

**EXAMINING THE IMPACT OF HOMELESSNESS ON THE WELL-BEING OF  
INDIVIDUALS IN BULESA SUB-COUNTY, BUGIRI DISTRICT**

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**UGANDA CHRISTIAN  
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## DECLARATION

I WANJALA JOHN declare that this dissertation is my original work and has not been submitted for any academic award in any institution of higher learning.

Sign:  .....

Date: ...7th/05/2026.....

## APPROVAL

I confirm that this dissertation titled examining the impact of homelessness on the wellbeing of individuals in Bulesa Sub-county Bugiri District has been written under my guidance as supervised.

Name: Mr. Bukenya Liino

Signed: .....

Date: 09/05/2026

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## ABSTRACT

The research looked at how homelessness affects the wellbeing of people in Bulesa Sub County, Bugiri District. The study was guided by Maslows hierarchy of needs theory (1943). A cross sectional research design was used together with both qualitative and quantitative methods. Data was collected from 35 respondents including homeless people, community leaders and social workers using questionnaires and interviews.

The findings showed that homelessness in Bulesa Sub County greatly affects the physical well being of people. Many respondents reported problems with hygiene (94.3%), exposure to health risks due to sleeping in unsafe places (91.4%), lack of enough food (88.6%), illnesses caused by lack of shelter (85.7%) and limited access to health care services (82.9%).

According to the study, homelessness causes major social problems. These include limited engagement in social activities (84.3%), stigma from the community (85.7%), exposure to violence and theft (88.6%), lack of social support (91.4%) and difficulty obtaining education or vocational training (80%).

Despite these difficulties, homeless people attempt to manage in various ways. These include working part time (88.6%), creating social networks (82.9%), depending on one's own strength (80%), practicing religion (77.1%) and asking for assistance from the community (74.3%).

The study concludes that homelessness in Bulesa Sub County negatively affects physical health, social relationships and emotional well being of people. It also shows that the coping strategies used are not enough to solve the problem in the long term.

The study recommends that the local government should create community based shelters, community leaders and NGOs should increase awareness to reduce stigma and the government should introduce vocational training and income generating programs to support homeless individuals.

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.0 Introduction**

This chapter include the background of the study, the problem statement, purpose of the study, specific objectives, research questions, scope, justification, significance, the conceptual framework and operational definitions of key terms.

#### **1.1 Background of the study**

##### **Theoretical background**

The study was guided by Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory (1943) which explains that people must first meet their basic needs such as shelter, safety, food and health before they can achieve higher level needs like belonging, self esteem and self actualization.

According to Maslow, lack of stable housing interferes with physical, emotional and social well being. When individuals are homeless, they struggle to meet their fundamental needs which affects their mental health, personal relationships, productivity and general quality of life.

This theory helped to explain how homelessness in Bugiri Sub County limited individuals' ability to live healthy and fulfilling lives.

According to UN Habitat (2023), an estimated 1.6 billion people lived in inadequate housing and over 150 million people have no home at all. In many countries homelessness is linked to poverty, unemployment, family breakdown, substance abuse and lack of affordable housing.

Globally, research showed that homeless individuals often suffer from poor physical health, mental health challenges, low self esteem and limited access to education and social services (WHO, 2022).

In Africa, homelessness was a growing concern because of high levels of poverty, rapid urbanization, conflicts and weak social protection systems. Many individuals

who migrate to urban areas in search of work ended up living on the streets due to lack of affordable housing.

Studies conducted in Kenya, South Africa and Nigeria showed that homeless people experience stigma, violence, poor health and limited access to basic services (Adebayo, 2020). Homeless youth in African cities were particularly vulnerable to exploitation, substance abuse and health risks.

In Uganda, homelessness affected children, youth, women and adults due to poverty, family conflicts, domestic violence, unemployment and rural urban migration. Urban centers such as Kampala, Jinja, Mbale and Iganga had large populations of street individuals.

Bugiri district like many rural and semi urban areas faced challenges such as unemployment, poverty, domestic violence and poor housing conditions. Individuals who became homeless often lack food, healthcare, emotional support and safety. There was limited research documenting how homelessness affected their physical, emotional and social well being especially in Bugiri sub county.

This study therefore aimed to fill this gap by exploring the impact of homelessness on the well being of individuals in Bugiri sub county, Bugiri district.

## **1.2 Problem statement**

Ideally, every person should have access to safe and stable housing which is essential for physical health, emotional stability and social wellbeing. Housing is a basic human right and without it people struggle to meet their daily needs.

However, in Bugiri Sub County, a growing number of individuals were living in homeless conditions due to poverty, family breakdown, substance abuse, unemployment and limited social support. Many slept in unfinished buildings, shop verandas, markets and on the streets.

Homeless individuals in Bugiri faced various challenges such as poor hygiene, hunger, lack of safety, exposure to violence, stigma and limited access to health care and social services. These conditions negatively affected their well being and made it difficult for them to improve their lives.

Even though homelessness was visible in Bugiri district, there was limited research on how it affected the well being of individuals. Without such information, local leaders,

social workers and policymakers could not design effective interventions to support homeless individuals.

Therefore, this study sought to examine the impact of homelessness on the physical, emotional and social well being of individuals living in Bugiri sub county.

### **1.3 Purpose of the study**

The purpose of this study was to examine how homelessness affects the well being of individuals in Bulesa sub county, Bugiri district.

### **1.4 Specific objectives**

To assess the physical challenges faced by homeless individuals in Bulesa sub county.

To investigate the social challenges and risks experienced by homeless individuals.

To explore the coping strategies used by homeless individuals to survive.

### **1.5 Research questions**

What physical challenges do homeless individuals face in Bulesa Sub county?

What social challenges do homeless individuals face?

What coping strategies do homeless individuals used to deal with homelessness?

### **1.6 Scope of the study**

#### **a) Content scope**

The study focused on examining the impact of homelessness on the physical challenges and social well being of individuals as well as the coping mechanisms they used for survival.

## **b) Geographical scope**

The study was conducted in Bugiri sub county in Bugiri district in Eastern Uganda. The area was suitable because many individuals who experienced homelessness were found in trading centers, markets and villages within the sub county.

## **c) Time scope**

The study reviewed literature between 2020 and 2025, a period when Bulemba Sub County experienced increased cases of poverty and displacement.

## **1.7 Justification of the study**

This study was important because homelessness was increasing in many Ugandan communities yet there was limited research on how it affected individual well being. Understanding the experiences of homeless individuals will help social workers, community leaders and policymakers design better support programs.

The study provided evidence that guided interventions such as counseling services, community shelters, livelihood programs and social protection initiatives. The study enhanced the quality of life by drawing attention to the difficulties encountered by homeless people in Bugiri.

## **1.8 Significance of the study**

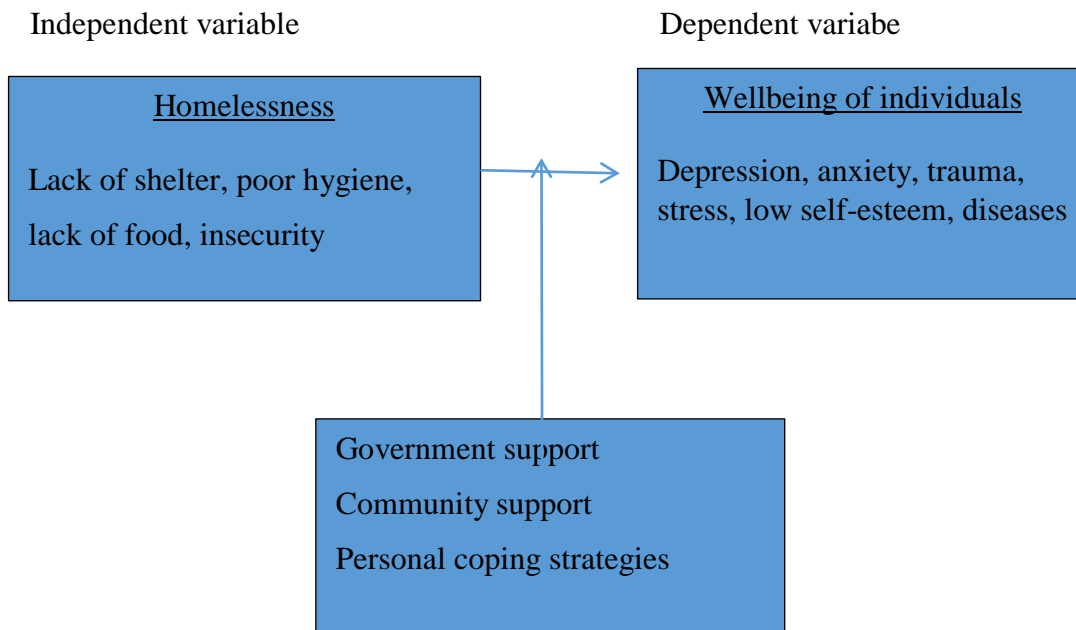
**To social workers and practitioners.** The study will provide information that will help social workers to understand the physical, emotional and social needs of homeless individuals which will enable them to provide better support.

**To policymakers and administrators.** The findings will guide policy formulation and budgeting for social services aimed at helping homeless people.

**To researchers.** The study will add to academic knowledge on homelessness in Uganda and provide a foundation for future studies.

**To the community.** It raised awareness about homelessness and encouraged the community to support vulnerable individuals.

## 1.9 Conceptual framework



(Source: Researcher, 2025)

## 1.10 Operational definitions

**Homelessness.** A situation where an individual lacked stable, safe and adequate housing.

**Well being.** The physical, emotional and social quality of life of an individual.

**Physical well-being.** Health, safety, hygiene, nutrition and general body functioning.

**Emotional well-being.** Mental health, feelings, stress levels and psychological stability.

**Social well-being.** Ability to interact with others, sense of belonging and social support.

**Coping strategies.** Methods individuals use to survive and manage challenges related to homelessness.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### **2.0 Introduction**

This chapter reviewed existing literature on the impact of homelessness on the well being of individuals. The review was drawn from books, journals, reports and studies conducted globally, regionally and locally.

#### **2.1 Theoretical framework**

The study was guided by Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory (1943) which explained that humans must first meet basic needs such as shelter, food, safety and health before achieving higher level needs like belonging, esteem and self-actualization. Homeless individuals often could not meet basic physiological and safety needs which negatively affected their emotional stability, physical health and social well being. The theory explained why individuals in Bulesa sub county experience stress, low self-esteem, social isolation and poor productivity because of homelessness.

#### **2.2 Empirical evidence**

Globally, conducted by WHO (2022) showed that homeless individuals experience poor physical and mental health, low self-esteem and limited access to social services. Studies conducted in North America and Europe revealed that homeless people had decreased life expectancies as a result of untreated illnesses, starvation, and exposure to severe weather.

Adebayo (2020) discovered that poverty, urban migration, unemployment, and inadequate social safety systems are associated with homelessness in Africa. In South Africa and Kenya, homeless people had to deal with health hazards, exploitation, and violence. According to a Nigerian study, young people living on the streets were especially susceptible to substance misuse and sexual exploitation.

Nabaggala (2019) noted that homeless persons in Kampala, Jinja, and Mbale, Uganda, suffer from social rejection, hunger, poor hygiene, and injury. According to MGLSD (2021), homeless youth frequently depend on NGOs and unofficial support networks to survive. Community leaders in the Bulesa subcounty have stressed that those who live on the streets, on market verandas, and in incomplete buildings face hunger, ill

health, and a lack of safety.

These studies demonstrated the impact of homelessness on social, emotional, and physical well-being. Nevertheless, little research has been done expressly to look at these effects in rural places like Bulesa Sub County.

### **2.3 Physical challenges faced by homeless individuals**

Poor diet, poor hygiene, exposure to harsh weather, and a heightened vulnerability to illnesses such as skin conditions and respiratory infections were all encountered by homeless people (WHO, 2022). Many people in Bugiri Sub County slept in dangerous places like markets and incomplete buildings, which resulted in fatigue, starvation, and ill health.

### **2.4 Social challenges and risks experienced by homeless individuals**

Stigma, social exclusion, prejudice and susceptibility to violence were all exacerbated by homelessness. According to Nabaggala (2019), street-connected people in Uganda frequently experience social rejection, theft, harassment and gender based violence. UN Habitat (2023) discovered that social exclusion led to an increase in risk taking behaviors, substance misuse and mental health problems worldwide. Homeless persons in Bulesa Sub County had fewer access to social support and community safety since they were occasionally viewed as criminals.

### **2.5 Coping strategies used by homeless individuals**

According to the Street Children Report (2022), homeless people have devised techniques include creating peer support networks, working as casual laborers, gathering scrap, contacting religious organizations and non governmental organizations for help. To meet their daily requirements, homeless persons in Bulesa Sub County frequently turned to market vendors, boda boda riders, religious organizations, or part time employment. While some people exhibited self reliance by sleeping in unfinished structures or engaging in unofficial trade, others used friendships as a means of protection.

## **2.6 Research gap**

Studies conducted in Uganda and around the world have focused on homelessness, but little is known about the social and physical health of people living in rural areas like Bulesa Sub County. It is challenging for social workers and legislators to create focused treatments because few research have looked at coping mechanisms in this setting. By offering specific data on homelessness in Bugiri sub county, our study aimed to close this gap.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.0 Introduction**

This chapter explained the methods that guided the study. It included the research design, approach, study area, population, sample size and determination, sampling techniques, data collection methods, data quality measures, data analysis, ethical considerations and methodology constraints.

#### **3.1 Research design**

The study used across sectional design to collect data at a single point in time to understand the relationship between homelessness and well being (Setia, 2016).

#### **3.2 Study approach**

The study adopted a mixed methods approach which combined qualitative and quantitative techniques. Quantitative data captured demographic information, physical challenges, social risks and coping strategies. Qualitative data explored participants' experiences in depth. This approach allowed for triangulation and improved the validity of findings (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

#### **3.3 Study area**

The study was conducted in Bulesa sub county, Bugiri district, Eastern Uganda. The area was selected because homelessness was visible in trading centers, markets and villages.

#### **3.4 Study population**

The population included homeless individuals, community leaders, social workers, and community leaders. local authorities and staff from NGOs supporting homeless people. These groups had direct knowledge and experience on homelessness in Bulesa sub county. The estimated population for the study was 40 individuals.

### 3.5 Sample size and sample determination

The study used a sample size of 35 respondents.

Table 1

<b>Respondent</b>	<b>Population</b>	<b>Sample size</b>	<b>Sampling techniques</b>
Homeless people	30	25	Simple random sampling
Community leaders	6	6	Purposive sampling
Social workers	4	4	Purposive sampling
Total	40	35	

### 3.6 Sampling techniques

Snowball sampling was used for homeless individuals due to difficulty in identifying participants. Purposive sampling was used to select community leaders and social workers who had relevant knowledge of homelessness.

### 3.7 Data collection methods

Quantitative data was collected using structured questionnaires to capture demographic data, physical challenges, social risks and coping strategies. Qualitative data was collected through semi structured interviews and focused group discussions to understand lived experiences.

### 3.8 Data collection procedure

Approval was obtained from the head of department, school of social sciences UCU and Bulesa Sub county authorities. Participants were informed about the study purpose and informed consent was obtained. Interviews and discussions took place in safe locations. Audio written notes was collected with respondent permission.

### 3.9 Data quality and error control

Instruments were pretested and research assistants trained to ensure consistent data

collection. Triangulation of qualitative and quantitative data enhanced reliability and thematic analysis guided qualitative data interpretation.

### **3.10 Data processing and analysis**

Quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive statistics such as percentages, frequencies to summarize challenges and coping strategies. Qualitative underwent thematic analysis to identify patterns and themes related to physical, emotional and social well being (Sevilla, 2023).

### **3.11 Ethical considerations**

Ethical principles was strictly observed by the researcher. Informed consent, confidentiality, the right to withdraw at any time was ensured. Sensitive issues were handled with empathy and respect. Approval was obtained from Uganda Christian University and Bugiri authorities.

### **3.12 Methodology constraints**

Challenges included reluctance to participate due to fear, difficulty locating respondents and financial constraints.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSION OF FINDINGS

#### 4.0 introduction

The presents, analyses and discusses the findings from the field. The analysi is done concurrently with discussion in order to clearly explain the meaning of the findings. findings are presented in tables using frequencies and percentages from the questionnaires and direct quotations from interviews.

#### 4.1 Response rate

The sample size was 40 respondents. Questionnaires was designed and distributed to 40 respondents, 35 questionnaires were fully answered which indicated that the response rate was good.

#### 4.2 Demographic information of respondents

##### 4.2.1 Age of respondents

**Table 2.**

Age group	Frequency	Percentage
10-17	5	14.3%
18-25	12	34.3%
26-35	10	28.6%
36 and above	8	22.8%
Total	35	100%

Source primary data 2026

The findings show that most respondents were between 18-25 years followed by 26-35 years. This indicate that homelessness is more common among young adults in Bulesa sub county.

#### 4.2.2 Sex of respondents

**Table 3**

Sex	Frequency	Percentage
Male	21	60%
Female	14	40%
Total	35	100%

Source primary data, 2026

The findings show that 60% of respondents were male and 40% were female. This shows that males are more visible in street within Bulesa sub county.

#### 4.2.3 category of respondents

**Table 4.**

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Homeless people	25	71.4%
Community leaders	6	17.1%
Social workers	4	11.5%
Total	35	100%

Source primary data, 2026

The table shows majority of respondents were homeless people ensuring first-hand information about the impact of homelessness on well-being.

#### 4.2.4 Education level

Table 5

Education level	Frequency	Percentage
None	9	25%
Primary	14	40%
Secondary	10	28.6%
Tertiary	2	5.7%
Total	35	100%

Source primary data 2026

Most respondent had primary education which shows limited educational attainment among homeless people.

### 4.3 Physical challenges faced by homeless individuals in Bulesa sub county

Table 6

Statement	Agreement (%)	Neutral (%)	Disagreement (%)
Homeless people often lack access to adequate food	88.6%	5.7%	5.7%
Homelessness affects access to health care	82.9%	8.6%	8.5%
Sleeping in unsafe places exposes people to health risks	94.1%	2.9%	5.7%
Lack of shelter causes physical illness	85.7%	5.7%	8.6%
Homeless people face hygiene challenges	94.3%	2.9%	2.8%

Source primary data 2026

The study found that homelessness significantly affects physical well being in Bulesa Sub County.

Most respondents (94.3%) reported hygiene challenges, 91.4% reported that sleeping in unsafe places exposes them to health risks, 88.6% reported lack of adequate food and 85.7% reported that lack of shelter causes physical illness. Over 82.9% reported difficulty accessing health care services.

These findings show that homeless individuals live in poor conditions such as markets, verandas and unfinished buildings. Such environments expose them to diseases like malaria, respiratory infections and skin conditions.

During interviews, a community leader explained,....“Most of them sleep in market stalls and unfinished buildings without mosquito nets. They suffer from malaria, cough and skin infections.” .....Respondent 4

This affirms that homelessness directly affects basic human needs such as food, shelter, hygiene and health.

The findings are consistent with Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs which explains that failure to meet basic physiological and safety needs negatively affects the general well being. WHO (2022) emphasize that homeless populations experience higher disease rates because of poor living conditions and limited access to health care.

Therefore, the study shows that physical deprivation is one of the most serious consequences of homelessness in Bulesa Sub County.

#### **4.4 Social challenges and risks experienced by homeless individuals in Bulesa sub county**

**Table 7**

Statement	Agreement (%)	Neutral (%)	Disagreement (%)
Homeless people experience stigma from community	85.7%	8.6%	5.7%
Homelessness exposes people to violence and theft	88.6%	5.7%	5.7%
Homeless people find it difficult to access education or vocational training	80%	11.4%	8.6%
Lack of social support affects emotional well-being	91.4%	5.7%	2.9%
Homelessness limits participation in social activities	84.3%	8.6%	7.1%

Source primary data 2026

The finding revealed that homelessness also affects social and emotional well being. Majority of respondents (91.4%) reported lack of social support, 88.6% reported exposure to violence and theft, 85.7% experienced stigma from the community, 84.3% reported limited participation in social activities and 80% reported difficulty in accessing education or vocational training.

These findings show that homeless individuals in Bulesa are socially excluded and often treated as outsiders. Stigma and discrimination reduce their chances of accessing opportunities and support services.

A community member explained during interviews....“They are always chased away from public places because people think they are thieves.”.....Respondent 2

This shows that negative perceptions in the community increase isolation and emotional distress among homeless individuals.

From a theoretical perspective, Maslow’s theory explains that lack of belonging and acceptance affects emotional stability and self esteem. When individuals are excluded from society, their psychological well being declines.

Therefore, homelessness in Bulesa Sub County leads to strong social exclusion, insecurity and emotional stress.

#### 4.5 Copying strategies used by homeless individuals in Bulesa sub county

Table 8

Statement	Agreement (%)	Neutral (%)	Disagreement (%)
Homeless people rely on community support	74.3%	11.4%	14.3%
Some engage in temporary work or casual labor	88.6%	5.7%	5.7%
Homeless people form social networks	82.9%	8.6%	8.5%
Religious or cultural practice	77.1%	11.4%	11.5%

help coping			
Individuals use resilience strategies to manage stress	80%	8.6%	11.4%

Source primary data 2026

The study found that despite the challenges, homeless individuals use different coping strategies to survive.

The majority of respondents 88.6% work in markets, wash cars, and carry goods, 82.9% create social networks with other homeless people for safety and support, 80% employ personal resilience techniques and 77.1% rely on religious or cultural customs for emotional fortitude.

These results demonstrate that the majority of homeless people rely on unofficial and precarious survival techniques. Forming a group gives them emotional support and protection and working informally enables them to achieve their daily needs.

"They move in groups for safety and share whatever little they get," one respondent said. Respondent 7

Strong resilience in the face of adversity is demonstrated by this.

These coping mechanisms, however, are not sustainable answers. They don't deal with the underlying reasons of homelessness; instead, they only assist people in overcoming daily obstacles.

As a result, although coping mechanisms are available, they are only temporary and cannot take the place of official support networks like social protection programs and shelters.

## **4.6 Discussion of findings**

### **4.6.1 Physical challenges faced by homeless individuals in Bulesa sub county**

Objective one of the study sought to assess the physical challenges faced by homeless individuals in Bulesa sub county. The findings from the study showed that 94.3% of the respondents agreed that homeless people face hygiene challenges, 91.4% agreed that sleeping in unsafe places exposes them to health risks 88.6% agreed that homeless individuals lack access to adequate food, 85.7% agreed that lack of shelter causes physical illness and 82.9% agreed that homelessness affects access to health care services.

Majority of respondents (94.3%) reporting hygiene challenges shows that homeless individuals lack access to clean water, sanitation facilities and bathing places. Poor hygiene increases vulnerability to infections such as skin diseases and respiratory illnesses. 91.4% of respondent agreeing that sleeping in unsafe places exposes individuals to health risks shows that market stalls, verandas and unfinished buildings provide inadequate protection from bad weather, mosquitoes and other environmental hazards.

These results were consistent with the World Health Organization's (2022) emphasis that poor living circumstances, malnutrition, and restricted access to health care lead to increased incidence of illness in homeless populations. These results are also consistent with Maslow's theory of needs (1943), which highlights the detrimental effects on general well-being of not meeting fundamental requirements like food, shelter, and safety. People find it difficult to attain stability and a higher standard of living when these basic demands are not satisfied.

One community leader stated in the interview that "the majority of them sleep in market stalls and unfinished buildings without mosquito nets." They suffer from malaria, cough and skin infections."

Therefore, the findings show that homelessness in Bulesa sub county severely affects physical health and survival which reinforce the need for shelter, food security and accessible health care interventions.

#### **4.6.2 Social challenges and risks experienced by homeless individuals in Bugiri sub county**

Second objective sought to investigate the social challenges and risk experienced by homeless individuals in Bugiri sub county. findings showed that 91.4% of respondent agreed that lack of social support affects emotional well being, 88.6% agreed that homelessness exposes people to violence and theft, 85.7% agreed that homeless individuals experience stigma from the community. 84.3% agreed that homelessness limits participation in social activities and 80% agreed difficulty in accessing education or vocational training.

The findings from the study shows that homelessness affects not only physical well being but also disrupts social integration and emotional stability. Majority of respondents (91.4%) showing lack of social support indicate that homeless individuals feel isolated and excluded from family and community networks.

The findings also show that 88.6% agreed exposure to violence and theft. This shows insecurity faced by homeless individuals. 85.7% showed stigma which indicate negative community perceptions toward homeless individuals. "They are always chased away from public places because people think they are thieves," a social worker stated. Such categorization makes people vulnerable and restricts their ability to engage in society and find work. Maslow's theory states that a lack of acceptance and belonging keeps people from reaching higher level wants like self-actualization and esteem.

Thus, the results of the study verify that homelessness in Bugiri Sub County causes emotional anguish, social exclusion, and insecurity, all of which have a substantial impact on social well being.

#### **4.6.3 Coping strategies used by homeless individuals in Bulesa sub county to survive**

The study's final goal was to investigate the coping mechanisms homeless people employ to survive. According to the results, 88.6% of respondents agreed that homeless people work temporarily or casually in order to survive, 82.9% agreed that they create social networks with other homeless people, 80% agreed that people use

resilience strategies to manage stress, 77.1% agreed that religious or cultural practices help them cope, and 74.3% showed reliance on community support.

Despite challenging circumstances, the majority of homeless people (88.6%) actively seek out income-generating occupations like carrying items, washing cars, and working in markets. This demonstrates tenacity and a will to live.

Creating social networks (82.9%) demonstrates collective coping in which people depend on the safety and emotional support of the group. "They move in groups for safety and share whatever little they get," one reply clarified.

This demonstrates how, in the absence of family and community support, social bonding turns into a survival strategy.

The results also demonstrate the significance of religion (77.1%) in offering consolation and hope. Participating in religion can lower stress and increase resilience. This is consistent with studies carried out by the Ministry of Gender, Labor, and Social Development which discovered that homeless people frequently rely on unofficial networks and the kindness of their communities to survive.

As a result, social safety, shelter programs, and sustainable livelihood assistance are still necessary and cannot be replaced by these coping mechanisms.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **5.0 introduction**

This chapter presents the summary of the major findings of the study, draws conclusions based on the findings presented in Chapter Four, provides recommendations for policy practice and further research.

#### **5.1 Summary of finding**

##### **5.1.1 physical challenges faced by homeless individuals in bulesa sub county**

The majority of respondents agreed that homeless people face serious physical challenges. 94.3% agreed that homeless individuals experience hygiene challenges, 91.4% agreed that sleeping in unsafe places exposes them to health risks, 88.6% reported lack of access to adequate food, 85.7% agreed that lack of shelter causes physical illness and 82.9% agreed that homelessness affects access to health care services.

Community leaders and social workers emphasized that many homeless individuals sleep in market stalls, verandas and unfinished buildings without protection from bad weather conditions and mosquitoes. They reported common illnesses such as malaria, cough, skin infections and malnutrition.

These findings showed that homelessness directly undermines basic needs such as food, shelter and safety which are the basis for survival and good health.

##### **5.1.2 Social challenges and risk experienced by homeless individuals in Bulesa sub county**

Most respondents (91.4%) agreed that lack of social support affects emotional well being, 88.6% showed that homelessness exposes individuals to violence and theft, 85.7% reported that homeless individuals experience stigma from the community,

84.3% agreed that homelessness limits participation in social activities and 80% indicated that homeless individuals face difficulty accessing education or vocational training.

According to the respondents, homeless people are stigmatized as criminals, driven from public areas, and barred from participating in community events. Stress, low self-esteem, and feelings of loneliness are all exacerbated by this social rejection.

The results demonstrate that homelessness harms social relationships, mental stability, and a sense of community belonging in addition to physical health.

### **5.1.3 Copying strategies used by homeless individuals in Bulesa sub county**

The majority of respondents (88.6%) agreed that homeless individuals engage in temporary work or casual labor such as carrying goods in markets, washing cars and doing small manual jobs. 82.9% agreed that they form social networks with other homeless individuals for safety and support, 80% agreed that individuals use personal resilience strategies to manage stress, 77.1% agreed that religious or cultural practices help them cope with challenges and 74.3% reported reliance on community support.

respondents emphasized that homeless individuals often move in groups for protection and share food and income among themselves. Religious institutions and well-wishers sometimes provide them with food and temporary support.

The findings show that their coping strategies are largely informal and unstable and do not provide long term solutions to homelessness.

## **5.2 Conclusion**

Homelessness in Bulesa Sub County affects physical health of individuals because they lack food, shelter, hygiene and health care services.

Homelessness leads to social exclusion, stigma, violence and limited participation in community activities.

The copying strategies homeless individuals use such as casual labor and peer networks are not sustainable solutions to homelessness.

Therefore, homelessness in Bulesa Sub County is a serious social problem that requires intervention from government, social workers, NGOs and community leaders to improve the well being of affected individuals.

### **5.3 Recommendations**

Local government in Bugiri District should develop and implement community based shelter programs to provide temporary and safe accommodation for homeless individuals.

Community leaders and NGOs should promote community awareness programs and social initiatives to reduce discrimination and improve acceptance.

Government should introduce vocational training and income generating programs to provide sustainable livelihoods for homeless individuals.

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## APPENDIX I: QUESTIONNAIRE

(For homeless individuals and community members in Bugiri Sub County)

Dear respondent,

My name is Wanjala John, a student at Uganda Christian University, Mukono, pursuing a Bachelor of Social Work. I am conducting a study on *the impact of homelessness on the physical, emotional, and social wellbeing of individuals in Bugiri Sub County, Bugiri District*.

This questionnaire is purely for academic purposes. Your responses will be kept confidential, and you are kindly requested to provide honest answers.

### Instructions

The questionnaire has Sections A, B, C and D. In Sections B, C, and D, please tick (✓) only one option for each statement.

Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Neutral (N), Disagree (D), Strongly Disagree (SD)

### SECTION A

#### Demographic information

1. Age:  10–17  18–25  26–35  36 and above
2. Sex:  Male  Female
3. Status:  Homeless individual  Parent/Guardian  Community member
4. Education level:  None  Primary  Secondary  Tertiary
5. Occupation (if any): .....

### SECTION B

To assess the physical challenges faced by homeless individuals in Bugiri Sub County

NO	STATEMENT	SA	A	N	D	SD
6	Homeless people often lack access to adequate food					
7	Homelessness affects access to health care					
8	Sleeping in unsafe places exposes people health risk					
9	Lack of shelter causes physical illness					
10	Homeless people face hygiene challenges					

## SECTION C

To investigate the social challenges and risks experienced by homeless individuals

NO	STATEMENT	SA	A	N	D	SD
11	Homeless people experience stigma from community					
12	Homelessness exposes people to violence and theft					
13	Homeless people find it difficult to access education or vocational training					
14	Lack of social support affects emotional well being					
15	Homelessness limits participation in social activities					

## SECTION D

To explore the coping strategies used by homeless individuals to survive

NO	STATEMENT	SA	A	N	D	SD
16	Homeless individuals rely on community support to survive					
17	Some engage in temporary work or casual labor for survival					
18	Homeless people form social networks with other homeless individuals					
19	Religious or cultural practices help homeless individuals cope with challenges					
20	Individuals use self care and resilience strategies to manage stress					

## APPENDIX II: INTERVIEW GUIDE

(For community leaders, social workers and health workers in Bugiri Sub County)

**SECTION A**

**Demographic Information**

Age: .....

Position: .....

Years of experience: .....

**SECTION B**

To assess the physical challenges faced by homeless individuals in Bugiri Sub County

1. How would you describe the living conditions of homeless individuals in Bugiri Sub County?

.....  
.....

2. What are the main physical challenges faced by people without stable housing?

.....  
.....

3. How does homelessness affect access to food, health care and hygiene?

.....  
.....

4. How do these physical challenges impact individuals' overall wellbeing?

.....  
.....

**SECTION B**

To investigate the social challenges and risks experienced by homeless individuals

5. What social problems do homeless individuals face in this community? (e.g, stigma, violence, discrimination)

.....  
.....

6. How does homelessness affect individuals' ability to access education, employment, or community activities?

.....  
.....  
7. What emotional or psychological effects do you observe in homeless individuals?

.....  
.....  
8. How does the community perceive homeless individuals?

SECTION C

To explore the coping strategies used by homeless individuals to survive

9. How do homeless individuals cope with daily survival challenges?

.....  
.....  
10. What role do community support systems, NGOs or local leaders play in helping homeless individuals?

.....  
.....  
11. Do you know of any self help or resilience strategies used by homeless individuals to manage stress or social exclusion?

.....  
.....  
12. What interventions could improve the well being of homeless populations in Bugiri Sub County?

**APPENDIX II: RESEARCH LETTER**



**UGANDA CHRISTIAN  
UNIVERSITY**

A Centre of Excellence in the Heart of Africa

February 24<sup>th</sup>, 2026

**TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN**

Dear Sir/Madam

**Re: INTRODUCTORY LETTER FOR RESEARCH**

This is to introduce to you **WANJALA John** Registration number **M23B15/066**, a student of Uganda Christian University, pursuing Bachelor's degree in Social Work and Administration. He is expected to carry out research in the final year under the guidance of a university supervisor in partial fulfillment for the requirements of the above-mentioned award.

**Topic: "Examining the impact of homelessness on wellbeing of individuals in Buleba Sub- County, Bugiri District"**

The purpose of this communication is to request your office to allow him collect data from your organization. Any assistance rendered to him will be highly appreciated.



**Doreen Kukugiza**  
**Coordinator, Research & Fieldwork Programmes**  
**Tel: 0773395349**  
**Email: dkukugiza@ucu.ac.ug**

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