened her health, while demolition of her informal shelter led to the loss of her remaining belongings and documents. "*Hindi naman kami humaharag sa daan... bakit niyo ginagawa ito sa amin?*" she questioned. She reported being denied assistance due to lack of registration, yet asserted her dignity: "*Hindi ako kriminal... Huwag [ninyo] akong tatakutin.*"

A severe episode of pneumonia then led to hospitalization, during which she was unconscious for eight days. She described a spiritual vision: "*Ayon sa librong binuksan... Hindi pa tapos ang misyon mo sa mundo. Bumalik ka.*" Upon recovery, she expressed diminished fear of death.

At present, Nanay Victoria lives on the street, sustaining herself through daily scavenging, earning less than one hundred pesos. Her routine begins early with prayer. She shares space and mutual support with neighbors, particularly in food preparation and daily survival. Her relationship with her only surviving child remains central, marked by small acts of care such as being asked, "*Nakakain ka na ba, Nay?*" Despite hunger and instability, she maintains acceptance: "*Masaya na ako basta nakakain kami kahit asin lang.*" She relies on a small radio for information and expresses contentment: "*Wala naman akong reklamo... basta nakakatulog ako ng payapa.*"

Looking toward the future, she expresses no material aspirations, instead entrusting her life to faith. "*Hindi ko na iniisip kung ano mangyayari... Dasal na lang. Siya na bahala.*" She hopes only for strength and time with her child, consistently affirming, "*Lord, ikaw na ang bahala.*"

c) **Participant 3:** A 53-year-old woman, Christina Bumatayo's life story began in the coastal city of Navotas, where she was born as the eldest of five children. Raised in a modest wooden house built on borrowed land, her early years were shaped by both simplicity and warmth. For eight years, she knew Navotas as her entire world, before the death of her grandfather, led to their displacement. "*Pinapaalis kami kasi hindi naman sa amin 'yung lupa,*" she explained. With no legal claim to the land, the family relocated to Balicbalic, Sampaloc, Manila. There, they lived in cramped conditions, renting a space from a relative. "*Maliit lang 'yung bahay noon, sobra. Pang isang tao lang... Pinagkasiya naming anim mag-ama.*" Despite the hardship, she remembered a time when life felt more manageable: "*Mura pa ang bilihan, kaya mura rin ang upa.*"

However, her childhood was abruptly altered by a traumatic event at the age of twelve. "*Nagalaw ako ng matandang lalaki,*" she recounted, describing the abuse she experienced from a man in their neighborhood. This incident became a turning point not only in her life but also in her family's structure. "*O sige, oras nang makulong na iyan, maghihiwalay tayo, 'sabi ni nanay ko.*" Following the man's imprisonment, her parents separated. "*Dahil sa nangyari sa akin, naghiwalay sila,*" reflecting the intertwined effects of personal violation and family disruption.

As she grew older, hardship became a constant. Her first child, born from the assault, was given away shortly after birth. Extreme poverty compelled her to make this decision, though she found some comfort in knowing the child was cared for. She remained in the same household with her child's adoptive parent, performing unpaid domestic labor: "*Wala akong bayad sa kanila... Ako palagi ang namamalantsa, naglilinis ng bahay.*" Often, she survived on leftovers: "*Kung minsan, binibigyan nila ako ng pagkain — pero tira lang.*"

Her physical condition eventually deteriorated, leading to a collapse that prompted her return to her grandmother. As an adult, she worked as a house helper, earning minimal wages. Later, she entered a relationship that led to marriage. Initially cared for, she soon experienced restriction and control. “*Ayaw niya akong palabas-labas,*” she said. She had two children, but economic hardship forced her to let others care for them.

Returning to Navotas, she survived through scavenging. Currently, Nanay Christina resides beside a bridge in Brgy. Navotas East, relying on small-scale scavenging and occasional support from strangers for sustenance. She faces physical challenges, including swelling and limited mobility in her right arm, knee pain, and lumps on her head. Her daily routines are minimal yet structured: procuring small meals, managing basic hygiene, and conserving energy to cope with chronic pain. Despite isolation, she maintains mental stability and endurance. She explained: “*Kapag wala akong makain, tatahimik na lang ako. Hihiga na lang ako dito.*” demonstrating resilience through adaptation and acceptance of her limitations.

She continues to endure, even when “*Malungkot na malungkot,*” she admitted. Nanay Christina does not aspire to accumulate wealth or restore her former home. She holds on to modest hopes for the future: “*Gumaling lang sana ako, para makapagtrabaho ulit ako,*” recovery, and a desire for care: to be in a nursing home. “*Gusto ko sana pumunta sa alagaan ng matatanda... gusto ko na may mag-alaga sa akin.*”

d) **Participant 4:** Ethel, a 54-year-old woman, presented a life narrative shaped by prolonged hardship yet sustained by resilience, faith, and hope. In earlier years, Nanay Ethel described a relatively stable and dignified life with her former husband in a small home on Policarpio Street, Navotas City. Despite limited means, they were able to meet basic needs, including regular meals, which she associated with contentment. “*Masaya na ako noon basta nakakakain ng tatlong beses sa isang araw.*” During this period, she worked as a waitress at a bar in the Horseman Hotel. While the work was physically demanding, it provided a sense of independence and sufficiency. Nevertheless, she emphasized the persistence of poverty across time, stating, “*Mahirap dati, mahirap pa rin ngayon.*” Occasional financial assistance from a relative in Japan helped sustain their living conditions, particularly in covering rent.

A significant turning point occurred following her remarriage. What was anticipated as a new beginning instead led to deeper instability, including the loss of housing and increasing financial insecurity. Although she considered seeking help again from her relative abroad, she refrained due to feelings of pride and reluctance to impose. In 2015, she and her husband participated in the government’s Balik Probinsya Program, which promised relocation to Cebu with housing support. Initially, this generated hope for permanent shelter. However, upon arrival, they found no assistance or accommodation, leaving them effectively abandoned. This experience led to lasting distrust, expressed in her statement: “*Bakit maniniwala ulit... Eh no’ng huling beses na naniwala kami, wala namang nangyari.*”

At present, Nanay Ethel and her husband maintain a routine centered on subsistence. Mornings begin with a shared drink before her husband departs with his sidecar to earn income. By midday, they eat a simple meal together. Evenings are spent beside their parked tricycle, which serves as their shelter beside a 7-Eleven convenience store in Brgy. San Jose, Navotas. Their living conditions expose them to environmental risks, particularly during rainfall, which she identifies as a major concern.

Her situation further deteriorated after experiencing a stroke during a storm, which left part of her body immobile. She was hospitalized through the assistance from emergency responders. Despite financial barriers to care, she accessed medical services through a DSWD card under the Assistance to Individuals in Crisis Situations (AICS) program. “*Lumapit po ako no’n sa doctor... nagbigay lang po ako ng card kasi hindi ka pwedeng pumasok ng hospital kapag wala kang dalawang libo... Wala kaming ginastos na pera no’n... ang ano lang namin ay ‘yung DSWD card na tinanggap naman.*” This intervention was critical to her survival.

Despite ongoing challenges, she continues to find moments of emotional relief. She values social interaction and small acts of kindness, stating, “*Masaya na natutuwa ka lang every time na napupunta ka sa labas... natutuwa ako sa mga nakikita kong magandang tanawin... Parang buhay lang natin ‘yan eh, umiikot-ikot lang tayo.*” But the kindness of strangers also reminded her of what she was missing. “*Buti pa yung ibang tao marunong maawa sa akin,*” she sighed. How strange, she seemed to say, that those with no blood ties could care more than the

ones who shared her own. “*Ang pinaka-bwisit ko lang sa mga kapatid ko... ang hindi ko gusto... hindi nila ako pinupuntahan dito.*” She was yearning, not for money or help, but for remembrance. “*Gusto kong... puntahan nila ako dito,*”

Although she has a 38-year-old child who now lives with a relative, she accepts this separation as a necessary circumstance. Occasional visits from her child and assistance from strangers reinforce her sense of connection.

Looking forward, she hopes to secure a stable home where she and her husband can live without fear. She also reflected on unrealized ambitions, noting that she once aspired to become a teacher or a secretary. Although these goals were not achieved, they remain part of her enduring sense of self. Each night, Nanay Ethel prays for improved circumstances.

Overall, her narrative demonstrates sustained resilience amid structural and personal adversity. While her material conditions remain precarious, her continued capacity to hope, endure, and find meaning underscores a form of quiet but persistent strength.

e) **Participant 5:** Virgie S. Remating is a 28-year-old mother of three. She lives with her long-time partner, also 28 years-old, with whom she shares caregiving responsibilities despite not being legally married. For the past four years, she and her children have resided in a self-made floating shelter, or *balsa*, in Brgy. Tanza Dos.

In earlier years, Virgie, her live-in partner, and their before, 2, children, lived in Adel, Brgy. Tanza Uno, Navotas City. There, she contributed actively to household income through informal labor, including drying fish, producing shrimp paste (*bagoong*), and selling rags. These tasks required long hours yet ensured daily subsistence. Despite these efforts, she recalled persistent deprivation: “*Talagang walang-wala talaga kami.*” Even then, their survival often depended on borrowing food or money.

Her partner’s involvement in vices further strained their situation: “*Mabisyo siya, nahulong sa barkada... napariwara ‘yung buhay niya.*” Despite this, she remained committed to supporting his reform: “*Pilit ko siyang pinagbabago para sa anak niyang panganay.*”

Conflict with her partner’s relatives intensified their instability. She explained, “*Nagkaproblema siya [asawa] sa pamilya niya... umuwi kami sa mama ko. Eh, nagka-alitan (sila) magkakapatid.*” These tensions ultimately resulted in homelessness.

After repeated displacement, Virgie’s brother constructed the floating shelter: “*Sige, gagawa tayo ng paraan para kahit kahiraso may matulugan mga bata.*” This act of support provided both physical refuge and emotional reassurance. Since then, her siblings have remained her primary support system: “*Kung wala akong magulang, wala akong kapatid, wala ring mangyayari sa ‘kin... hindi pa rin nila ako pinapabayaan.*”

The burden deepened following the birth of their third child, who developed a disability requiring continuous care. Virgie associated this condition with the stress she experienced during pregnancy: “*Na-stress ako sa kaniya [asawa]... dahil sa kaniya, kaya ‘yung anak ko nagka-ganito.*” At the same time, she described emotional distress from her partner’s relatives, who rejected her children: “*Ano ba ‘yung anak ko? Basura ba ‘yan para ipagtabuyan nila?*” These cumulative experiences reinforced both her sense of hardship and her protective role as a mother. She expressed this identity clearly: “*Sinusubukan ko lang maging matatag para sa mga anak ko... ginagawa ko ang lahat para maprotektahan at mapasaya sila.*”

At present, Virgie’s daily life revolves around caregiving and subsistence. She manages household tasks, attends to her children—particularly her child with disability—and seeks income through small-scale activities such as collecting recyclables or assisting in her partner’s fishing. However, their income remains unstable: “*Kapag walang labas, walang kita... naghahagilap kami ng pang-gamot ng bata.*” Her eldest child also contributes voluntarily, though this has drawn criticism: “*Bata-bata pa ng anak mo, pinaghahanap-buhay mo na, [sabi nila] Eh, anong gagawin ko? Gusto ng anak ko ‘yan.*” Social judgment adds emotional strain, leading her to cope privately: “*Minsan, iiyak ka na lang... Iniinyak mo na lang ‘yung sobrang galit mo.*”

Despite these challenges, she continues to find meaning in motherhood: “*Kahit pagod ka... makita mo lang ‘yung mga anak mo na masaya... nawawala ‘yung problema mo.*” Looking ahead, she aspires to pursue education through Alternative Learning System (ALS) or enrolling in Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA), “*Mag-aaral ako para sa anak ko.*” However, caregiving responsibilities create uncertainty. Her greatest fear concerns the health of her child: “*Iniisip ko na paano kaya kapag nawala anak ko?*” Alongside this fear, she maintains a modest aspiration for stable housing: “*Kahit wala kaming kainin... at least may sarili kaming tirahan.*”

Although she acknowledges exhaustion, her outlook remains grounded in hope. She expresses a desire for assistance, including from local government, and a wish for her experiences to be understood: “*Kung ako may cellphone lang ako, bibidyohan ko ‘yung pamumuhay ko...*” Overall, Virgie’s narrative reflects a continuous negotiation between adversity and perseverance, shaped by maternal responsibility, social exclusion, and enduring aspirations for stability and dignity.

Cross-story Thematic Analysis

a) **Navigating Family Life, Work, and Daily Challenges Before Homelessness.** Before experiencing homelessness, participants described interconnected realities shaped by family structures, economic roles, mobility, and resilience, with shared patterns evident across cases. Participants 1, 3, and 5 highlighted family life as both supportive and fragile: Participant 1 recalled early maternal loss, stating, “No’ng 5 years old pa lang ako, wala na akong nanay — ulila na,” while Participant 3 experienced family breakdown, “Naghiwalay na sila dahil nag-away-away sila,” and Participant 5 described a stable household, “Ang asawa ko nangingisda, ako naman sa bahay lang, nag-aalaga ng mga bata.” Similarly, Participants 1, 2, and 3 shared experiences of sustained labor despite hardship, with Participant 2 noting, “Mahigit labing-isang taon akong nanilbihan sa food corporation,” alongside informal work undertaken by others. These accounts collectively show that participants were active contributors to their households, yet remained vulnerable due to low wages and insecure employment, emphasizing that homelessness was rooted in economic precarity rather than personal failure.

Participants 1 and 3 also shared experiences of frequent relocation, moving across places in response to work demands and housing insecurity, with Participant 3 noting displacement because “hindi amin ang lupa.” While such mobility reflected adaptability, it also disrupted stability and weakened social support systems. Participant 1 expressed this through, “Hindi na ko gagawa ng masama... Kahit mahirap, okay lang,” while others maintained caregiving roles and simple daily structures. Across these subthemes, participants’ lives prior to homelessness were modest yet meaningful, characterized by responsibility, endurance, and hope, but constrained by structural inequalities such as unstable housing, limited income, and insufficient social protection.

Viewed through Life Course Theory, participants’ early experiences reveal how disadvantages accumulated over time. Childhood parental loss, family instability, interrupted education, and economic hardship limited access to opportunities and increased vulnerability to later housing instability. These findings suggest that homelessness was often preceded by long-term exposure to disadvantage rather than a single precipitating event. Through Bioecological Systems Theory, these experiences reflect the influence of the microsystem, particularly family relationships and caregiving environments, on later life outcomes.

b) **Disruptions and Vulnerabilities Leading to the Onset of Homelessness.** Participants’ pathways into homelessness reveal interconnected social, economic, health, and emotional challenges, often beginning within the household itself. Participants 1, 4, and 5 shared how strained or broken relationships contributed to their displacement. Participant 1 described the emotional impact of growing up with a stepmother: “No’ng medyo binata na ako, nagkagulo na ang buhay namin kasi iba talaga ang tunay mong nanay kaysa sa stepmother. Para bang iniiba na ako ng tatay ko.” Participant 5 recounted being forced out due to her husband’s addiction: “Umpisa po talaga... sa bisyo po talaga ng asawa ko... tapos tinaboy pa kami ng pamilya niya, kaya wala na kaming matirhan,” while Participant 4 highlighted marital conflict shaped by prolonged poverty: “Kapag mahirap talaga ang isang tao, gaya ko ngayon, lagi kong inaaway ang asawa ko. Kasi 12 years na kaming wala kaming bahay.” Alongside these social fractures, Participants 1, 2, and 4 experienced severe economic shocks that led directly to housing loss, including disaster, illness, and financial instability. Participant 1 shared, “No’ng araw nga do’n sa Malibay... nasunugan kami ng bahay. Lahat ng mga ano namin nasunog,” while Participant 2 described

compounded loss: “Nagsimula ang lahat nang magkasakit ang mga anak ko... isinangla ko ang bahay namin... Namatay rin ang asawa ko dahil sa cancer,” and Participant 4 stated, “Nung nagka-asawa, wala na kami pambayad sa bahay kaya nagkaganito na lang kami.” These accounts show that homelessness often arises from overlapping relational and financial breakdowns, where even a single crisis can destabilize already fragile living conditions.

Health and psychological burdens further intensified this vulnerability, as seen in the shared experiences of Participants 2 and 3, whose physical and caregiving struggles limited their capacity to recover. Participant 2 noted, “Kailangan ng malaking halaga para sa gamot... Unti-unting naubos ang ipon at wala na akong pambayad,” while Participant 3 endured ongoing pain from labor: “Masakit pero tinitiiis ko lang... Hindi ko alam kung putol na ba ‘to... Pati ‘yung tuhod ko masakit na.” At the same time, Participants 2, 4, and 5 described the emotional weight of these hardships, with Participant 2 expressing, “Masakit at mabigat sa kalooban ang mawalan ng lahat... Pero hindi ako nawalan ng pananampalataya... Bahala na si Lord sa akin,” Participant 4 admitting, “Minsan po, kapag wala ka pong pera, bored. Maiinis ka kasi wala kang pera,” and Participant 5 sharing, “Ang hirap po... parang gusto mo na sumuko sa sarili mong buhay. Hindi mo magawa kasi para sa pamilya mo.” Finally, Participants 1 and 2 revealed experiences of exploitation and social invisibility, with Participant 2 stating, “Pananamantala ng ibang tao... ginamit ako sa picture-picture kapalit ng kunwaring tulong,” and Participant 1 reflecting exclusion due to lack of identification: “Kaya... hanggang ngayon hindi na ako nakapagparehistro... ‘colorum na tao.’” Together, these subthemes demonstrate that homelessness is not solely the result of economic deprivation but a cumulative process involving family conflict, financial shocks, health crises, emotional strain, and social marginalization, ultimately eroding both material stability and human dignity.

The findings indicate that participants’ homelessness emerged through the interaction of multiple vulnerabilities rather than a single cause. Family conflict, unemployment, illness, disasters, and displacement frequently occurred together, compounding participants’ difficulties. From a Life Course perspective, these experiences represent cumulative disadvantages, whereby repeated hardships progressively weakened housing stability. Through Bioecological Systems Theory, these vulnerabilities can be understood as the interaction of family circumstances (microsystem), institutional supports and employment opportunities (exosystem), and broader socioeconomic conditions such as poverty and disaster exposure (macrosystem).

c) Sustaining Everyday Life Amid Hardships. Participants’ daily lives while experiencing homelessness reveal interconnected patterns of survival shaped by routine, economic hardship, health challenges, social relationships, and faith. Participants 1, 2, and 4 described how their days are structured around meeting immediate needs despite uncertainty. Participant 1 shared, “Pag gising ng umaga, kakape muna ako, pipila na ko dito sa pilahan ng tricycle,” while Participant 2 noted, “Meron akong kape, hati kami ng anak ko tapos pahinga ko minsan hapon na kasi inaatay ko anak ko,” and Participant 4 added, “Kapag morning naman po, mag-aalmusal lang po kami. Kape, almusal diyan sa gilid, merong beef rice diyan.” These routines, though simple, create a sense of normalcy and control. At the same time, Participants 1, 2, and 5 emphasized the instability of their livelihoods. Participant 1 explained, “Minsan, walang masyadong pasahero kaya maliit ang kita. ‘Pag gano’n, wala ka talagang maiuwi,” often leading to debt, “Tatlong-libo na ‘yan, araw-araw huhulugan ng isang-daan hanggang matapos.” Participant 2 shared, “Kailangan ko gumawa ng paraan para makaraos... nangangalakal ako para may makabili ng pagkain,” while Participant 5 expressed, “Minsan, sakto lang pangkain.” These accounts show that survival depends on irregular income, constant effort, and difficult trade-offs. Meanwhile, Participants 1, 3, and 4 reported health and environmental difficulties that further constrain their capacity to cope, with Participant 1 stating, “Mula no’ng araw, babad ako sa init... tapos biglang uulan, basang-basa ako niyan,” Participant 3 expressing, “Hindi nga ako makalakad nang maayos at hindi ako makabihis,” and Participant 4 adding, “Minsan, sobrang init, tapos maya-maya ulan naman. Ang hirap kapag wala kang masilungan.” These conditions highlight how physical vulnerability and exposure intensify daily hardship.

Despite these challenges, participants demonstrated strong emotional coping mechanisms grounded in relationships and faith. Participants 2, 4, and 5 described how social connections provide relief and motivation, with Participant 2 sharing, “Masaya rin ‘pag nagkakatuwaan kami. ‘Pag maraming pasahero, okay ang araw,” Participant 4 noting, “Kahit pagod ka, hirap ka... onting makita mo lang ‘yung anak mo na masaya, nawawala ‘yung problema mo,” and Participant 5 stating, “Nandiyan ‘yung ate ko... hindi ako pinabayaan ng mga kapatid

ko.” In parallel, Participants 1, 3, and 4 emphasized faith as a central source of resilience. Participant 1 said, “Minsan, dasal na lang din. Wala ka namang ibang malalapitan kundi Diyos,” Participant 3 added, “Tiwala lang at pagdarasal sa Diyos... pagdasal mo lang sa Diyos at magtiwala ka,” and Participant 4 expressed, “Lahat ng hiras, pinagdadasal ko lang. Alam kong may plano si Lord.”

Participants developed adaptive strategies that enabled them to continue functioning in daily life. These strategies included maintaining routines, engaging in informal work, relying on family support, and drawing strength from faith. Bioecological Systems Theory helps explain these findings by highlighting the role of protective factors within participants' social environments. Family members, community relationships, and spiritual beliefs served as important resources that supported resilience despite limited formal assistance.

d) Holding on to Faith and Aspiration in the Face of an Uncertain Future. Participants' future outlooks reflect a complex interplay of aspiration, faith, family responsibility, and uncertainty, revealing both hope and disillusionment. Participants 1, 2, and 4 expressed shared aspirations for stability through ownership, particularly of housing or livelihood assets. Participant 1 stated, “Yun na lang pangarap ko... makamit ko na siya (tricycle),” while Participant 4 longed for “kahit kapirasong bahay, basta safe kami,” and Participant 2 hoped to “stop renting and have a small place to call our own.” These accounts show that material ownership symbolizes not only economic security but also dignity and emotional peace. At the same time, Participants 1, 3, and 5 emphasized faith as a central source of strength, with Participant 3 explaining, “Dasal lang... kasi wala namang ibang magliligtas,” Participant 5 sharing, “Kahit makakain lang three times a day, okay na 'yon sa amin... Tulungan niyo po ako, Panginoon,” and Participant 1 affirming, “Tiwala lang sa Diyos, kasi Siya lang ang alam kong di nang-iwan.” This reliance on spirituality reflects how belief systems sustain hope and provide emotional grounding amid ongoing hardship.

Family also emerged as a central source of motivation, as seen in the shared experiences of Participants 2, 4, and 6, whose aspirations are rooted in the well-being of their loved ones. Participant 4 expressed, “Gusto ko talaga 'yung maayos pamumuhay naming mag-iina,” Participant 5 shared, “Makaligtas lang siya sa sakit niya, okay na ako,” and Participant 2 emphasized, “Okay lang basta nakapagtapos ang anak ko.” However, alongside these hopes, Participants 3, 4, and 6 conveyed uncertainty and distrust toward the future. Participant 4 noted, “Pumipila kami sa pabahay, pero hindi naman totoo,” reflecting frustration with unmet promises, while Participant 3 stated, “Parang wala nang pag-asa, kasi kahit anong gawin mo, ganun pa rin,” and Participant 1 expressed resignation: “Ito na'ng buhay ko. Wala na akong ibang pangarap.”

Participants' continued aspirations for housing, education, health, and family well-being demonstrate that homelessness does not eliminate future-oriented thinking. Although many participants experienced disappointment and uncertainty, they continued to exercise agency through caregiving, work, and personal goals. From a Life Course perspective, these aspirations represent efforts to alter future life trajectories despite prolonged adversity. Simultaneously, Bioecological Systems Theory suggests that achieving these aspirations depends not only on individual determination but also on access to supportive family, community, and institutional environments.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study provide a baseline estimate of the visible homelessness in Navotas City and suggest that homelessness is a complex social condition shaped by the interaction of economic, environmental, social, and personal circumstances. The Point-in-Time (PIT) count identified 136 visibly unhoused individuals across the city, revealing that homelessness is a measurable and visible concern within the locality. Although the count represents only a snapshot during the period of data collection and may not capture all forms of homelessness, the concentration of unhoused individuals in barangays such as Tangos North, Tangos South, and NBBS Kaunlaran indicates that homelessness is not randomly distributed throughout the city. These concentrations may reflect the tendency of unhoused individuals to remain in areas where livelihood opportunities, transportation access, public visibility, and informal support networks are available. Similar spatial patterns have been observed by Fleury et al. (2021) [2] and Songco et al. (2022) [14], who noted that homeless populations in urban areas often cluster in locations that provide opportunities for survival and income generation.

The demographic findings further suggest that homelessness in Navotas primarily affects individuals during their economically productive years. Most respondents belonged to the 25–54 age group, indicating that homelessness is not confined to older adults or individuals unable to work. At the same time, the predominance of respondents with low educational attainment and reliance on informal or unstable sources of income points to the role of economic precarity in shaping housing instability. These findings imply that employment alone may not be sufficient to prevent homelessness when earnings are inadequate, inconsistent, or unsupported by social protection mechanisms. Brown and Ballard (2019) [3] and Bedmar et al. (2022) [15] similarly observed that low wages, precarious employment, and limited access to affordable housing can leave working-age adults vulnerable to homelessness despite active participation in the labor force.

Another notable finding is that the majority of respondents were born and raised in Navotas and had lived in the city for most of their lives. This suggests that homelessness in the locality is largely experienced by long-term community members rather than being driven primarily by migration. The finding points toward persistent local conditions that may contribute to housing instability, including poverty, limited economic mobility, insecure housing arrangements, and repeated exposure to environmental risks. Arcilla (2022) [16] likewise observed that homelessness in Philippine cities frequently develops within communities already experiencing long-standing socioeconomic disadvantage. Viewed through the lens of Life Course Theory, the findings suggest that homelessness may emerge through the accumulation of disadvantages over time, wherein repeated exposure to hardship gradually increases vulnerability to housing loss.

The causes of homelessness reported by respondents further support the view that homelessness is a cumulative process rather than the result of a single event. Fires, eviction, natural calamities, unemployment, illness, and family conflict emerged as major factors contributing to displacement. Importantly, these experiences rarely occurred in isolation. Rather, the findings indicate that economic, social, and environmental pressures often overlap, making recovery from one crisis more difficult when other vulnerabilities are already present. For example, a family experiencing financial hardship may be particularly susceptible to homelessness following a disaster, illness, or relationship breakdown. This pattern aligns with the observations of Brown and Ballard (2019) [3], Horowitz et al. (2023) [17], and Heston et al. (2023) [18], who emphasized that homelessness frequently results from the interaction of multiple structural and personal vulnerabilities rather than from individual choices alone.

The qualitative narratives provide deeper insight into how these vulnerabilities unfold across the life course. Participants described experiences of family instability, childhood adversity, economic hardship, insecure employment, repeated relocation, and caregiving responsibilities long before becoming homeless. Their stories reveal that homelessness was often preceded by years of struggle rather than a sudden collapse of stability. Several participants had extensive work histories and remained actively engaged in supporting themselves and their families despite limited resources. These accounts challenge stereotypes that portray homelessness as a consequence of personal irresponsibility and instead highlight the cumulative effects of structural disadvantage. Similar findings were reported by Grattan et al. (2021) [19], Aykanian (2020) [20], and Brown and Ballard (2019) [3], who found that homelessness often develops through a gradual accumulation of social and economic hardships across different stages of life.

The participants' present experiences also demonstrate that homelessness extends beyond the absence of shelter. Daily life was characterized by constant efforts to secure food, income, healthcare, safety, and social support while coping with environmental exposure and physical hardship. Many participants reported chronic health concerns, emotional distress, and uncertainty regarding the future. Nevertheless, they continued to maintain routines, relationships, and responsibilities that provided structure and meaning to their lives. These findings suggest that homelessness should be understood not only as material deprivation but also as an ongoing process of adaptation and survival. Similar observations were made by Songco et al. (2022) [14], Lambino (2023) [21], and Batterham et al. (2022) [22], who noted that homeless individuals frequently navigate complex challenges that affect their physical, emotional, and social well-being simultaneously.

A particularly important finding is the role of social relationships and faith in sustaining resilience. Across participant narratives, family members, relatives, friends, and community connections frequently served as sources of practical assistance and emotional support. Faith likewise emerged as a central coping mechanism,

providing participants with hope, meaning, and psychological stability during periods of uncertainty. These findings suggest that resilience among unhoused individuals is not solely an individual trait but is also shaped by interpersonal and cultural resources. Consistent with the findings of Ison et al. (2024) [23], Woods et al. (2024) [24], and Griffiths (2023) [25], resilience was expressed through caregiving, persistence, spirituality, and the maintenance of social bonds despite difficult circumstances.

The participants' future aspirations further reveal the complex relationship between hope and uncertainty. Many continued to express desires for stable housing, education, employment, improved health, and better opportunities for their families. At the same time, some participants expressed disappointment with institutions, particularly when previous housing or assistance programs failed to meet expectations. These accounts suggest that homelessness involves not only material insecurity but also uncertainty regarding future opportunities and support. While participants demonstrated considerable agency and determination, their narratives also reveal barriers that may limit their ability to achieve long-term stability without broader structural assistance.

Taken together, the quantitative and qualitative findings portray homelessness in Navotas as a multidimensional condition shaped by the interaction of livelihood insecurity, housing vulnerability, family circumstances, health challenges, environmental risks, and access to support systems. The findings support Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Systems Theory by demonstrating how individual experiences are influenced by interconnected family, community, institutional, and societal environments. Similarly, Life Course Theory provided a useful framework for understanding how cumulative disadvantage across time can increase vulnerability to homelessness. While the present study cannot establish causal relationships or represent all forms of homelessness within the city, it provides evidence that homelessness is best understood as a complex social process requiring responses that address both immediate needs and the broader structural conditions that contribute to housing instability.

CONCLUSION

The study concluded that homelessness in Navotas City is a multidimensional social issue, deeply rooted in economic precarity, environmental vulnerability, and institutional neglect. Quantitative findings provided an initial snapshot and baseline estimate of visible homelessness in Navotas City, while qualitative narratives humanized these numbers, revealing the lived realities behind displacement and marginalization. Findings suggest that homelessness in Navotas persists because support systems—both structural and familial—are fragile. Fires, evictions, and urban poverty continuously displace individuals who, in the absence of state protection, rely on informal work, kinship ties, and faith for survival. The narratives revealed that despite social exclusion, the unhoused retain hope, moral strength, and dignity: values that reflect resilience rather than failure. Theoretically, the findings affirm Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Systems Theory, showing how environmental layers (family, community, institutions) interact to either reinforce or alleviate marginalization. Life Course Theory further explains how disrupted life trajectories and unequal access to resources shape long-term vulnerability. Ultimately, the study underscores that ending homelessness requires more than temporary shelter interventions. Sustainable solutions must integrate livelihood support, psychosocial care, and inclusive housing programs that address structural barriers and affirm the humanity of every individual. By situating personal stories within systemic realities, this study highlights that the path toward housing security in Navotas must begin with compassion, equity, and social accountability.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. To the Local Government (of Navotas City, and The Philippines), establish a sustainable and continuous data monitoring system for the unhoused population. Conducting an annual Point-In-Time count will help track demographic changes and emerging needs of the marginalized sector. Establishing a localized database will allow programs to be more targeted and responsive to actual on-ground realities. Furthermore, address the roots of homelessness by strengthening housing initiatives. Develop low-cost housing programs that are both calamity-resilient and accessible to employment areas, rather than relocating families to distant sites that often disrupt livelihoods. These shelters must also serve as entry points for reintegration into society through continuous case management and community linkage. Implementing livelihood training and employment referral programs in collaboration with Department

of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA), and local cooperatives can also empower unhoused individuals to regain economic stability. Integrating skills training with actual job placement opportunities would provide long-term solutions rather than temporary relief. Furthermore, local government officials should help unhoused individuals obtain legal identification documents, which are crucial for accessing employment, education, and other necessities.

2. To Non-Government Organizations (NGO) and other local groups, take part in information drives and other volunteer initiatives aimed at promoting empathy and reducing stigma toward the unhoused. Public awareness and community involvement must be strengthened.
3. To Future Researchers, allocate sufficient time for the careful review, validation, and reliability testing of research instruments to ensure accuracy and consistency of data. Adequate training sessions for enumerators should also be conducted to familiarize them with the instruments, ethical considerations, and fieldwork protocols. It is also a great point of emphasis that the Point-In-Time count is best conducted at night, when most unhoused individuals are settled in their usual locations, thus reducing issues related to mobility and undercounting. It is further advised that more enumerators be assigned to each barangay or specified locations to maximize coverage and minimize fatigue during data collection. Enumerators should be trained to approach participants calmly and confidently, establishing trust and minimizing potential discomfort. Following the researchers' successful technique, enumerators are also advised to avoid wearing bold-colored clothing during the day of count, as neutral attire helps maintain a non-intimidating presence in the field. For the qualitative phase, it is recommended that future researchers build rapport and establish a sense of trust with interviewees prior to the actual interview to elicit deeper, more authentic narratives. This relational approach enhances the quality and emotional depth of responses. Furthermore, member-checking should be conducted as early as possible—immediately after transcription and initial narrative analysis—to validate the accuracy of interpretations and ensure that the participants' voices are truthfully represented. These methodological adjustments will strengthen the rigor, credibility, and ethical integrity of future studies on homelessness and other sensitive social phenomena. The researchers, finally, recommend that future studies expand to other cities, or include episodic homelessness to build a more comprehensive national understanding of the issue.

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