

Beyond handouts: A gendered analysis of faith-based organization's response to homelessness



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Declaration

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Abstract

Homelessness is a complex issue, caused by interlocking socio-economic factors and Faith Based Organisations (FBO's) are one of the sectors at the forefront in addressing this issue at grassroots level. Causes of homelessness include poverty, unemployment, substance abuse, immigration, urbanisation, and abuse. Although, homelessness can be experienced by anyone if a crisis occurs in one's life, homeless women face critical and gendered issues as they are vulnerable and become an easy target on the streets. Such issues include challenges of reproductive health issues, lack of antenatal care, sanitary essentials and often physical, sexual, emotional and substance abuse in addition to challenges faced by the homeless population in general. Women also are rejected by families when gender identities are revealed. It is also important to note that women are an increasing population within the homeless community.

Women issues lack representation in literature, particularly homeless women. This study, therefore, seeks to highlight the plight of homeless women, and additionally seeks to engage this issue theologically from a Womanist lens.

The story of Hagar found in Genesis is analysed using womanist theology to expose how intersecting issues such as class, gender and race perpetuate homelessness. Finally, the study employs a qualitative approach using critical discourse analysis to analyse three FBOs in Cape Town to ascertain whether they engage a gender sensitive lens in their work with the homeless population and whether they address the issues of homeless women within the work of their organisations. This analysed their websites, reports, programmes, partnerships, and testimonials.

The findings of the study indicate that while, the organisations (FBOs) cater to the basic human needs of street homeless population, there is a lack of consistency and attention given to gender issues, specifically issues faced by women. Recommendations are also, therefore, made in this regard.

Opsomming

Dakloosheid is 'n komplekse kwessie wat deur sosio-ekonomiese faktore veroorsaak word. Geloofsgebaseerde organisasies is een van die sektore aan die voorpunt om hierdie kwessie op voetsoolvlak aan te spreek. Sommige van die oorsake is haweloosheid is armoede, werkloosheid, immigrasie, verstedeliking en mishandeling. Alhoewel, dakloosheid kan deur enigiemand ervaar word as 'n krisis in 'n mens se lewe voorkom. Vroue wat in haweloosheid leef, staar kritieke kwessies in die gesig soos die gebrek aan voorgeboortesorg, sanitêre noodsaaklikhede. Vroue word ook deur families verwerp wanneer geslagsidentiteite geopenbaar word. Ander kwessies sluit in reprodktiewe gesondheidskwessies, fisiese, seksuele, emosionele en dwelmmisbruik.

Vroue is kwesbaar en word 'n maklike teiken op straat. Dakloosheid onder vroue is 'n toenemende realiteit binne die hawelose gemeenskap. As gevolg hiervan word die verhaal van Hagar wat in Genesis gevind word, ontleed met behulp van 'n Womanist teologiese lens om aan die lig te bring hoe kruisende kwessies soos klas, geslag en ras haweloosheid voortduur. Kwessies wat spesifiek vroue raak het nie verteenwoordiging in literatuur nie, veral hawelose vroue. Dus, hierdie studie sal analiseer, hoe FBO's vrouekwessies binne hul organisasies aanspreek. Die studie het 'n kwalitatiewe benadering uitgevoer deur kritiese diskoersanalise te gebruik om drie FBO's in Kaapstad te ontleed. Die steekproeffokus was op hul webwerwe, verslae, programme, vennootskappe en getuigskrifte.

Vreemd genoeg het ons bevindinge bepaal dat die organisasies (FBO's) in die basiese menslike behoeftes van straathawelose bevolking voorsien. Daar is egter 'n gebrek aan konsekwentheid en aandag wat gegee word aan geslagskwessies, spesifiek kwessies waarmee vroue te kampe het.

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to the street homeless women who feel excluded and marginalised and to the ones who are moved by this injustice and who try to do what they are capable of doing to help the destitute.

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Abbreviations

ANC- African National Congress
CDA- Critical Discourse Analysis
CDO- Christian Development Organisation
CEO- Chief Executive Officer
COCT – City of Cape Town
FBO- Faith Based Organisation
GAD- Gender and Development
HAC- Homeless Action Committee
HSRC- Human Sciences Research Council
LGBTQ+- Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex, Queer/Questioning
LNOC- Local Networks of Care
MES- Mould Empower Serve
MOU- Memorandums of Understanding
NDHS- National Department of Human Settlement
NDP- National Development Plan
NGO- Non- Government Organisation
NHN- National Homeless Network
NPO- Non -Profit Organisation
PIE- Prevention of Illegal Eviction
PPPNN- Public Places of Prevention Noise Nuisances
PTSD- Post Traumatic Stress Disorder
RDP- Reconstruction and Development Programme
RTI- Reproductive Tract Infection
STI- Sexually Transmitted Infection
UN- United Nations
UNICEF- United Nations International Children Emergency Fund
UNISA- University of South Africa
UP- University of Pretoria
USA- United States of America
WHO- World Health Organisation
WID- Women in Gender

Table of Contents

Table of Contents

Declaration.....	i
Abstract.....	ii
Opsomming.....	iii
Dedication.....	iv
Acknowledgments.....	v
Abbreviations.....	vi
Chapter One	1
1. Introduction.....	1
2. Motivation.....	1
3. Research question	3
4. Objectives and aims	3
5. Literature review	3
6. Methodology	9
7. Limitations	10
8. Defining Concepts	10
8.1 Non-Profit Organisations	10
8.2 Faith-Based Organisation.....	12
8.3 Womanist Theology	13
8.4 Gender and Development.....	14
9. Chapter outline.....	15
Chapter Two.....	17
A review of homelessness in the South African context	17
1. Introduction.....	17
2. Homelessness: basic definitions	17

3. Homelessness as understood and addressed worldwide	18
4. South African historical context of homelessness	21
5. Pathways to homelessness in South African.....	23
5.1 Poverty	24
5.2 Immigration and urbanisation	24
5.3 Unemployment.....	25
5.4 Substance abuse.....	26
6.The social stigma of homelessness	27
7. Critical issues faced by street homeless women	28
7.1 Abuse.....	28
7.2 Lack of antenatal care	30
7.3 Disclosure of gender identity	31
7.4 Reproductive health issues	32
7.5 Lack of sanitary pads and hygienic spaces.....	34
8. Conclusion	35
Chapter Three.....	36
Responses to street homelessness from national government, local municipalities, and Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) in South Africa.....	36
1. Introduction.....	36
2. National government responses	37
2.1 Response from the state through the National Department of Human Settlements (NDHS)	39
3. Local municipalities' responses to homelessness in the cities of Cape Town and Tshwane	42
3.1 City of Tshwane	43
3.2 City of Cape Town	45
4. Laws and regulations for treating homelessness.....	46

5. Responses from Non-Government Organisations (NGOs).....	47
6. Self-advocacy by homeless.....	49
7. Gender in homeless policies	50
8. Conclusion	51
Chapter Four	52
Hagar and women's experiences of homelessness	52
1. Introduction.....	52
2. Hagar and homelessness	53
2.1 Patriarchy and women's marginalisation	53
2.2 Sexism and sexual abuse as reinforcements for marginalisation	55
3. Defining womanist theology.....	56
4. Womanist theology and the story of Hagar	58
4.1. Gender and power in Hagar's story.....	59
4.2. Classism and exclusion in Hagar's story.....	60
4.3. Race and oppression in Hagar's story	62
5. Hagar and South African homelessness.....	65
6. Conclusion	69
Chapter 5	70
Case study review of Faith-Based Organisations catering for the homeless in the Western Cape	70
1. Introduction.....	70
2. The development and nature of Faith-Based Organisations	70
3.1. Sample and data collection process	75
3. 2 Reliability and validity.....	76
3.3 Methodological limitations	76
4. Historical backgrounds of the FBO homeless shelters	76

4.1 FBO A.....	76
4.2 FBO B.....	77
4.3 FBO C.....	78
5. Analysis of websites	79
5.1 Annual reports.....	79
5.2 Skills and development programmes for women.....	82
5.3 Services and opportunities for women.....	83
5.4 Partnerships	85
5.5 Testimonials	86
6. Conclusion	88
Chapter 6.....	89
Conclusion and recommendations	89
1. Introduction.....	89
2. Summary of chapters	89
3. Key research findings	94
4. Recommendations.....	95
5. Suggestions for future research.....	96
6. Conclusion	96
Bibliography	97

Chapter One

1. Introduction

The escalation of socio-economic injustice is one of the leading factors in the increasing gap between rich and poor (Bowers Du Toit, 2018:30). We can attest to this statement in our own country, South Africa. One of the faces of poverty, is homelessness. However, homelessness is an overly broad and complex issue. It is not limited to an individual case. Factors that lead to homelessness could include immigration, unemployment, mental problems, and abuse (sexual, physical, and emotional). Consequently, homelessness is not a choice; there are circumstances that compel people to be homeless. The dignity of the homeless is violated by their reality. This reality counteracts the *Imago Dei*¹. Homelessness contradicts *shalom*² and it could be argued that homeless people do not experience a life of harmony and wholeness, as was intended by God in the creation narrative (Genesis 1:27-31).

In this thesis, my focus is homelessness and I pay special attention to a gender analysis with specific reference to homeless women and their wellbeing. The research will explore the intersectional factors such as gender, class, and race. These categories are primary contributors to homelessness, placing homeless women on the margins and perpetuating the cycle of poverty. The research will specifically use critical discourse analysis to investigate whether Faith-Based Organisations (FBOs) cater to the needs of homeless women. The websites, documents, and programmes of three FBOs situated in Cape Town will be analysed to ascertain this.

2. Motivation

My concern for the homeless started at an early age. A memory I vividly remember, is that, at the age of nine, my mother asked me to go to the shops to purchase some goods. On my way, on the corner, I noticed a young girl just sitting sadly. I walked towards her and asked her name. After a brief conversation, she confessed that she had nowhere to go. Coming back from the shop, I gave her some of the food which I had bought. However, while going home, my mind

¹ *Imago Dei* means (image of God): A theological term, applied uniquely to humans, which denotes the symbolical relation between God and humanity.

² *Shalom* is a Hebrew word meaning peace, harmony, wholeness, completeness, prosperity, welfare, and tranquillity.

was troubled, I was contemplating how I could have relieved her from that situation. Obviously, being young, I was terrified to bring her home. The thought of that young girl stuck with me for many years. As a result of that encounter, I tend to notice the homeless on street corners or pushing shop trolleys full of baggage. The song by Michael Jackson “Man in the mirror” depicts my struggle to better understand how the challenge starts with me to help the homeless. It is a conviction that I battle with every day, hence, I have chosen homelessness as my research focus. My research is also influenced by volunteer work with the homeless over the past few years, where I had the opportunity to have conversations with some homeless people. I believe that giving the homeless food, clothes, or slight change, is temporary relief rather than a constructive and long-term solution to eliminating the plight of homelessness. Homeless people are often excluded from society. My motivation also comes from my concern for women, especially homeless women in South Africa, who face tremendous societal ills. Therefore, the study includes gender analysis with regards to homeless women and the services provided to them.

This need is further supported by the fact that, in my own field, not much research has been done on women and homelessness, especially in South Africa. My own observations also indicate that the field of theology does not have a significant amount of research on this topic, again, particularly with regards to women and homelessness. As this thesis is positioned in the field of Theology and Development, I have chosen to focus on the interventions of FBOs with the homeless.

From a theological perspective, Myers argues that it is important for the non-homeless or the privileged to stop looking at poor people as helpless, saying “thus we will stop giving ourselves permission to look down on them and stop playing god in their lives” (Myers, 2011:105). This superiority complex derives from a “saviour mentality,” and results in the homeless becoming dependent on the people helping them rather than confessing the miraculous works of God (Mbaya, 2020:2). For instance, a homeless woman could be helped by an FBO (which would be Christian witness indeed). However, the practitioners or employers could take advantage of the woman’s vulnerable state, thus abusing the woman simply because she is homeless and powerless in society. Abuse can occur in different forms, such as verbal, sexual, and emotional. Christians are called to imitate the life of Christ and not to be Christ, but, because of our sinful nature, we tend to act the role of God in the lives of the poor. This behaviour is boastful and prideful, causing more suffering in the lives of the disadvantaged and poor. It also opposes the gospel that is centred in love (1 Corinthians 13:4-

7). The truth is, women are not always safe within “safe spaces” such as FBOs, something this thesis will seek to explore.

3. Research question

- ☐ In what constructive ways are FBOs addressing the issue of gender and the wellbeing of the female homeless population?

4. Objectives and aims

► This study seeks

- ☐ To discuss the issue of homelessness in South Africa.
- ☐ To explore the response of government and Non-Profit Organisations (NPOs) more broadly with regards to this issue.
- ☐ To explore homelessness from the perspective of womanist theology, reading Hagar from Genesis 16:1-16, 21:8-21.
- ☐ To investigate what programmes and specific strategies FBOs have in place that specifically work with the homeless to protect and empower homeless women.
- ☐ To make recommendations as to how FBOs can better address the issue of gender in the female homeless population.

5. Literature review

Many homeless people are stigmatised by society and people usually associate homeless people with substance and alcohol abuse. In addition, many homeless people are labelled as mentally unstable (Seager & Tamasane, 2010:63). Vally and De Beer (2017:383) argue that people are not homeless by choice, but that the socio-economic and political vulnerability of homeless people stems from the unjust structural systems that perpetuate poverty and unemployment. The reality of homelessness is complex and very hard to place within one category, as it is multi-faceted; homelessness is caused by different complex issues (Mbaya, 2020:4) For instance, mental illness can cause an individual to be rejected by family members, but homelessness can also be a leading factor in causing anxiety and depression (Seager & Tamasane, 2010:63).

According to Roets and Botha et al (2016:614) some contributing factors towards the increase of homelessness in South Africa are the constant rising immigration and urbanisation rates. The homeless are “robbed of all forms of security” (Vally & De Beer, 2017:384) which means they are rendered voiceless in many circumstances. According to Thebus (2020:1), the City of Cape Town has allowed “stricter law enforcement on the homeless in public areas” forcing homeless people into more dangerous situations. One homeless person complained that the amendments made their lives worse; as homeless people, they are afraid to walk on the streets, because they are threatened with being arrested (Thebus, 2020:1).

Covid-19 as a global pandemic increased my concern for the homeless, who experienced unjust treatment during this time. Although the virus affected everyone, regardless of gender, social status, race, etc., the poor were severely at risk. They function in extreme freezing weather in winter, and many have no options for self-isolation or social distancing (Thebus, 2020:2), which was one of the crucial protocols that citizens were obligated to observe to prevent the spread of the virus.

The homeless as a community are exposed to inhumane treatment. For instance, during lockdown at the peak of the Covid-19 pandemic, a large number of homeless people were placed in Strandfontein sports grounds in Cape town. It was set to accommodate 2 000 homeless people (Thebus, 2020:2). The homeless complained about their experiences at the site, especially that it was crowded. The influx of many people in one place increased the chances of many contracting the virus, leading to many deaths. The reality is that the homeless community is not effectively catered for by government and larger society. This causes great anxiety for the homeless community. Roets and Botha *et al* (2016:619) argue that homeless people are stigmatised, they are perceived as troublesome, criminals, and a nuisance. Their privacy is violated by them being subjected to “practices of social cleansing” (Daya and Wilkins, 2013:358).

Another challenge that homeless people face, is police brutality. They are forcefully removed from pathways, corners, and shopfronts when they are merely sheltering from cold. Due to the strict laws enforced against the homeless in the City of Cape Town, the homeless have committed to letting their voices be heard, regardless of their social status. The community has formed a committee, Homeless Action Committee (HAC). Thus, the homeless are acting for themselves, advocating for their rights as humans, because the government, FBOs and larger society is failing them (Ntseku, 2021:1). The Strandfontein Homeless Action Committee (SHAC) was also formed to “decriminalise” the homeless community (Ntseku, 2021:1).

Morghadam (1998:225) states that “it should be recognised that the women among the poor suffer doubly from the denial of their human rights.” There are noticeably clear gendered dimensions to homelessness, despite this being understudied by scholars. Seager and Tamasane (2010:63) state that alcohol abuse can be a critical cause of homelessness. A person can lose a job or house due to their addiction, or the desperation of being homeless can influence the individual to use alcohol as a coping mechanism. Heavy alcohol consumption is common in South Africa. Due to this reality, many women experience gender-based violence and women and children are forced into uncomfortable situations, such as harassment, and sexual and physical violence. Homelessness is complex and various situations compel people to become homeless (Seager & Tamasane, 2010:63). Often young women flee their homes to be free from their abusers, and may then end up on the streets, which leads to other forms of abuse. Homeless women are often forced into the world of prostitution or trapped into the sex industry as a means of survival on the streets. A homeless woman in a video³ states, “a homeless woman is a target” in the streets. She is a target because of her gender, and homeless men are feared more than homeless women (Seager & Tamasane, 2010:64). Homeless women are also murdered by their partners, but we rarely hear about this.

It is important that we rid ourselves of God complexes, that we do not assign ourselves the right to describe others with words such as destitute, working poor, and marginalised (Myers, 2011:106). The words the non-homeless use to describe the homeless contribute to the tarnishing of their dignity. We exclude the homeless by labelling them with words that are diminishing, words that segregate. The homeless have an identity and are also included in the creation narrative. The cross is an important reminder that Christ died for all, including the poor. The Apostle Paul reminds us of the unity of all in Christ (Galatians 3:28). Jesus’s ministry centred on those on the periphery and challenged those with power and prestige (Myers 2011:72).

Kimberle’ Crenshaw is an African American womanist who coined the term “intersectionality” (Davis, 2008:68), whereby she argues that Black women are marginalised and unheard because they are categorised as black (race) and women (gender) (Davis 2008:68). In the case of homelessness, many women on the streets are women of colour. Intersectionality also reflects on the interconnectedness of problems.

³ <https://youtu.be/Q0rDBz7EOVw>

The narrative of Sarah and Hagar depicts the commonality that all women face pain and women are usually judged by society (Claassens, 2013:1). Claassens argues that these females' wellbeing is threatened by forces that prevent them from flourishing and achieving their full potential (Claassens, 2013:2). On the one hand, Sarai is shamed because of her situation of barrenness, which raises questions of her status, as value is placed on women who bear children. And in Hagar's case, she is "forced into a situation of limited or no resources during her expulsion into the wilderness" (Claassens, 2013:2). Both women face demanding situations. However, Hagar becomes homeless in the wilderness because she is thrown out – Hagar was an Egyptian slave with lower status than Sarah. The actions taken against Hagar confirm Butler's statement that some lives are considered by society to be more valuable and thus more worthy of protection than others (Claassens, 2013:5).

I am of the opinion that the story of Hagar (Genesis 16:1-8) relates to current stories of women who are homeless. The angel of God assisted Hagar in her time of need in the wilderness (Genesis 16:1-18). How can we as theologians, church leaders, community development practitioners transform the lives of homeless women? Masenya (2004:46) adds perspective to this and argues that women in South Africa facing poverty or emptiness should be their own agents of change. The Northern Sotho proverb *tlala e ntshitse noga moleteng*, which means "hunger took a snake out of a hole," in this context simply means an urgent need will force the person with that need to become "an agent towards meeting that need" (Masenya, 2004:48). Rereading the Naomi-Ruth story in the Bible in the South African context demonstrates how disadvantaged women in South Africa can be empowered to be their own agents of change. Ruth and Naomi became their own sense of security; this is evident when Ruth decides to "pick up grain leftovers in the field by the harvest workers" (Ruth 2:1-3). The work that Ruth did was regarded as worthless, but Ruth and Naomi were able to survive. In the same light, homeless people can be their own agents of change. Homeless women make products from beads and sell them. Sometimes there are programmes in the shelters that assist in this regard. In my perspective, collaboration from government, FBOs, and homeless women can help in fighting the feminisation of homelessness.

Intersectionality is significant in this context, because it also relates to difficult issues faced by homeless women. Race, gender, and class play a huge role in excluding homeless women. Homeless people in South Africa are predominately Black and Coloured and fall in a lower-class category. Thus, homeless women are usually voiceless. It is important that practitioners use programmes that will equip these women to feel empowered. But also, homeless women

should participate in their own development. Myers (2011:107) states that it is crucial that community development practitioners come into a context and understand that each community has its own original story. The community story is important to understand the people. This helps to counteract the God complex mentality. Another narrative that is fundamental here, is the creation story, recognising that God is a missional God, who is involved in the chaos and the transformation of all creation (Myers, 2011:107).

Seager and Tamasane (2010:63) argue that not enough research has been done regarding the health of the homeless in Africa. Truly little research has been done specifically on homeless women and their wellbeing. This results in health services not taking the homeless community seriously when it comes to issues of health in the country, but also Africa as a whole (Seager & Tamasane, 2010:63). The health of homeless people is usually at risk; many homeless people are exposed to elements like freezing weather, harsh environments, excessive alcohol use, and substance abuse which may lead to various chronic health problems (Seager & Tamasane, 2010:64). Excessive alcohol use and the use of various narcotics is one of the leading causes of the violation of human dignity. As discussed above, women become the victims of sexual, physical, verbal, and mental abuse. Many are raped and tortured which leaves them traumatised. Substance abuse at times leads to dangerous sexual behaviours, such as multiple partners, resulting in sexually transmitted diseases, by which women are affected most in the homeless community (Seager & Tamasane, 2010:64). According to Olufemi (2000:230), homeless women face a myriad of issues including deprivation of access to economic, political, and social resources, which keeps homeless women trapped in extreme poverty. Hence, poverty is both a “cause and an effect of marginalisation and street homelessness” (Olufemi, 2000:230). Because of poverty, homeless women face the challenge of wellbeing-related issues such as unplanned or early teen pregnancies, abortions, and miscarriages.

Women’s access to employment and property is one crucial aspect that Moghadam (1998:223) states should be emphasised for women to be empowered in society. Without capital, a person cannot afford even the necessary and basic things. For instance, one critical problem that homeless women face, is lack of sanitary pads. Sanitary pads give a sense of dignity, hiding what society deems as shameful. If all women had blood stains on their clothes during their periods, all of them would be embarrassed and uncomfortable and would prefer to isolate themselves; this shame is what some homeless women experience because of lack of access to basic items. Some women use clothes, toilet paper, or tissues to absorb the flow of menstrual blood (Refinery,2022:1). In my opinion, the lack of access to sanitary pads is dehumanising.

Other issues include lack of access or awareness of contraceptives. For instance, in Emfuleni, a predominately Black township near Cape Town, clinics were packed with Covid-19 cases in 2020 as there are no hospitals nearby, and homeless women had no access to contraceptives due to their status. At a clinic inside a local chain store, a prescription is required to buy contraception, while in Stellenbosch one can just go in a pharmacy and a sister will assist with the contraceptives. The emphasis in this situation is the lack of accessibility of services. Another issue is lack of documentation. Not having a fixed address means exclusion from services that privileged people have. On the other hand, some homeless women do not even have money to buy contraceptives. Lack of access to this health service causes the cycle of poverty to continue. An example is that the homeless woman becomes pregnant, and that child is born into an unstable environment. One can even wonder whether homeless women are aware of contraceptives and family planning options to begin with, as some are not educated.

Furthermore, culture, religion, and gender socialisation play a significant role in perpetuating gender-based violence (Maluleki & Nadar, 2002:14). Homelessness can be caused by what Maluleke and Nadar term the “unholy trinity” of religion, gender subjection, and culture (Maluleke & Nadar, 2002:14). For instance, certain cultural beliefs that many women are compelled to follow, can lead to homelessness.

Additionally, young women who fall pregnant out of wedlock can, according to some cultures, bring shame to the family. There are many varied reasons why a woman would fall pregnant; not all reasons are positive. Some women are raped by their partners or strangers (Chasteen, 2001:106). The feminist reconstruction of rape argues that “men who rape, are from every stratum of society, sharing only the desire to dominate and control women through violence” (Chasteen, 2001:107). Gender-based violence is an epidemic that many women in South Africa face and homeless women are even more vulnerable to this.

Homeless women are severely affected by gender-based violence, unlike non-homeless women in relatively privileged and “safe” positions. Most of the stories of homeless women who are victims of gender-based violence, are not documented or they have no-one to advocate for them. In a case where a homeless woman gets beaten by her partner and she decides to report it at the local police station, will the police accept her report? Moreover, homeless women often come from traumatic households or relationships, often fleeing from abuse that they suffered from family, community members, friends etc. Many do not have the privilege of getting counselling to enable them to build healthy and flourishing relationships. On this note, the

documentation of gender-based violence, specifically regarding homeless women. Are their bodies and stories not valuable enough to be documented?

Lastly, although it is important to understand homelessness and its effects on women exposed to this gruesome reality, it is equally important that we understand how FBOs are responding to the plight of homelessness. The FBO sector has been an active agent of change in communities, by providing developmental services to the destitute and marginalised (Bowers Du Toit, 2018:24). Thus, FBOs become “accessible communities” to the poor. These accessible communities are an expression of God’s love (Mbaya, 2020:9). Offering spaces where the homeless are welcome and treated with *ubuntu*⁴, which is one way of restoring their dignity. FBOs tend to advocate for the poor and create programmes that combat social, economic, and political exclusion to create a just society (Bowers Du Toit, 2018:26). Therefore, this will be explored deeply in my research, which will include an analysis on how FBOs are responding to the issue of gender and wellbeing of women, particularly homeless women.

6. Methodology

This study is positioned within the field of Practical Theology and the sub-discipline of Theology and Development. The field of Theology and Development is in addition to being positioned also an interdisciplinary one. In this thesis several of these boundaries will be transgressed and fields drawn upon – such as gender studies, Womanist theology, sociology etc.

This research uses a qualitative approach together with a literature review. My data collection will not involve field work, however, but will instead sample the websites of three FBOs that work with the homeless in Cape Town, which for the purpose of this study will be anonymised. Critical discourse analysis will be used to analyse the documents from the three FBOs to ascertain whether their work does have a gendered approach and whether they take account of gender, especially the wellbeing of women. Discourse analysis also gives meaning to a text; therefore, it is the study of language (Adonis, 2017:9). It is referred to as “a range of techniques to analyse language in use” (Research Methods Datasets, 2019:2). Thus, a close reading of the documents will be done. Standards of textuality, which are different components of language

⁴ *Ubuntu* is a Nguni Bantu term meaning “humanity”. It is sometimes translated as “I am because we are” (also “I am because you are”), or “humanity towards others” (Zulu *umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*).

in discourse studies, include intentionality, acceptability, intertextuality, situationally, and informativity (Research methods datasets, 2019:2). In this research I will focus on three:

- Informativity, which concerns how new or unexpected the information is
- Situationally, which refers to ongoing circumstances
- Intertextuality, which refers to a text's relation to other texts (Research methods datasets, 2019:4)

According to Adonis (2017:9), “there is a complex hierarchy of power and ideology at work in discourse which helps sustain a gendered social order.” Therefore, a key area that will be investigated is the language used or not used in relation to gender. This analysis will involve coding data. Coding is “applying condensed topics to units and later analysing these topics for larger patterns” (Research methods datasets, 2019:6). Coding will pay close attention to textual themes such as primacy (what comes first in the documents), and emphasis (what is treated with more regard in the text) (Research methods datasets, 2019:6). As I will not be conducting field research, the study does not require ethical clearance from the university.

7. Limitations

I am limited to only secondary sources which are based on Annual General Meeting reports, testimonials and programmes that are outlined on the websites. This may not provide a full picture of all the services rendered to the homeless by these FBOs. Nevertheless, it could be said that the key emphasis on a website is what the organisation wants the general public to understand as most important to the work they do.

8. Defining Concepts

8.1 Non-Profit Organisations

In any society, non-profit organizations are significant players and bodies. They are organizations that rely on donations to survive and execute their programs and do not aim to generate a profit for their founders and stakeholders.

It is crucial to provide a thorough description of these things in order to gain a better knowledge of them. The best definition is provided by Salamon and Anheier (1992:152). They established five operational characteristics that set apart non-profit organizations from other organizations in order to create the most thorough definition of non-profit organizations. According to

Salamon and Anheier, the operational characteristics that distinguish not-for-profit organizations are as follows:

- *Organised*, i.e., institutionalized for some extent. And possessing some institutional reality, which separates the organisation from informal entities such as families, gatherings, or movements.
- *Private*, i.e., institutionally separate from government, which sets the entity apart from the public sector. They are not part of the government
- *Non-profit-distributing*, i.e., not returning any profits generated to owners or equivalents, which distinguishes non-profits from businesses
- *Self-governing*, i.e., equipped to control their own activities. Non-profit organizations have their own internal procedures for governance and are not controlled by outside
- *Voluntary*, i.e., involving some meaningful degree of voluntary participation, either in the actual conduct of the agency's activities or in the management of its affair⁵

However, Glaeser (2003:2) argues that these elements give non-profit organizations' chief executive officer (CEO) and board members an almost unprecedented degree of autonomy. Donors frequently understand that they have little power over the organizations they fund, thus they donate knowing that their contributions will have negligible impact than to enhance the recipient non-profit's financial plan. It is also less obvious what non-profit managers optimize or what ultimately influences the actions of non-profit organizations, even while non-profit managers do not intrinsically maximize the objectives of either investors/donors or society at large.

Kenton (2022:1) adds that a non-profit organization is a business that has been given tax-exempt status, because it advances a social purpose and delivers a public benefit. Donations to a non-profit organization are often tax-deductible for the individuals and corporations who make them, and the non-profit pays no tax on the received donations or any other money gained from fundraising operations. Based on the part of the tax code that allows them to function,

⁵ Salamon, L.M and Anheier, H.K (1992) 'In Search of the non-profit Sector; The question of definitions. *Voluntas: International Journal of Voluntary and Non-profit Organizations*. P. 125-151

non-profit organizations are sometimes referred to as NPOs or Section 501(c)(3)⁶ organizations.

Furthermore, only organizations that further religious, scientific, philanthropic, educational, literary, public safety, or cruelty-prevention causes, or goals are accorded non-profit status and tax-exempt status. Hospitals, universities, national charities, churches, and foundations are examples of non-profit organizations.

8.2 Faith-Based Organisation

According to McDonald (2018:2) religion is expected to be marginalized in a modern secular culture. Simultaneously, Faith-Based Organizations provide spaces and resources for all people, particularly youth, to feel a sense of belonging. A Faith-Based Organization is defined as any organization that gets inspiration and guidance from the teachings and values of the faith or from a particular interpretation or school of thought within the faith.

Bowers Du Toit (2018:25) states that, Faith-Based Organizations are key- role players in South African civil society, noting that FBOs provide social development services to the poorest of the poor. Although mostly unstudied, questions should be addressed about Christian Development Organizations (CDO) as a subtype of FBO positioning, considering their Christian identity. Furthermore, Anend (2008:259) adds, that workers within Faith-Based Organizations, operate with messages and ideals frequently which collide with the prevalent norms, values, and behaviours that surround them in their daily lives. For instance Faith based organisations working with the homeless have to deal with negative perceptions that the homeless deal with daily. Like being labelled as lazy and nuisance in society.

According to the Health Communication Capacity Collaborative (2006:1) for well over a century, Non-Governmental Organizations and religious organisations have supplied healthcare in impoverished countries. They now supply over 40% of healthcare services in Sub-Saharan Africa⁷. They frequently understand the local context, advocate for the disenfranchised, provide higher-quality services, mobilize energy and resources, contribute to consensus-building, and link local communities with higher authorities. FBOs are sometimes

⁶ Section 501(c)(3) is a portion of the U.S. Internal Revenue Code (IRC) and a specific tax category for non-profit

⁷ The geographical area of the continent of Africa that lies south of the Sahara. According to the United Nations, it consists of all African countries and territories that are fully or partially south of the Sahara.

the only development groups in a distant community, or they have been there the longest. Their intimate ties to communities, as well as their power over them, for instance having connections with authoritative sectors, such as government and churches, this presents them with a perfect opportunity to addressing other cultural factors that contribute to high child morbidity and death (Heath Communication Capacity Collaborative, 2006:1).

8.3 Womanist Theology

According to Harris and Horsley (2022:3) Womanist theology offers diverse viewpoints on atonement in comparison to "classical" theology. An investigation of redemptive suffering through the lenses of Womanist theologians reveals a theology that opposes White supremacy, uniting Black people with the pre-colonial theology that helped build Christianity worldwide. It is deliberate in amplifying the voices of Black women.

Womanist theologian Katie Cannon asserts that, "We need a womanist historiography that will challenge what we presently and naively take for granted as true concerning Black women"⁸

Fluker (2022:34) states that womanist theology gives insight into the experiences of a minority group that is often disregarded by bringing the narratives of Black women into US history and theological discourse. Cannon describes the relationship between Black women's experiences and their historical context as the prerequisites for patterns of ethical action and moral wisdom that have formed in the Black female community.

Furthermore, Fluker, (2022:34) argues that, since the 1980s, the term "womanist" has served as a foundation for womanist theology. While the name "womanist" is a literary term, emphasizing the realities of Black women provided the catalyst for new theological study. Walker's⁹ definition recognizes the experience, culture, and ideals connected with Black femininity and integrates the different experiences of Black women who are marginalized in society.

Linda E. Thomas, a womanist theologian, defines womanist theology as a theology that "connects the plight, survival, and fight" and "takes seriously Black women's experience as

⁸ Katie Cannon, *The womanist theology primer* (Women's Ministries Program, 2001), 119.

⁹ Walker's definition is largely used in Chapter four which I discuss womanist theology in-depth

human beings fashioned in the image of God"¹⁰. Womanist theology incorporates the work of Black women in family and community life as a theology that represents both struggle and survival. A womanist history incorporates Black women's experiences and gives a framework for analysing how these experiences reinterpret Christian ideas and teachings (Fluker,2022:34).

Fluker (2022:35) argues, that the Black church and the use of biblical scripture as an empowering source for understanding their relationship to a God who spoke to an oppressed people uplifted Black women. The Bible, as most Black women's highest source of authority, shaped scripture as a reference point for developing their theological ideas and commitments to the survival and emancipation of all people.

Black women's oppression has a multi-layered history that is entrenched in both history and theological ideas that have fuelled years of violence and cruelty (Fluker,2022:35). The historical prism through which Black women are identified is embedded in a normative patriarchal framework that excludes their voice and witness. Historically, Black women have been identified based on the narratives of their oppressors. Religious faith and institutions are at the basis of this patriarchal normal. Religious organisations and institutions must now prioritise the witness and experiences of Black women as an extension of white patriarchal standards of oppression (Fluker,2022:35).

8.4 Gender and Development

As Chilongozi (2017:30) states, there are a number of reasons why it is vital to talk about "gender and development" rather than "women and development," including the fact that women are not a homogenous group and that problems impacting women cannot be addressed or dealt with as isolated occurrences. In this context, African Women Theologians assert that the term "gender" designates the social roles played by both men and women. This explains why any development program has a varied impact on the lives of men and women since they occupy distinct roles in society (Chilongozi,2017:31).

According to Haddad (2005:34), women were viewed as being constrained by tradition when modernization and development were equated. They were, therefore, viewed as not possessing equal worth to men. In addition to seeing them as obstacles to modernity and, consequently, growth, they were viewed as backward members of the society. The assumption that women

¹⁰ Linda E. Thomas, "Womanist Theology, Epistemology, and a New Anthropological Paradigm," Cross Currents Vol. 48, Issue 4 (Summer 1998).

would eventually be forced to take a more progressive stance toward development once the modernization process had begun and the third-world men had learned to organise their societies along modern lines caused women to be ignored by development planners during the 1950s and 1960s (Haddad 2005:25). As a result, all programme planning was done with men in mind, operating under the premise that women had no considerable influence over economic or political decisions. In fact, as Haddad (2005:35) further argues, women's contributions to the production of their communities were made invisible.

The Women in Development (WID) strategy was also critiqued by Gender and Development (GAD) experts for seeing women as a homogenous group. They persisted in saying that the strategy should emphasise how disparities in race, class, age, marital status, and ethnicity or other race or ethnic group affect development results (Momsen 2010:13). They "made a distinction between 'practical' gender interests (i.e., things that would better women's lives in their current positions) and 'strategic' gender interests that help to increase women's capacity for taking on new roles and to empower them" (Momsen 2010:13).

9. Chapter outline

The thesis follows the following outline:

Chapter One: Introduction

This chapter will introduce the thesis topic and will discuss the aims and objectives and gives a brief literature review on homeless. Also, the methodology that will applied, limitations and definitions of concepts used in this study.

Chapter Two: A review of homelessness in the South African context

Chapter Two will expand on the broader understanding of homelessness. It will discuss the basic definitions of homelessness. This chapter also looks at how the issue of homelessness is understood and addressed worldwide, four countries are chosen and will be reviewed. Furthermore, a South African historical background will be discussed. Lastly a section on pathways into homelessness and critical issues faced by homeless women will be discussed.

Chapter Three: Responses to street homelessness from national government, local municipalities, and NGOs in South Africa.

Chapter Three will examine the responses towards homelessness within the South African context. This chapter will highlight the responses from national government, local municipalities, Non-Government Organisations, and the homeless people own advocacy

Chapter Four: Hagar and women's experiences of homelessness.

Chapter four will use womanist theology as a lens to expose how the intersecting issues of race, class and gender play a huge role in Hagar's story and how she was forced into homelessness. This chapter also, will highlight the relevance of Hagar's issues to those of south African women, particularly the marginalised and oppressed women.

Chapter Five: Responses from homeless Faith-Based Organisations in Cape Town

Chapter five will discuss the methodology used to analysis the three chosen FBOs, that are based in the Western Cape region. It will also discuss the sample and analytical process.

Chapter six: Conclusion and recommendations

Chapter six will give an overview of the all the chapters in this study. It will also discuss the findings and give recommendations. A further study section and the conclusion.

Chapter Two

A review of homelessness in the South African context

1. Introduction

South Africa faces critical problems, most of which are the results of socio-economic issues, political instability, and inequality. Homelessness is one of these critical issues. According to De Beer & Vally (2021:29), homelessness is an outcome of systemic, institutional failure and sometimes individual life-choices. It is also a challenge globally. The manifestation of this challenge in our communities becomes an urgent call to health, housing, education, and religious sectors to unite and form constructive pathways that enable homeless people to be re-integrated in society. It is also important that the homeless people are active participants in this vision of harmony and *shalom* (Mangayi & Ngcobo, 2015:1).

Homelessness is an issue that is often treated without urgency by state actors, as government policies and development sectors often pay less attention to homelessness (De Beer & Vally, 2021:29). However, homelessness cannot be ignored as Covid-19 further exposed the exclusion of homeless people, also revealing contrasting sentiments from the non-homeless (De Beer & Vally, 2021:29). While there are different forms of homelessness in South Africa, it is important to note that my research focus is on homeless people on the streets, specifically homeless women on the streets. Because homelessness has been an escalating problem in recent years, women are a “fast growing and understudied segment of the homeless population” and are disproportionately affected (Racette & Fowler, 2021:1; cf. Gelberg & Browner *et al*, 2008:87). My focus is, therefore, on homeless women to broaden the literature on the issues faced by homeless women.

In this chapter, I discuss homelessness and the perspectives on and responses to homelessness in other countries, the South African historical context of homelessness, pathways to homelessness, and close with focusing on critical issues faced by homeless women.

2. Homelessness: basic definitions

Homelessness is a global phenomenon which is multi-dimensional owing to its complexities (Roets & Botha *et al*, 2016:614). The causes are diverse, ranging from political instability, cultural beliefs, to economic and social factors. It is a difficult term to explain as it defies a

singular definition, it has been a challenge to scholars in different disciplines due to its multi-faceted nature. For instance, homelessness in some contexts can be defined as informal settlements or housing, in other cases people are considered homeless if evicted or losing their house. Furthermore, those who are homeless are also described as homeless (Roets & Botha *et al*, 2016:614). It is a complex situation, as all the scenarios are different and would require different responses to be addressed. However, Roets and Botha *et al* (2016:620) fundamentally define the essence of homelessness in the following way, which is the definition which is used in this thesis:

Being on a continuum, ranging from people who may be at risk of becoming homeless, to those who currently have no shelter of their own and live and sleep in parks, train stations and the like and who do it mostly for economic reasons.

Another definition that grasps homelessness, is “all people living on the streets who fall outside of a viable social network of assistance and who are not able to provide themselves with shelter at any given time and place” (Mangayi & Ngcobo, 2015:1).

Homelessness is also the reality of people living in inhumane circumstances that distort and damage their human dignity. It is associated with negative connotations that mostly derive from non-homeless people, words such as troublesome, nuisance, unhygienic, unclean, beggar, vagrants, and thieves. Due to these labels, homeless people are exposed to “practices of social cleansing” (Daya & Wilkins *et al*, 2013:358). Social cleansing means that authoritative figures such as police or security officials use physical and verbal abuse to remove homeless people from public spaces, where the homeless cause discomfort to the non-homeless. For instance, because of property value, the homeless are removed or cleansed from the suburbs and esteemed spaces that non-homeless work and live in (Daya & Wilkins *et al*, 2013:359).

The common causes of homelessness, especially in developing countries, are poverty, unemployment, and unaffordable housing. Consequently, the experience of being homeless is also associated with displacement. Hence, feelings of being displaced create an awareness of not being at home in this world (Louw, 2017:1), and this displacement often means not belonging, with the self, with others, and with God. Homelessness excludes the destitute from experiencing healthy social networks and a sense of community.

3. Homelessness as understood and addressed worldwide

Before discussing the South African context, it is important to understand how other countries perceive and respond to the issue of homelessness, as the issue of homelessness is increasing globally, due to immigration and urbanisation. In this chapter I focus on four countries, namely Britain, India, Sweden, and America, and try to explore how these countries respond to homelessness.

➤ **Britain**

The industrial revolution influenced many unemployed and poor people in rural communities to move into cities and urban areas. For instance, during the 18th century, parishes in London began implementing laws targeting vagrants and beggars (Cross & Seager *et al*, 2010:6). Interestingly, those with mental illnesses and disabilities were given permission to beg (Cross & Seager *et al* 2010:6). However non-disabled people were sent to court when caught begging. They were sentenced to hard labour, which included working in workhouses. The hard labour was in exchange for clothing, shelter, and food (Cross & Seager, 2010:7). Government aid was offered to the destitute only if they accepted severe, inferior working conditions. Marginalised and minority groups were usually treated unjustly by people with power and status. Hence, the homeless community was disadvantaged and mistreated.

Fortunately, during the 20th century, an approach to end poverty and homelessness was formulated. This was aimed at both prevention and alleviation. In 1946 the Universal Social Aid was introduced and in 1948 the welfare state was created which offered social services such as old age pensions, unemployment compensation, and low wages interventions, and free compulsory education was emphasised (Cross & Seager *et al*, 2020:9). Although these social welfare services were in place, homelessness did not disappear. According to Broll and Huey (2020:3381), homelessness in Britain was later regarded as a concern. The homeless community was more than 4 100 for a single night estimated in 2016 (Broll and Huey, 2020:3381). A homelessness reduction bill was introduced by the British legislators and this bill required public services to be active agents in finding those affected by homelessness and to increase local government's responsibility to end homelessness (Broll & Huey, 2020:3381). Homelessness is still an issue in Britain; however, these strategies improved government aid in minimising the number of homeless people. Fortunately, citizens of the European Union received help from the social benefits that were expanded beyond just a financial safety net. Due to this, homelessness in Europe is at a low rate (Cross & Seager, 2010:9).

➤ **India**

India is still an industrialising state, and therefore, unlike Britain, Indian authorities have limited control over spaces occupied by the poor and street homeless. In India local migration and urbanisation is growing into a well-established informal economy (Cross & Seager *et al*, 2010:9). The rise in street children without contact with their families is a major social concern. Children become more vulnerable on the streets, especially without guidance. The informal economy tends to support the homeless community in India out of the “orbit of formal housing and control measures” (Cross & Seager, 2010:9). The living options for the homeless community include squatting, homeless camps, streets, and slums.

➤ **United States of America (USA)**

The USA emphasises the notion of individual responsibility and freedom to fight poverty, homelessness, and unemployment. In the 1930s homelessness and hunger spiked rapidly after the Great Depression and in response to this, public social provision was set up. This intervention was also a response to those defined as “wandering tramps and hoboes” (Cross & Seager *et al*, 2010:10). It included slum clearance, but this did not focus on large-scale housing projects (Cross & Seager *et al*, 2010:10). However, in the 1960s the USA introduced measures that were targeted at helping the poor. The governmental welfare programmes included conditional steps to prevent misuse of resources; however, this caused challenges for the poor to receive and gain ultimate access, thus creating exclusion for the destitute. Fortunately, emphasis was placed on affordable housing and de-institutionalisation (Cross & Seager, 2010:10).

Much like the South African context, street homeless people have built camps, structured like shacks, but many are prevented and opposed by police authorities and property owners, because the homeless decrease property value (Cross & Seager *et al*, 2010:10). However In America, San Diego state, their municipalities adopted the bottom-up approach, which introduced targeted programmes to focus on downtown investments. This strategy also aimed to move the homeless and poor through transitional housing back into housed society (Cross & Seager *et al*, 2010:11). Interestingly, the American homeless population in earlier years was composed largely of middle-aged alcoholics. Today its population includes a growing number of young people of which the majority are females (Gelberg & Browner *et al*, 2004:88). In 1963 the percentage of homeless women was 3%; now it is estimated to be 20%-30% (Gelberg & Browner *et al*, 2004:88).

In 2010 the US government composed a federal plan addressing homelessness (Broll & Heuy, 2020:3381). One of the goals was to end chronic homelessness by 2010. The long-term goal is to end all homelessness in the USA. However, a report stated that in 2014 on a single night 578 000 people were homeless, and 84 000 were categorised as chronically homeless (Broll & Huey, 2020:3381).

➤ Sweden

In Sweden, homelessness is placed into four categories: (1) acute homelessness – involves sleeping and living on the streets, (2) institutional or supportive care – homeless people with access to group homes or supportive houses that they live in, (3) long-term housing solutions – accommodation arranged by a local municipality, with living terms and conditions, (4) personally arranged housing – temporary arrangements between friends and family (Wikstrom & Erikson *et al*, 2018:611). However, it is important to note that homelessness is not only a housing problem, but also associated with critical issues like impaired health, mortality, and financial instability, which lead to sexual exploitation, especially among women (Wikstrom & Erikson *et al*, 2018: 611; Aparicio & Kachingwe *et al*, 2021:236).

4. South African historical context of homelessness

History plays a significant role in a country's systemic structure. Thus, to empathise with the homeless in the South African context, its historical context should be presented. In this section I will, therefore, begin by discussing the impact of South African history on homelessness. Black people in Southern Africa suffered immensely under the yoke of colonisation and one of the most pertinent points in the discussion is that “colonialism played a significant role in dispossessing Indigenous people of their land” (Greyvenstein, 2021:1). Under white supremacy, discriminatory laws were intended to strip Africans of their land (Greyvenstein, 2021:1). One historical event that affected generations of Africans to come, was the Berlin Conference (1884-1885), which summoned all major European representatives (Oliver & Oliver, 2017:1). The conference was organised to discuss the fate of Africa and how Africa would be ruled by colonial powers. This is known as the “scramble for Africa” (Oliver & Oliver, 2017:1). As a result, within half a century, Europeans had almost subjugated the whole continent.¹¹

¹¹ African countries were under the rule of western powers since the 15th century. The colonising countries were Great Britain, France, Portugal, Germany, and Belgium (Oliver & Oliver, 2017:1).

The colonisation of these African countries was accompanied by humiliation, oppression, and unjust inhumane laws (Oliver & Oliver, 2017:1). According to Oliver and Oliver, South Africa was colonised in 1652. Significantly, they argue that the colonisation of South Africa, compared to other African countries, was a “unique case,” because it was colonised and occupied by the Netherlands in 1652-1795 and 1803-1806, and by Great Britain in 1795-1803 and 1806-1961 (Oliver & Oliver, 2017:2).

After colonisation apartheid¹² came to prominence in South Africa. After World War 2, in 1948, the National Party won the elections “marking the beginning of white Afrikaner rule under the supervision of Britain” (Oliver & Oliver, 2017:2). However, when South Africa became a republic independent from Britain in 1961, the country introduced a system of Afrikaner supremacy over Black people in the country, which lasted for more than three decades (Oliver & Oliver, 2017:2).

These laws contributed immensely to the unjust system of socio-economic inequality in post-apartheid South Africa. Moreover, these acts contradicted the reality that “everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself/herself and his family” (Greyvenstein, 2021:1). Homelessness does not exclude any race, however, in South Africa, street homelessness is still predominately Black (Tenai & Mbewu, 2019:12). De Beer and Vally (2021:12) argue that the poorest are the street homeless, this is related to apartheid and colonial history. Hence the face of the poor population in South Africa is the Black population.

Although history plays a significant role, the present situation needs to be evaluated for change to occur for the betterment of all persons. Unfortunately, the South African economy ranks as the one of the most unequal economies in the world (De Beer & Vally, 2021:5). The common causes of homelessness in South Africa are poverty, unemployment, and lack of affordable housing (Roets & Botha, *et al*, 2016:614). The homeless community in South Africa is largely made up of people who do not have any income or who receive minimal/low wages (Roets &

¹² The apartheid regime determined South African people’s movements; geographically people were purposely segregated through laws and legislation such as the Influx Control Act and the Group Areas Act (De Beer & Vally, 2015:12). These laws prevented Black people from entering certain areas including shops, public toilets, and estates. Thus, these laws also prevented in-migration as Black people were not allowed to occupy or stay in “white cities” (De Beer & Vally, 2021:2).

Botha, *et al*, 2016:614). As a result, homeless people experience economic exclusion. This exclusion denies the homeless their basic human rights (De Beer & Vally, 2021:6). As mentioned, the lack of governmental policies to address this perpetuates the cycle of homelessness. Furthermore, without support and laws to protect the street homeless, homeless people have no security. Thus, issues of social cleansing occur as mentioned above. The street homeless experience extreme physical hardships and live with psychological and emotional traumas. These lived experiences require all stakeholders to unite and work together to improve the lives of the homeless. Homelessness is not a housing issue only but also a health matter. (Sweden also places emphasis on the mental health of the homeless.) Because of poverty, people in rural areas like the Eastern Cape and Kwa-Zulu Natal migrate to cities such as Johannesburg, Tshwane, Durban, and Cape Town. However, due to the socio-political and economic systems at play, many find themselves without work. Without employment to generate income, it leads them to overpopulated townships and the streets (Roets & Botha *et al*, 2016:614). For instance, in Johannesburg, street homeless people sleep in spaces like open recreation spaces, bridges, vacant lots, cemeteries, and parks (Charlton & Rubin, 2021:34).

Homeless people face exclusion from society because economic and social progress and stability are decided by one's ability to have a home with a fixed address (De Beer & Vally, 2021:6). Hence, without a home, homeless people are on the periphery, and do not have basic human rights (De Beer & Vally, 2021:6). It is important to note that a home is not only a shelter to protect us from extreme climates; a home is also a personal space which provides a sense of peace and privacy. This is poignantly worded in (Luke 9:58): "Foxes have dens and birds have nests, but the son of man has no place to lay his head," which beautifully expresses the desolation of homelessness.

5. Pathways to homelessness in South African

What are the pathways to homelessness? There are critical "pushes and pulls" that lead people to a life of homelessness. However, it is important to note that certain pathways are gendered (Broll & Heuy, 2020:3381); there are different and similar external forces that compel men and women to become homeless. Men tend to fall into homelessness due to job loss, mental illnesses, and addiction. On the other hand, one of the major pushes for women to become homeless and experience multiple homelessness is violent victimisation; the abuse is perpetrated by relatives, partners, and strangers (Broll & Huey, 2020:3381). Therefore, practitioners, church leaders, and community developers need to understand that homelessness

has different sides, and that each homeless individual is a unique case. Therefore, solutions should not be linear but broadened to help all homeless individuals with their complexities. Homelessness is a complex issue as individuals go through the process of existing and re-entering into homelessness, which causes people to experience multiple periods of being on the streets.

In the next section I will discuss the four major pathways to homelessness that affect all genders – immigration and urbanisation, unemployment, poverty, and substance abuse.

5.1 Poverty

Homelessness, specifically in South Africa, is attributed to the immense reality of poverty-stricken households (Kok & Cross *et al*, 2010:21). The high prevalence of poverty is a determining factor for the rise and constancy of homelessness (people on the streets) (Kok & Cross *et al*, 2010:21). Poverty is dehumanising. Kok and Cross *et al* (2010:22) argue that an estimated ten million are poor in South Africa and fewer than 50 000 are homeless. As mentioned above, the apartheid system played a critical role in the segregation of people and unequal distribution of services (Cross & Seager, 2010:7).

However, as housing is a one way of eradicating poverty, the question is why are the street homeless not receiving this service? Why are the street homeless not living in shacks? The street homeless are excluded due to developmental property advancements in urban areas. It is important to understand that street homelessness is a social, moral, political, and institutional problem, which is a symptom of our flawed society (De Beer & Vally, 2021:14).

The poor and homeless experience extreme hardships. To have no home means not belonging, no security, and lack of a social network (De Beer & Vally, 2021:7). There are no homeless-led pro-active homeless organisations owned by homeless people. Due to the lack of political participation, homeless people focus on survival on the streets than paying attention to political issues.

5.2 Immigration and urbanisation

South Africa experienced an immense increase of urbanisation after 1994. Due to this, the face of street homelessness changed as more socio-economically disenfranchised people moved to towns and cities to seek a better future for their families (De Beer & Vally, 2021:29) According

to De Beer & Vally (2021:13), the number of people living in urban areas increased from 30% in the 1950s to 50% in 2018 and an estimated increase of 60% is expected by 2030.

Immigration is, therefore, one of the leading causes of homelessness. Immigrants flee their homes, facing extreme circumstances to feel safe, secure, and to belong (Claassens, 2019:1). According to Cross and Seager *et al* (2010:5) less attention is given to street homelessness due to our large shack population. This causes concern, because shacks are not reliable or sufficient housing, especially in extreme weather like floods. Shack population is a reality and common in South Africa compared to other countries. Because when people move to the city and end up unemployed, this results in overcrowded townships, which are populated with shacks (slums).

Immigration is often a result of wars and instability in neighbouring countries. Wars force innocent people to flee their countries in search of peace and a sense for safety in other places. The desire for a home is unattainable for many people in the world today (Claassens, 2019:1). Migrants look to find a new home for themselves and their children, because their homes are no longer places of safety, security, and belonging and their wellbeing is threatened.

Street homeless people find themselves in various places in search of belonging. Homelessness is a lack of belonging; it means to be displaced. What is home to some, can become life-denying for others. A poem by Warsan Shire highlights this reality and depicts the deep sense of despair that is experienced by those looking for a home in places of refuge:

I want to go home

but home is the mouth of a shark (Warsan Shire: 2015)

One can pose the question of what home is? Realistically, no one leaves home unless they are faced with complex issues. In search of a new home, dislocated, homeless people often go through deadly situations. Immigrants today “try to fit in, [but] find themselves ostracised” (Claassens, 2019:3).

Because of war, unemployment, and poverty, immigrants search for a better world, a world of peace and freedom to live in harmony in foreign countries.

5.3 Unemployment

South Africa’s unemployment crisis affects a large part of the population. Unemployment contributes to various social ills, such as crime, early teenage pregnancy, and homelessness. Cross and Seager (2010:143) argue that unemployment is a stressor in poor households, which

provokes the cycle of extreme marginalisation, which leads to socio-economic and political exclusion. Employment in communities stands for security. It is usually used as a trustworthy mechanism to fight being homeless (De Beer & Vally, 2021:6). Unemployment, on the other hand, causes tension in poverty-stricken households and can also foster other toxic living conditions in families. Due to gender roles and societal expectations, unemployed men use alcohol and substance abuse as coping mechanisms to cover the shame placed upon them by culture and traditional beliefs. These behaviours can lead to gender-based violence and gender victimisation (De Beer & Vally, 2016:6).

Unemployment is one of the causes of homelessness as it is a form of exclusion. People who have no income, are deprived of enjoying their basic rights. With no money, one cannot afford to buy food, and food is a basic human need. Street homeless people without employment become dependent and rely on charity from organisations and hospitable individuals. However, this dependency is not healthy, as homeless people will not change their state as long as there is someone who provides. Charity is good but not advisable for a long-term solution to end homelessness. In addition, the relationships between the giver and receiver are categorised as “secondary violations or trauma experiences” (De Beer & Vally, 2021:7).

South Africa offers social grants to aid the poor, however, these social grants are beneficial to the poor living in shacks (informal housing) rather than the population that is homeless with no shelter (Seager, 2010:143). This is due to the unavailability of resources from government to cater to the needs of all citizens. Fewer resources are available to help those who live in shacks as “they are a first priority for house delivery” (Seager, 2010:145). Hence, they occupy temporary jobs which are not secure. This causes poor people to fall into the trap of homelessness (Cross & Seager, 2010:145).

5.4 Substance abuse

Poverty leads to street homelessness which becomes a routine of sleeping on pavements and corners without access to shelter. As a result, people end up abusing substances such as drugs and alcohol to cope with their reality. According to Tenai and Mbewu (2019:2), one of the main reasons street homeless people use drugs is to escape harsh and unbearable situations that they experience daily. These become traumatic lived experiences. However, extreme usage creates unhealthy habits which lead to addiction and dependency on the drugs, hence it is difficult for addicted street homeless persons to be re-integrated into larger community without rehabilitation intervention (Tenai & Mbewu, 2019:2).

Substance abuse is common among street homeless people because substances are usually coping mechanisms to overcome traumatic experiences and the uncertainty of life in the streets. Nevertheless, addicted street homeless are usually stigmatised and blamed for this bad behaviour and remain prone to extreme forms of criminalisation and marginalisation (De Beer & Vally, 2021:14).

6.The social stigma of homelessness

Homelessness is a social pandemic, where those most affected are the marginalised in society. One cannot predict who the reality of homelessness can befall. It is important to note that anyone can become homeless – people lose their houses due to debt, substance abuse, divorce, domestic abuse, and lack of unemployment (De Beer & Vally, 2021:29). As a result, homeless people must learn to survive on the streets like secondary citizens, at times subjected to inhumane treatments. For instance, rejection is one form of exclusion to which they are exposed. There are different forms of rejection that the street homeless experience.

- Engaged rejection: opposition towards the homeless and institutions for the homeless
- Distanced rejection: a feeling of discomfort in the presence of a homeless person or people
- Indifference: treating homeless persons and the non-homeless differently
- Critical rejection: “neighbours who are uncomfortable with fellow neighbours who practice engaged rejection in different forms of intolerance” (De Beer & Vally, 2021:9).

These responses towards the homeless differ. However, mechanisms are used to remove the street homeless in sight. Some neighbourhoods remove homeless people because they will decrease property value and street homeless people are associated with crime which raises issues of security (Charlton & Rubin, 2021:17).

Additionally, homeless people are stigmatised and are labelled as “bad” because they have no homes, while people with homes are “good.” Treatment of the homeless and non-homeless differs with regards to the actions of the police, health facilities, and the public. Very often they are considered a nuisance in society. A newspaper article entitled “South Africa: Homeless poorly treated in Bedfordview” depicts this negative behaviour that street homeless people are exposed to by providing an example of social cleansing that the homeless experience daily. In this affluent suburb in Johannesburg police confiscated the possessions and personal

belongings of the homeless. Other homeless people are victims of verbal harassment, assaults, and fines (*All Africa Global Media*, 2018).

The phrase “robbed of all measures of security” (Vally & De Beer, 2017:384) describes how the homeless are frequently left without a voice. Thebus (2021:1) claims that Cape Town’s city council authorised stricter legal enforcement against the homeless in public locations. According to one homeless person, the changes made their life worse, and the new laws put them in dangerous situations. It was reported that homeless individuals are frightened to walk on the streets because they fear being accused (Thebus, 2021:1).

My concern for the homeless grew as I learned about Covid-19 as a global pandemic. During this time, the homeless were treated unfairly, even though the virus did affect everyone, regardless of gender, social status, or race.

However, the treatment of the homeless is further elaborated on in Chapter Three, particularly in South Africa.

7. Critical issues faced by street homeless women

As mentioned above, there are the four common causes of homelessness among all persons. This section will discuss an in-depth review on the critical issues faced by street homeless women specifically. Because people experience homelessness uniquely, there are similarities and differences, which will be discussed in this section. But the common critical issues faced by women are abuse, lack of antenatal care, disclosure of gender identity, and reproductive health issues. The above issues were chosen, because women particularly face these critical issues.

7.1 Abuse

Women and children are the most vulnerable in our society, however this reality becomes extremely dangerous for homeless women on the street (Tenai & Mbewu, 2019:2). Homelessness is a dynamic, periodic cycle that involves homeless individuals coming in and out of homelessness (Broll & Huey 2020:3380). Consequently, there is a lack of research on women who experience multiple episodes of homelessness and its connection to violent victimisation. It is important to understand that homeless women who were exposed to different forms of victimisation, such as emotional, sexual, and physical abuse, in any stage of their lives, are most likely to experience multiple phases of homelessness. Broll & Huey (2020:380)

note that women often flee to the streets for safety as a result of gender-based violence (cf. Tenai & Mbewu, 2019:3).

There are also other reasons why women end up on the streets, such as substance abuse, unemployment, mental health issues, family and marital breakdowns, and survival. Financial dependence is common among uneducated and unemployed women, which is a contributing negative factor to this issue. Financially vulnerable women are more vulnerable to abuse, and consequently women flee due to abuse and conflicts, and homelessness becomes a possibility to escape that reality (Broll & Heuy, 2020:3382). Violence is cited as one of the primary reasons for women's homelessness. Reports state 80% of homeless women have been victims of abuse (Broll & Heuy, 2020:3382). In many instances, these women have backgrounds of violent victimisation dating back to their childhood. The most traumatic experiences among homeless women are emotional, physical, and sexual abuse. This childhood trauma includes feelings of neglect and abandonment. Sexual abuse affects more women than men (Broll & Heuy, 2020:3383).

As mentioned above, homelessness is a process which is transitional; however, studies show that men are less likely to return to homelessness once they are out of that state compared to women (Broll & Heuy, 2020:3384). This continues to influence the victimisation of women; women often remain in a chronic state of homelessness (Broll & Heuy, 2020:3384). Furthermore, the rates of women who experience multiple episodes of homelessness is perpetuated by experiences of childhood sexual abuse perpetrated by both strangers and relatives in women's lives, compared to those who experience first time homelessness.

Women are also exposed to different socio-cultural factors that marginalise them. Rape culture is a critical issue that needs to be addressed. It is embodied in rape myths that many women are manipulated to believe when they are violated (Cote & Flynn *et al*, 2022:1). Child sexual abuse is also a common experience among homeless women (Cote & Flynn *et al*, 2022:1). This traumatic experience is further amplified by victim blaming, shaming, and disbelief, especially when the individuals show their truth. This leads the victim to social exclusion and isolation, thus turning to homelessness.

Sexual trauma is a health issue that causes long-term physical and psychological strain (Cote & Flynn *et al*, 2022:2). Hence, survivors experience extreme levels of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), anxiety, depression, suicide ideation and attempts. They also struggle with drug and alcohol abuse (Cote & Flynn *et al*, 2022:2). These mental issues are associated with

substance abuse, which is a coping mechanism. Some survival strategies include sexual services for subsistence (Cote & Flynn, 2022:2).

7.2 Lack of antenatal care

Antenatal care is a vital part of maternal care. According to Tufa and Tsegaye *et al* (2020:657), antenatal care services are important, because it ensures that the health of both mother and child are safe. An article in the *International Health of Women* says that initial antenatal care services can ensure positive results for the health of the child and mother (Tufa & Tsegaye *et al*, 2020). The aim of antenatal care is to prevent any harm that can potentially affect the child and mother. Unfortunately, this service is not accessible to all pregnant women. In developing countries “access to care, empowerment and decision-making power of women is low “(Tufa & Tsegaye *et al*, 2020:657). Lack of access constrains the poor, and it perpetuates the cycle of deprivation. According to Tufa and Tsegaye *et al* (2020:657) in developing countries 99% of mothers face pregnancy complications and more than 830 mothers die each day. These deaths are normally caused by lack of antenatal care services (Tufa & Tsegaye *et al*, 2020:658). There are two types of antenatal care: prompt antenatal care, and late antenatal care. According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), pregnant women are recommended to obtain antenatal services within the first trimester of pregnancy (Tufa & Tsegaye *et al*, 2020:658).

Women who do not receive antenatal care services face many dangers that affect their health. These include blurred vision, vomiting, fever, convulsions, vaginal bleeding, severe headaches, respiratory distress, acute abdominal pain, and increased risk of fatal death (Tufa & Tsegaye *et al*, 2020:658). Therefore, it is important to consider homeless women in terms of antenatal care. Homeless women already have limited access to services that are beneficial to them. Antenatal care services, as mentioned, are an important process that all pregnant women should receive, regardless of their, race, class, and status. However, being homeless significantly limits access to these services. Homeless people lack education on issues, other are negligent, and others are addicted to substances whilst pregnant, which places them at greater risk of danger for both child and mother. Furthermore, homeless pregnant women stay in unsafe environments and indulge in unhealthy diets and behaviours (Tufa & Tsegaye *et al*, 2020:658).

Homeless pregnant women face prenatal challenges that affect the development of the baby and also their best health, as severe difficulties include that lack of nutritional diets and access to antenatal care services. Also, many pregnant homeless women suffer from pre-existing conditions such as mental illness, substance abuse, sexual victimisation, and sexually

transmitted infections (STIs) (Cronley & Hohn *et al*, 2018:321). Unfortunately fear that they will risk losing custody of their child also prevents them from seeking prenatal care (Cronley & Hohn *et al*, 2018:321). Thus, the results of pregnancy for homeless women are worse than that of non-homeless pregnant women.

Homelessness not only affects the mothers, but also the innocent unborn babies. These children are born into this vicious cycle. Homeless pregnant women give birth regardless of lack of access to care and basic facilities. However, because the stories of homeless women are not frequently reported and there is limited literature focused on homeless women, especially on issues such as lack of access to antenatal care, one can only imagine the attitudes towards and treatment of these women in their increased state of vulnerability. Homeless people are categorised as people who experience a deep sense of vulnerability and defencelessness (De Beer & Vally, 2021:10). Sadly, according to Tenai and Mbewu (2019:1), young women who are forced into the state of homelessness, are often pregnant or have new-born babies.

7.3 Disclosure of gender identity

Another factor that forces women into homelessness is the disclosure of their sexuality. People come from environments that lack education or lack the empathy to understand that the LGBTQI+ community are human beings. Thus, transgender people or those in the LGBTQI community are marginalised and victimised. In the homeless community transgender people face challenges and are stigmatised. Transgender women, especially women of colour, face challenges such as employment discrimination, violence, racial and ethnic marginalisation, poverty, low levels of education, and poverty (Eastwood & Nace *et al*, 2019:1). Lack of food, lack of social networks, and lack of transgender friendships are also associated with homelessness (Eastwood & Nace *et al*, 2019:1). As a result, transgender women are more prone to live in extreme poverty and unstable housing. According to Eastwood & Nace (2019:2) an estimated 67% of young transgender women of colour have used sex as an exchange for shelter, money, food, and drugs (Eastwood & Nace, 2019:2). Homeless transgender women use sex work to support themselves financially. Sex in exchange for money allows them to buy gender-affirming services: hormones and products that enhance feminisation. Riskier, unsafe sex offers higher pay. These risky sexual behaviours contribute to higher chances of contracting viruses such as HIV (Eastwood & Nace, 2019:2).

Intersectionality encourages us to consider how upstream social determinants (such as racism, sexism, classism, transphobia, and queerphobia) form interlocking systems of oppression

which shape the experience of people with multi-dimensional identities (Fraser & Chisholm *et al*, 2021:2).

In South Africa, safe shelters for queer people are limited. There are only two in the country: Cape Town's Pride Shelter Trust and Turning Tides. The latter is a newly established queer shelter that opened in Ekurhuleni, a township in Johannesburg, during Covid-19. The shelter can house 16 individuals. It was first used as a shelter for children, then later turned into a safe space for survivors of human trafficking. Turning Tides was opened by a mother and her daughter who have Christian values (Collison, 2022:1).

As mentioned above, the LGBTQI+ community is often ostracised. Queer people leave homes due to abuse and rejection; homelessness becomes a choice to find peace. Patriarchal systems still play a key role in the continuation of these unjust lived experiences. There are different forms of violence that these marginalised people endure, including same-sex violence, adult violence against children, and male violence against women (Cote & Flynn *et al*, 2022:4).

7.4 Reproductive health issues

Homeless women face greater danger of contracting sexually transmitted infections because of engagement in risky, unprotected sexual behaviours. There is also an elevated risk of unplanned pregnancies. Unfortunately, young girls and women facing homelessness have limited access to sexual and reproductive health care and education (Aparicio & Kachingwe *et al*, 2021:229). As a result, the pregnancy rates among homeless women stays high (Aparicio & Kachingwe *et al*, 2021:229). Access to adequate sexual and reproductive services and support will empower these women to make their own decisions but, most importantly, to make empowered choices about their bodies (Aparicio & Kachingwe *et al*, 2021:229).

Other contributing issues to homeless women's reproductive health are exposure to extreme weather conditions; for instance, winter rains and cold can cause health issues which can lead to other chronic diseases (Gratikopolou & Gkouras *et al*, 2021:31). Living in unhygienic conditions can lead to health problems. And forced and unprotected sexual intercourse with numerous partners increases women's chances of contracting sexually transmitted infections (Gratikopolou & Gkouras *et al*, 2021:31) As mentioned previously, the lack of access to services that benefit women, is critical. Lack of access to screening, pap smears, and contraception further places the reproductive health of homeless women at risk (Gratikopolou

& Gkouras *et al*, 2021:31). It is, thus, imperative that health interventions should be embedded in reproductive justice (Aparicio & Kachingwe *et al*, 2021:235). Discussions targeting topics like contraceptives and birth control are challenging among homeless women (Aparicio & Kachingwe *et al*, 2021:232). One reason for this is that among homeless women are school dropouts and women who are not educated about these critical health issues.

Although all genders experience challenges in obtaining health care, homeless women are faced with added burdens due to their unique needs (Gelberg & Browner *et al*, 2008:87). Homelessness as a public health issue contributes to the increase of HIV transmission because homeless people often engage in risky sexual behaviours. Because of the sexual exploitation homeless women face, sex is used as means of survival (Wikstrom & Eriksson *et al*, 2018 :612; Aparicio & Kachingwe *et al*, 2021:236). According to Cronley and Hohn *et al* (2018:320), homeless women have been reported to have higher rates of reproductive health-related traumas, which include miscarriages, abortions, and unplanned pregnancies. Also, pregnant homeless women tend to be ill prepared for the birth of the child, hence services such as antenatal care are vital for all pregnant women. Additionally, women from low socio-economic status are 13.1 times more likely to end up homeless during or after pregnancy, compared to pregnant women from higher socio-economic groups (Cronley & Hohn *et al*, 2018:320).

Another factor that negatively affects the reproductive health of women is violence by their intimate partners (Lutwak, 2018:373). Usually, intimate partner violence is associated with PTSD, poor health, and substance abuse.

The women facing this trauma are overwhelmed and lack the ability to cope (Lutwak, 2018:374). Physical difficulties faced by victims include headaches, chronic backpain, fatigue, and weight loss (Lutwak, 2018:374). Pregnancy is a journey that women are meant to enjoy. However, street homeless women are prevented from fully experiencing that joy due to the challenges they face in terms of their sexual and reproductive health. Systemic barriers that homeless women face must be broken down so that they can access adequate health care services that cater to their needs (Aparicio & Kachingwe *et al*, 2021:229). Thus, projects aimed at helping homeless women should be optimised at a multi-dimensional level.

This quote describes the importance of providing beyond food and clothes:

Spanning beyond the provision of a warm bed, to include access to clean water and sanitation, psychological support and stress coping strategies, disease management

and acute health care, food of adequate quality, opportunities for employment. (Gramatikopouiou & Gkiouras *et al*, 2021:32)

This level of access and support can enable homeless women to discard the labels of shame and disgust associated with being homeless. This empowerment can be a simple practice such as supplying sanitary pads for those who cannot afford it.

7.5 Lack of sanitary pads and hygienic spaces

According to Anand and Singh *et al* (2015:249) and Krenz and Strulik (2021:1), a woman's menstruation cycle can occur between 1 800 to 2 000 days over five years. Menstruation cycles vary at the individual level; however, most women's periods last between three and five days (Krenz & Strulik, 2021:1). Menstruation signifies significant physiological changes in girls during adolescence. On average girls start to menstruate between the ages of 11 and 15, showing physiological maturity (Anand & Singh *et al*, 2015:249). To avoid blood stains that can show on clothes, women use sanitary pads. However, due to the cost of sanitary pads, poor women often use old, torn cloths (rags) to absorb the menstrual blood. These rags could cause infections should they not be properly washed and dried with direct sunlight (Anand & Singh *et al*, 2015:249).

Anand and Singh *et al* (2015:249) also state that the lack of menstrual hygiene needs in poor, rural areas are contributing factors to the increase in reproductive health morbidities in women. For instance, a study done in India among young schoolchildren who used old cloths or undried old cloths, showed that many suffered from vaginal infections (Anand & Singh *et al*, 2015:249). Menstrual hygiene is associated with female empowerment and equality (Garikipati & Boudot, 2017:32). However, this privilege is not afforded to every woman. Women who use cloths instead of sanitary pads also have a higher risk of Reproductive Tract Infection (RTI). Menstrual hygiene directly influences young girls and women's participation in work or education and impacts women's reproductive health (Garikipati & Boudot, 2017:33).

A study presented by UNICEF indicates that 10% of schoolgirls in African developing countries do not go to school during their menstrual cycle due to the lack of sanitary pads (Garikipati & Boudot, 2017:33). In developing countries women face challenges; they often do not have financial stability to afford their essential needs and have limited access to suitable health facilities (Krenz & Strulik, 2021:1). However, this issue is not only in developing

countries. A YouTube video¹³ shows that homeless women in America face the same problem. The women interviewed state that when having their periods, some must resort to stealing painkillers for cramps. Because sanitary pads are expensive, others must choose between buying food or sanitary pads. It is a sad decision to make. The interviewed homeless women use napkins, toilet paper, plastic bags, makeup pads and socks as alternatives because they cannot afford pads. This also affects women's social being. According to Anand and Singh *et al* (2015:250) provision of sanitary essentials for women should be a priority for poor and deprived communities. Research focusing on homeless women and menstrual hygiene is limited. Ensuring access to sanitary pads for homeless women is not just a poverty response, but it is a form of bringing dignity to street homeless women.

8. Conclusion

To sum up, the street homeless are a fast-growing population. Especially women endure dehumanising behaviour to survive the streets. Homeless women carry unsolved childhood traumas that strongly contribute to the cycle of homelessness, poverty, and abuse. Kuvuna and Von Sinner (2018:615) state that the contemporary world is faced with the spreading of violence, racism, and oppression. It is easy for people to ignore these critical issues, mainly because they do not experience these dehumanising acts personally. Homelessness with its complexity and multi-faceted nature, lacks a singular definition, thus it defies one solution for all aspects of this phenomenon (De Beer & Vally, 2021:29). The increase in the homeless population makes it a critically urgent issue and makes it still more pressing that we understand the causes and find long-term solutions that combat this societal ill.

¹³ How do homeless women cope with their periods? Accessed online at: <https://youtu.be/ABch4VYOJZ0>.

Chapter Three

Responses to street homelessness from national government, local municipalities, and Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) in South Africa

1. Introduction

South Africa has various forms of homelessness. Having a population live in inhumane conditions due to the lack of shelter is a social issue which is interconnected with other social ills (Obioha, 2022:2).¹⁴ Shack dwellings and street homelessness are the most obvious, but my research focus is street homelessness, specifically, women without shelter, living on the streets. The lack of shelter is accompanied with negative comments about and labels for homeless people as noted in Chapter Two, under the section Homeless: basic definitions. Due to the negative connotations, many are exposed to practices of social cleansing which are mostly initiated by authoritative figures (Daya & Wilkins *et al*, 2021:358). This is also discussed in Chapter Two. Another issue faced by street homeless persons, is the lack of representation in governmental policies. Due to this invisibility in governmental policies, the shack¹⁵ population in South Africa tends to overshadow the homeless community (Cross & Seager, 2010:5). However, this invisibility would not exist if governmental policies were in place for the homeless. Currently it appears that the government's major emphasis is on the population living in informal housing and although the street homeless are intricately connected to the issue of social economic poverty, the street homeless population is further marginalised, due to the lack of representation and visibility in governmental policies (Naidoo, 2010:129).

Thus, this chapter seeks to deepen the conversation around policy development, intervention, and homeless prevention in South Africa. To this end this chapter reviews government and Non-Government Organisations' (NGOs') responses to homelessness in South Africa with

¹⁴ This chapter's interest and focus is on those who are homeless by default, in this case "the term default refers to those that need a home but do not have financial and related economic means to acquire it" (Obioha, 2022:2).

¹⁵ A built hut: in South Africa, these small shacks are commonly found in townships. These shacks are easily burnt down and are not sustainable.

specific reference to the street homeless with no shelter. It addresses the following question: Given the socio-economic complexity of homelessness, how have the specific needs of the street homeless been addressed and what strategies are in place to assist the street homeless community? It is concerned particularly with responses from national and provincial government in South Africa. The chapter will analyse government responses from national level and local municipalities, with a special focus on the cities of Cape Town and Tshwane. It will also explore the responses from NGOs. The chapter will review if the street homeless have any self-advocacy. Finally, the chapter will explore whether and how gender issues are addressed or presented in homeless policies.

2. National government responses

In South Africa there has been a slight shift in conversations around homelessness, as there is a realisation that there is limited information and data on the matter of people without shelter. In hindsight this realisation will encourage dialogue to move the conversation further (Obioha, 2022:4). Some studies have limited scope on street homelessness. But other conversations on interventions are streamlined on municipal level and much attention is given to individuals with inadequate housing, known as shacks or slums (Obioha, 2022:4).

However, the lack of an official headcount or a national census that includes the category of street homeless people, has resulted in grossly inaccurate statistics of the population without homes in South Africa. Research conducted by the South African Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) emphasises that “national census data on the homeless is almost non-existent” and “the official census conducted by Statistics South Africa is unreliable and unsuitable for establishing absolute numbers or trends in homelessness” (Kriel, 2017:400). Thus, this is a social category that should receive greater attention. Despite this, available statistics from non-government or unofficial counting indicate that 13.6% of the homeless population are slum dwellers, but these statistics exclude the homeless “on the streets” (Statistics South Africa, 2013). Due to the unavailability of an accurate state-sponsored database on all homeless people, including all forms of homelessness, scholars rely on the estimates of unofficial voluntarily individuals or organisations (Obioha, 2022:4).

For distinct reasons, the number of unsheltered persons in the country, especially in cities, has escalated. This is evident when one is passing certain street corners, taxi ranks, and bus stations. For instance, surveys conducted a few years ago revealed that homelessness as a social issue has escalated in various provinces, an escalation of 0.2% to 0.22% in Mpumalanga, Gauteng,

and Limpopo between 1996 and 2001 (Obioha, 2022:4). In 2015, the homeless community in Cape Town was estimated to be 0,2% (Obioha, 2022:4).

The current housing policy in South Africa was an outcome of a process of intense negotiation in the National Housing Forum¹⁶ from 1992 to 1994 (Huchzermeyer, 2001:304). As mentioned, due to the apartheid system policies prior to 1994, the incoming administration had to deal with an immense housing crisis and lineup. According to the *South African Government News Agency* there was an estimated 1.2 million housing backlog in the year 2014, which increased to 1.5 million two years later (Obioha, 2022:6).

It is important to note that the ruling party during the apartheid regime created settlement-related policies that only benefited a few, hence, after 1994 the incoming government was faced with a housing crisis which had to cater for a large population of disadvantaged people (Obioha, 2022:6). The new governance had an extensive list of individuals in need of adequate housing. It is important to note that in 2017 Statistics South Africa stated that the General Household Survey revealed that 2.3 million households live in makeshift structures (Obioha, 2022:6). However, the rapid population increase due to factors such as local and international migration and the increase in birth rates, also contributed to the country's inadequate housing provision, especially with regards to government's efforts in housing supply in metropolitan cities.

As discussed in Chapter Two, homelessness is a multifaceted issue in our society which requires a multi-solution response that will tackle the problem from all angles. Thus, a response to eradicate homelessness is not reliant solely on governmental initiatives but requires a multi-agency approach. It should, nevertheless, be noted that government should be on the forefront in addressing the issue, particularly with regards to the provision of official statistics as a starting reference point, as this will allow policies to be created and strategies re-evaluated with a common goal to eradicate homelessness in South Africa. However currently there is no policy from a governmental level, although there is a Department of Human Settlements which deals with housing matters in South Africa.

¹⁶ Funded by the Independent Development Trust (IDT) which operates on a government grant, the National Housing Forum was set up in 1992 with the intention of negotiating the future housing policy and framework. Represented were businesses, development agencies, organised labour and community, and political parties (see Lalloo, 1999:38).

2.1 Response from the state through the National Department of Human Settlements (NDHS)

The National Department of Human Settlements (NDHS) is one of the leading public state agencies in the country, and on the frontline of responding to the issue of homelessness. The services provided by the NDHS include provision of cheap and decent housing and ensuring that all South African citizens live in adequate housing with essential facilities i.e., running clean water, safe shelter, and toilets.

The South African state policy regarding housing is based on the understanding that housing is a basic human need. This right was articulated in the ANC Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) in 1994. It is also enshrined in the South African Constitution Bill of Rights (Republic of South Africa, 1996:12). The Housing White Paper in 1994 gives this description of the concept of adequate housing through its vision of:

Viable, socially, and economically integrated communities, situated in areas allowing convenient access to economic opportunities as well as health, educational and social amenities, within which all South Africa people have access to a permanent residential structure and with tenure, ensuring privacy and providing adequate protection against the elements; and potable water, adequate sanitary facilities including waste disposal and domestic electricity supply. (Department of Housing, 1994:12 in Huchzermeyer, 2001:305)

The NDHS falls under the country's national, provincial, and local spheres of governance. Obioha (2022:7) argues that the response to homelessness is not based on provision of affordable or free housing in the country, despite the fact that access to housing is a crucial and effective way of addressing homelessness. Unfortunately, the allocation of housing placement has to undergo various procedures before the process reaches the homeless. This results in housing provision congestion and delays which prolongs the process further. These procedures may include screening of important documents such as SA identity documents, birth certificates, and passing the Means Test (Obioha, 2022:7). These are some of the hurdles that the homeless must overcome to gain housing.

Kriel (2017:401) states that in developing countries the homeless "industry" is regarded as largely a humanitarian mission, which is driven by international and local Faith-Based Organisations (FBOs) and NGOs. However, there is a lack of concentrated efforts on national government level to address issues of the street homeless. Furthermore, emphasis is placed on

urban renewal and neighbourhood rehabilitation rather than on the promulgation of national policies on homelessness (Kriel, 2017:401).

According to the United Nations (UN) there will be a world population increase of 9.6 billion by the year 2050 and 70% will occupy and live in urban spaces (Kriel, 2017:399). The immense increase in urbanisation and immigration will lead to a “rapid increase in the numbers of impoverished, homeless and displaced people – an army of desperate people – who will roam the streets of cities and megacities looking for income-earning opportunities and a place to spend the night” (Kriel, 2017:399). As mentioned in Chapter Two, other pathways to homelessness include immigration and urbanisation. Different people move to cities in search of work opportunities. Unfortunately, with the socio-economic state of the country, it difficult to find employment and Covid-19 also placed a strain on many companies, resulting in many individuals losing their jobs which could have resulted others into being homeless.

Kriel (2017:408) argues that countries that have formulated strategies and policies targeting inseparable issues such as housing deprivation, physical displacement, cross-border migration, poverty alleviation, and homelessness, specifically with strategies that are designed to address various forms of homelessness and involving both regional and local sectors, have managed to progress.

According to Kriel (2017:408), it remains a pity that in South Africa on a national level street homelessness has not yet been viewed as worthy of a policy response. Accommodating all role players includes the homeless, who can articulate their needs and participate in their own development. The government and NGOs should consider involving homeless individuals in their discussion meetings because they are key role players in addressing the issue of homelessness. In addition to the importance of a collaborative effort from key role players, there is a need for reliable data on the nature and causes of homelessness with in-depth and sophisticated research techniques that are useful for the construction of terminology and discourse around homelessness and development which include homeless strategies, policies, interventions, and long-term solutions (Kriel, 2017:408).

Furthermore, it is crucial for intervention strategies to be re-evaluated, to check and determine whether services provided by government and NGOs are working, whether there is room for improvement or if strategies that are responding to the homeless issue should be replaced. However, Kriel (2017:408) argues that most of these data types are not available in South

Africa and the focus should include evaluation research which should be a legal and a regulatory requirement.

The aim of policies and strategies should not be responsive rather preventative (Kriel, 2017:409) by understanding and preventing the root cause of homeless. The response to homelessness currently is that it is seen as a housing shortage and focuses on providing adequate housing. However intense research on the topic will lead to preventative methods, which will lead to the minimising of the current homelessness problem (Kriel, 2017:409).

Kriel (2017:399) further notes that South Africa has a problem regarding the provision of long-term housing and staircase-type accommodation. This is due to the country's financial instability, housing backlog, and the immense increase in the number of homeless individuals, including refugees, asylum seekers, and undocumented immigrants (Kriel, 2017:409). Despite different methods aimed at addressing the issue of homelessness having been adopted by NGOs and governments across the world, the progress is minimal or less than anticipated in the South African context.

Kriel (2017:409) further argues that the country's main response towards homelessness should be to formulate measures or methods that will reduce the likelihood of becoming homeless in the first place. This reinforces the need for the creation of secure job opportunities combined with advanced training and educational systems, and an extensive sustainable support system. The provision of housing and shelters will be replaced with the formulation and facilitation of paid work and a "well monitored welfare system that prioritises upward social and economic mobility instead of perpetual welfare damage control" (Kriel, 2017:409).

Kriel (2017:408) states that funding and generation of reliable data are fundamental issues faced by the local government. Evidence provided from abroad indicates that local governments can only address homelessness if there is financial support by central and regional governments. However, the ideal approach is involving all local role players and creating a watchdog to ensure and oversee that the policies and procedures are followed and implemented. Local stakeholders and players can be the churches, local NGOs, school initiatives, and the homeless as active agents for change in their lives and their communities (Kriel, 2017:408).

Budget deficiencies in local governments indicate that the guiding principles and methods should be cost-effectiveness rather than cost-saving as an approach to fighting homelessness. In South Africa one issue that critically affects the implementation of housing supply, is funding. The absence of a clear national budget for a homelessness policy and strategies,

minimises the efforts of local government in addressing the phenomenon at grassroots level (Kriel, 2017:408). Thus, local municipalities are faced with major challenges without a concise policy that articulates the procedures that need to be followed to combat homelessness nationally and locally.

3. Local municipalities' responses to homelessness in the cities of Tshwane and Cape Town

This section of the chapter will focus on two cities, namely Cape Town and Tshwane, because these cities have homelessness policies. This section will, therefore, critically discuss which policies are in place and whether they cater for the street homeless community. It is important, however, to note that a complex issue that paralyses the agenda for eliminating homelessness, is the lack of consensus as to what must be implemented for effective change to occur. The lack of precise information on the homeless community, a population that represents a gap in the formal policy, causes local municipalities to create their own policies in the absence of a national governmental homelessness policy. Although national government is supposed to set in place constructive social policies that address homelessness, the lack thereof has placed pressure on local municipalities and society as role players in tackling the issue. Cross and Seager *et al* (2010:8) note that this is rather contradictory, because solutions and systemic policies should come from the higher levels of governance then collaborate with local municipalities to implement these as a plan of action.

The Covid-19 pandemic as a national crisis forced a rapid response from government. The population that was invisible in policies was at the forefront as solutions had to be discussed on what the homeless community would do during the lockdown in early 2020. Therefore, President Cyril Ramaphosa suggested that temporary housing should be offered to homeless persons. Unfortunately for this intention, there was no framework nor blueprint to support the president's suggestion (De Beer, 2020:1).

Furthermore, the president's call for urging local municipalities to support and provide shelter for homeless people, revealed various issues that De Beer (2020:1) states are institutional fault lines:

Backlogs in infrastructure; the lack of policy and budgets at national and local levels to deal with homelessness; the lack of organized networks in different cities that could deal with homelessness collaboratively; weak civil society in the face of – in some cases

– brutal and inappropriate government interventions; and ambiguous, to say the least, church responses (De Beer, 2020:1).

3.1 City of Tshwane

The City of Tshwane is no stranger to the issue of homelessness as for many years it has sought to address this complex issue. Different policies were drafted but never adopted. This changed in May 2013, when different collaboratives¹⁷ came together to draft the Tshwane Homelessness Policy which was later approved (De Beer and Vally, 2017:368). In 2014 the former mayor of the City of Tshwane, Kgositso Ramokgopa, appointed the Homelessness Forum with the University of Pretoria to revisit and review the 2013 homelessness policy. This formed another collaborative vehicle with the University of South Africa (UNISA) and University of Pretoria (UP) as higher education institutions, who later involved the Tshwane local government.

In the City of Tshwane, a homeless shelter which was meant to shut down due to lack of maintenance, was transformed into a hub of collaborators. According to De Beer (2020:2), this place, as it received threats to be shut down, became a “catalyst for collaboration.” Thus, a group of researchers from UNISA and UP and from different fields of study collaborated and engaged in the complex issue of homelessness through research.

This group of researchers involved current and former homeless individuals, practitioners, politicians, business individuals, and city officials, which resulted in a transdisciplinary research project called Pathways out of Homelessness. The aim of the project was to influence policy by placing homeless individuals, their holistic freedom, and their dignity at the centre of the city’s agenda (De Beer and Vally, 2017:384).

The research process included a drafting of policy and strategy on homelessness in the city. The draft policy was submitted to the mayoral committee in 2015; however, the drafted policy and strategy were not adopted immediately (Mashau, 2017:416). The strategy and policy were only approved in 2019, four years after the initiative (De Beer, 2020:2). Although it was adopted, there was no budget to aid in the implementation of the policy in the city, which made it a “toothless document.” According to De Beer (2020:2), the adaptation of the policy emphasised the visibility of the homeless population in Tshwane. However, the lack of further

¹⁷ The project brought together different sets of expertise to find real-world solutions for real-world problems. In the context of this project, a shared understanding of homelessness in the City of Tshwane and a shared working definition were required.

action from the metropolitan municipality demonstrated that the policy was not the city's main priority (De Beer, 2020:2).

Nevertheless, the project paved the way for new projects to be created, for instance, the construction of a post-lockdown plan, which was encouraged by the crisis of Covid-19. The plan aimed to create 1 250 permanent beds over a year in each region in Tshwane. This initiative also argued for psycho-social and healthcare programmes, vocational training, and economic access, and was a collaborative vehicle that was formed by the Tshwane Homelessness Forum, various universities, and the City of Tshwane municipality (De Beer, 2020:5).

Because eliminating homelessness is a collaborative responsibility, several scholars have reflected on this responsibility. Their research and discourse have reflected on and appreciated efforts from NGOs, businesses, and FBOs. However, they agree that the major responsibility when it comes to implementing policies lies with the government (Mashau, 2017:415). If the government accepts this responsibility, issues like the definitions of homelessness and different forms of homelessness will be identified and dealt with accordingly. This will help distinguish the street homeless from those living in inadequate housing, particularly in policy and strategy interventions (Naidoo, 2010:131).

It is important to note that often the emphasis regarding the homeless policy in the City of Tshwane is placed on the adoption of the document on 8 May 2019 by the city council. However, the collaborative research which was implemented to address the shortcomings that prevented the policy from being fully realised and the lack of cost strategy, was undertaken by UP, UNISA, Tshwane Homelessness Forum and City of Tshwane (Mashau, 2017:416). The documents used included the Freedom Charter,¹⁸ the National Development Plan 2030, the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, and Tshwane Vision 2055¹⁹ (Mashau, 2017:416). The documents were used by the committee for drafting the Tshwane policy. It is crucial that

¹⁸ The Freedom Charter addresses the apartheid narrative and the vision embraced by the oppressed masses with regards to creating a South Africa which is a home for all. The vision of a non-racial society which is a home for all who live in it is entrenched in the constitution of the country. The National Development Plan maps out the vision of the country moving forward.

¹⁹ Tshwane Vision 2055 maps a way forward in terms of creating this city as a home for all; therefore, it is also critical to reflect on it while appraising the current policy (Mashau, 2017:416).

the Tshwane project for combating homelessness aligns itself with and is informed by a national agenda, although there is no policy on street homelessness on national level.

3.2 City of Cape Town

The Cape Town metropolitan has a policy called the Street People Policy. Its problem statement argues that livelihood on the streets makes street people prone and vulnerable to abuse (Street People Policy, 2013:5). According to research conducted by the Cape Metropolitan Council, street homeless individuals live with critical and complex problems, such as substance abuse, illiteracy, mental illness, sexual exploitation etc. (2013:5). Baseline surveys conducted by the city estimated that 7 000 people are homeless. The homeless people in the city normally occupy spaces such as transport hubs and the city centre, where economic opportunities occur (Street People Policy, 2013:5). In 2013, The city formulated an integrated plan which focuses on programmes, policies, and budget priorities of administration for the next five years. It also partnered with strategic group, which aims on creating a vision of a caring city. The policy aims to provide social services for those who need it, especially street people.

The purpose of the implementation protocol agreement between the provincial government and the City of Cape Town was to implement projects and initiatives aimed at developmental needs of both individuals and communities at large. The programmes are required to cover issues such as substance abuse, youth development, crime prevention and homelessness eradication (Street People Policy, 2013:8).

The city's development strategy is a 30-year-strategy which is inspired by the OneCape2040²⁰ strategy. The implementation of the programmes involved a collaborative effort from stakeholders; memorandums of understanding (MOUs) were to be signed by all parties, which ensured the delivery of quality services (Street People Policy, 2013:10). Thus, the policy directives are implemented as follows: Street people identification, assessment, temporary accommodation, secondary accommodation, skills and training opportunities, and the establishment of Local Networks of Care (LNOC) (Street People Policy, 2013:10).

²⁰ This is a deliberate attempt to stimulate a transition towards a more inclusive and resilient economic future for the Western Cape region.

3.2.1. Laws and regulations for treating homelessness within the city of Cape Town

In South Africa there are several laws and regulations in place that specify how homeless persons should be treated. This dates to the pre-democratic vagrancy laws implemented in the 1800s, notably in the Cape Colony (Vagrancy Act 23 of 1879, and Vagrancy and Squatting Act 34 of 1895), many of which were adopted to oppress and subjugate the Indigenous people in the Cape Colony (Obioha, 2022:8). Even after the new dawn of democracy, legislation laws were accepted in Cape Town, Tshwane, Durban, and Johannesburg, which aimed at criminalising street persons instead of providing a long-term solution to their homeless state. However, although these criminalising laws are in place, efforts to eradicate homelessness were also developed, for instance Section 26 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa which confirms that each citizen has a right to housing and the White Paper's emphasis on the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) which created a framework for social housing development (Obioha, 2022:8). The aim of these policies was to address the issue of homelessness directly or indirectly. However, due to different stakeholders' different interpretations of these policies, they are ultimately problematic (Obioha, 2022:9).

Furthermore, laws and regulations also differ in cities. For instance, in the City of Cape Town it is argued that the behaviour of street people tends to impact negatively on service delivery to residents and costs to the administration of Cape Town (Street People Policy, 2013:5). This is problematic because this is stripping of the humanity and dignity of the homeless. The laws against the homeless are due to their social standing. Chapter Two argues about the stigma placed on the homeless.

There are certain laws that street people should follow. The city has laws about public places and prevention of noise nuisances which prevent anti-social behaviour in public spaces. When street people break these laws, certain disciplinary measures are implemented by law enforcement (Street People Policy, 2013:5). Other laws that should be obeyed by the street homeless in the city include no drinking, no aggressive begging, no fires, no urinating, no defecating, and no sleeping in public spaces (Street People Policy, 2013:8). This is problematic, because the homeless are criminalised and imprisoned if they do not abide by these laws. Yet many feel they have no alternatives. Thus, this is not a constructive way of addressing the issue of homelessness.

The city's law enforcement emphasises that complaints are frequently received from non-homeless people which involve crimes committed by the street homeless, thus the law

addresses such behaviours. Other incriminating laws for the homeless include tents and structures in public spaces such as parks and pavements, serious crimes such as robbery, public indecency, and damaging of municipal infrastructure (City of Cape Town, 2022:7).

The Public Places and Prevention of Noise Nuisances by law has been in action since 2007 in Cape Town; this law is also implemented in other cities. The law provides alternative accommodation to those in need; however, if an individual refuses the offer, the law takes its course as a last resort measure (City of Cape Town, 2022:7). This can be identified as acts of social cleansing as discussed in Chapter Two. Furthermore, this places the street homeless in uncomfortable positions, because if resistance occurs during interaction with government officials, it can lead to the street homeless being jailed. These laws should be re-evaluated so that the rights of the homeless are not violated.

The Prevention of Illegal Eviction (PIE) (from unlawful occupation of land) Act applies to transient structures and tents, occupied by the homeless living on the streets. However, the city must apply for an eviction order to remove the unlawful occupants, and offer alternative shelter (City of Cape Town, 2022:7).

5. Responses from Non-Government Organisations (NGOs)

Non-Government Organisations (NGOs)²¹ are among the leading role players in eradicating the problem of homelessness in South Africa and on a global level. There are a number of NGOs that assist the homeless in the Western Cape region. This section focuses on a few organisations that have responded to the issue of homelessness, using different methods and strategies, particularly in the cities of Cape Town and Tshwane. For instance, in Cape Town an innovative idea, the first mobile shower, called the *Nina Manzi*, which is an isiXhosa term and can be translated as “mother of water”, was developed through a partnership of U-turn Homeless Ministries, Viva con Agua South Africa, and Baz-Art, aimed at providing the homeless community with basic hygiene (Ntseku, 2022:1).

This enables homeless persons to take charge of their hygiene, as most people living on the streets do not have the privilege of taking a hot shower, especially in winter. To make use of this, a homeless person must hand in a Mi-change voucher that they receive from a member of the public or earn through participation at the U-turn service centre (Ntseku, 2022:1). The

²¹ A Non-Profit Organisation that operates independently of any government, typically one with the purpose of addressing a social or political issue.

programme is currently operating in Claremont and plans are in progress for providing the same initiative in Mitchells Plain and Muizenberg. The Project Manager, Sisanda Henda, explains that the motive was a result of research that was conducted in the year 2021, in which homeless individuals were asked about their living conditions and the challenges they faced on the streets (Ntseku, 2022:2). U-turn as an organisation view this as a pathway out of homelessness; it not only touches on the dignity aspect but also involves economic empowerment as some get employed at the organisation. According to Henda, “the clients receive toiletries and other essentials before they shower. They are given 15 minutes, as the warmth of the shower touches them, dignity is restored” (Nteku, 2022:2).

The Stellenbosch Night Shelter is another NGO based in Stellenbosch that deals with the homeless in the town. It was established on 17 October 1991. The shelter serves the destitute and has room for thirty men and twelve women per night. The homeless must follow strict guidelines to stay the night at the night shelter. Each person accessing the facility must be sober, have their identity paper, and pay an entrance fee of R7 (or R12 for grant recipients or those who have jobs) between 17:30 and 18:30. The purpose of the entrance charge is to encourage responsibility and accountability in the homeless population. It also functions as a sort of rehabilitation.

A Christian-based initiative called Straatlig was started in 2004, also with the goal of assisting the homeless population in Stellenbosch. Through street store operations and charitable donation campaigns, Straatlig seeks to address the homelessness problem. The homeless are given clothing, food, and spiritual support through Straatlig. However, in response to the rise in the number of street children in Stellenbosch, Straatlig gave birth to another project called Becoming Kids, which aims to support children in returning to school while also fostering competence.

Giliomee and Prinsloo (2017:13) state that Tshwane has many organisations that offer services to the homeless in the city. The focus of these organisations is offering basic needs for human survival; many of the organisations have not explored other types of services that can be offered to the homeless (Giliomee & Prinsloo, 2017:13). The services rendered can range from personal and basic needs to programmes that focus on poverty alleviation. In a focus study participants categorised the services as follows: skills training, attention to basic needs of beneficiaries, and pscho-social services that focus on social-emotional needs (Giliomee & Prinsloo, 2017:13).

Covid-19 had an immense impact on the lives of many people all over the world, it had grave consequences specifically for the destitute and disadvantaged. Simultaneously, the virus negatively affected the economic situation of South Africa. This "... triggered a funding crisis for already under-funded NGOs when they are needed most" (SaferSpaces, 2021). On the other hand, the homeless population skyrocketed, leading to an estimated 14 357 individuals on the streets of Cape Town. Three Cape Town organisations teamed up and did a study on homelessness. The study revealed that over R744 million is spent on this social issue, with an amount of R286 million used particularly for criminal justice costs (SaferSpaces, 2021).

With the collaboration of U-Turn, Khulisa Streetscapes, and MES,²² a coalition was formed to address this issue. These three organisations are well established and are known for their developmental and rehabilitation services offered to the homeless. The trio has called for investors into the project. The objective of the organisation is to shift the method of reactive and handy solutions to long-term systems that will eradicate poverty, reducing the current financial costs. Hence the vision of the collaborating NGOs is stated below:

The NGOs have committed to a rehabilitation model as opposed to short-term welfare, and are actively encouraging all stakeholders in the sector, including the government, shelters and feeding schemes, to incorporate rehabilitation programmes to support their short-term relief (SaferSpaces, 2021)

The vision for establishing long-term solutions prompted the City of Cape Town to launch the Give Dignity initiative, which encourages the approach of a "hand up rather a hand-out" method (SaferSpaces, 2021). This is aimed at shifting the mentality of donors and those who want to change the current homeless state. The donations received from the Give Dignity initiative are transferred to local NGOs appointed by the city, like the Haven Night Shelter on Napier Street in Cape Town. The Haven Night Shelter can thus afford services like provision of meals, beds, and rehabilitation and reintegration programmes (SaferSpaces, 2021).

6. Self-advocacy by homeless

As already stated, homelessness as a social problem requires different sectors to collaborate and combine strategies and ideas that will help to eradicate homelessness. However, it is not only the responsibility of those in higher positions. This involves the homeless community

²² MES is an organisation in Cape Town of which one of the aims is to help the homeless to mould, to empower, and to serve.

itself to participate, as they too have agency. According to Kriel (2017:409), there is growing consensus globally that homeless prevention should be the focus rather than homeless intervention. In the South Africa context this is tricky because prevention would require, different sectors coming together and implementing strategies and structures that will be long term solutions to eradicate homelessness individuals. (Kriel, 2017:409).

Due to these mistreatments in the City of Cape Town by authorities and lack of representation. the homeless community has committed to making their voices heard they have formed a committee called the Homeless Action Committee; the committee is aimed at advocating for the rights of the homeless. It is a way to self-advocacy and urgency. Also, the Strandfontein Homeless Action committee is committed to removing the stigma attached to the homeless. The homeless community has started to stand for their human rights (Nteku, 2021:1).

It has been a challenging assignment given the time allocated to meet the Homeless Action Coalition requirements, but the SHAC and the Homeless Hub have covered as much ground as possible to seek representation for all homeless persons in Cape Town and its environs. The procedure will continue. The Homeless Action Coalition (HAC) will consist of 50% service providers and 50% homeless or re-housed individuals. Ten board members, five from each group, will be chosen by the members (*Cape Argus*, 2021). The goal of HAC was to finalise the organisation's charter and then eventually and effectively pick up where the Street People's Forum and the Homeless Action Committee left off.

It is also important to note that there is a stigma attached to homeless people; the general assumption is that many are criminals, and they are regarded as a nuisance within larger society (Roets & Botha, 2016:619). Many are subjected to practices of social cleansing and police brutality. Their privacy is violated, and they are often treated in inhumane ways (Daya & Wilkins, 2012:358). The homeless are forcefully removed from spaces where they can shield themselves. For instance, in winter the homeless use abandoned spaces, however, authorities force them to move.

7. Gender in homeless policies

In Chapter Two I intensively discussed the issues that street homeless women face. Morghadam (2005:1) states that "it should be recognized that the women among the poor suffer doubly from the denial of their human rights. Thus, homeless policies should stipulate the programs and strategies that can help women overcome this social ill." Women are among the most vulnerable and easy targets on the streets; hence gender should be a critical subject in

homelessness and gender policies. However, due to the invisibility of street homelessness in policies from governmental level and prolonged municipal processes, many suffer, especially women. Unfortunately, gender is not represented in policies, and it is important that this issue is recognised and addressed by all sectors that aim at eradicating homelessness in the country.

Fortunately, there are shelters in Cape Town that help women; these shelters are normally aimed at abused women. Shelters like the Saartjie Baartman centre for women and children, and Sisters Incorporated are among the shelters that have become places of refuge and offer services to abused children and women. However, street homeless shelters targeted particularly for homeless women are rare.

8. Conclusion

Obioha (2022:7) and De Beer (2020:2) state that a singular response to homelessness is unrealistic as homelessness itself is a multifaceted problem. Therefore, as has been argued in this chapter, the response requires a multi-agency response that will tackle the problem by involving multiple role players. Notably each organisation has its own function in the process of eradicating the targeted issue. The collaboration in Tshwane, where academic, lay people, current and former homeless people, politicians, city officials, and church representatives came together to ponder and produce constructive solutions that will help in the long-term in combating street homelessness, is a good example. This collaborative tool is important and should be implemented nationwide so that knowledge can be shared, and solutions actively sought and implemented.

The next chapter will examine the biblical story of Hagar (Genesis), which can shed light on factors that can lead women to homelessness and the complexity of the many of these issues from an historical, biblical viewpoint. The troubling relationship between religion and oppression of women is also addressed.

Chapter Four

Hagar and women's experiences of homelessness

1. Introduction

As mentioned in Chapter Two, the phenomenon of homelessness is complex and multi-faceted. For instance, Hagar experienced multiple episodes of homelessness. The two narrative accounts found in Genesis 16:1-6 and 21:8-19 are troubling texts. Exum (2009:4) argues that the repetition of the story in two different forms functions emphasises her difficulties and the traumatic process she undergoes.

Womanist theologians have used Hagar's narrative, specifically looking at slavery and different issues faced by marginalised African American women. This study uses a womanist theology framework as a lens to analyse Hagar's experience of homelessness.

In this study, I will discuss Hagar's story from a homeless woman's perspective. Thus, Hagar becomes a patron saint for homeless women. The womanist theology framework also challenges intersecting issues such as class, racism, and gender issues that are still relevant in today's societies. This study will focus on Hagar's experience and womanist theology as a framework that advocates and empowers, exposing and challenging societal ills such as homelessness. In addition, the intersectionality of race, class, and gender are prevalent in Hagar's story.

Therefore, this paper invites the thoughtful reader to purposely search for the character that is furthest from the centre of privilege, and further challenges the reader to take time to see Hagar and her lack of agency, and how God (*El Roi*) responds to her cry of desperation. This study can be helpful for FBOs, specifically homeless shelters. Reflecting on Hagar's narrative from a homeless woman's perspective can encourage others. Homeless women can reflect on and relate to her story. This paper also challenges systemic practices and beliefs that oppress and marginalise women, particularly homeless women.

Therefore, this chapter will discuss Hagar and women's compulsion into street homelessness, patriarchy as a benchmark for women's marginalisation, and sexism and sexual abuse as reinforcements for marginalisation. Reading Hagar's story through the lens of womanist theology, it will focus on gender and power dynamics, classism as a form of exclusion, and race as a tool to perpetuate oppression. Finally, the chapter will look at Hagar and South African homelessness.

2. Hagar and homelessness

As Chapter Three mentioned, the focus of this study is on those who are homeless by default; women placed in this inhumane situation not by choice, but compelled by social, economic, cultural, and religious reasons. For these reasons, Hagar and other marginalised women are victims of these systems placed to oppress and silence them. For instance, critical issues that women face which are complemented by religious beliefs and practices, are patriarchy, sexism, and sexual abuse. Firstly, the issue of patriarchy is discussed because Hagar's story centres around this patriarchal system that does not only oppress her, but also leads her into multiple episodes of homelessness. Secondly, sexism and sexual abuse is combined. The two can be discussed separately, but for this study, the two intertwine in Hagar's narrative. For instance, Hagar's body is used as a commodity, because of her position as a woman; she is maidservant because of her gender. As a result, she is sexually abused. Hagar had no right to consent or not to sexual relations with Abram (Genesis 16:4). Like Hagar, other women face this similar fate. Patriarchy normalises and silences women to either stay in these oppressive situations or become homeless.

2.1 Patriarchy and women's marginalisation

Feminist theologians interpret patriarchy as any social construction, in thinking and practice, which bases its reasoning on the domination of women and minority groups because of their sexual orientation, disability, class, race, and gender (Russel, 2016:188). Patriarchy is a system and an institutionalisation of male ideologies to marginalise women in private and public spaces. These spaces consist of homes, churches, and work environments (Kobo, 2016:5). As mentioned, Hagar's story centres around patriarchy and its systemic laws that prevailed in that era. Like Hagar, many women in today's societies still suffer due to patriarchal agendas that favour men. Moreover, Hagar was sold into slavery; this transaction happened between men, it benefited the men, not Hagar. This is discussed later in the chapter.

Religion, culture, and gender subordination play a huge role in reinforcing patriarchal systems. Although patriarchy oppresses, women consciously or unconsciously participate in its reinforcement. As mentioned before, women face oppression and discrimination in different spaces. However, in this study a significant distinction is shown between the oppression of Hagar and of Sarai. Unlike Hagar, Sarai shifts between power and oppression, because of her position. She can become the oppressor. She perpetuates the cycle of patriarchy, not standing with Hagar, allowing the systems at play that marginalise women. Sheppard (2014:2) explains

the relative positions of Sarai as a white women and Hagar as a slave woman, and their rating in the patriarchal system:

A familial-social ideological political system in which white men and white women by force, direct pressure or through ritual tradition, law and language customs, etiquette, education, and division of labour determine what part Black women shall or shall not play, and which the [Black female] is everywhere subsumed under the white female and white male.

Writing in a South African context, Kobo (2016:2) argues that foremothers (*volksmoeders*²³) are uncritical of culture and religion, hence they adhere to patriarchal structures and remain complicit. As a result, many women are denied a public voice. This keeps them in the shackles of patriarchy. Consequently, the next generations inherit this as a norm. Exposing women's complicity to patriarchy, liberates the next generation from the seed of death (Kobo, 2016:2). Maluleke and Nadar (2002:7) calls this complicity the covenant of death. Although progression can be identified in some areas in society, Black women continue to be excluded and experience discrimination in educational and work settings (Parrish, 2020:10).

Furthermore women, especially Black women, face humiliation by being negatively labelled and stereotyped. This is a result of Black women being economically and socially disadvantaged. Mitchem (2002:57) argues that the construction of womanist theology was an act of rebellion, as African American woman faced a variety of issues that have been normalised, and many of which were socially constructed by mainstream society in the American context, which is white, heterosexual, middle-class, abled-bodied, middle-aged male, which excludes and leaves black women invisible because they do not fit the mould or standard (Mitchem, 2002:57). Consequently, without representation, Black women are further limited and lack opportunities. Thus, womanist theology became a liberative tool for all Black women, and extends this liberative cry to all contexts, not only African American women, but all women that face oppression.

Oppression also occurs in both church spaces and homes, because of the systems at play that appoint men as authoritative figures. For instance, a woman can be assaulted by their pastor, however, these issues are concealed to protect the reputation of the pastor. Phiri (2002:24) argues that in homes there are certain beliefs that promote gender-based violence. For instance,

²³ *Volksmoeders* is an Afrikaner term used to describe the notion of ideal womanhood – “mothers of the nation” (Pretorius, 2019:2).

in the African culture, there is a belief that a man owns a woman after marriage. This is demonstrated by a man quoted to have said “In African culture my wife is not my equal. She is property. She is like one of my children. I have paid ‘lobola’ for her” (Malinga, 1997:8). Women are not only sexually abused, but also emotionally abused and financially exploited by men in both private and public spaces, including religious spaces. Patriarchy is a tool used by its beneficiaries to oppress minorities. Black women experience this oppression especially through sexism and gender subordination.

2.2 Sexism and sexual abuse as reinforcements for marginalisation

Sexism and sexual abuse are practices that stand on the shoulders of patriarchy. Power and authoritarianism are two major driving tools for the patriarchal system. For instance, sexism is implemented by social structures which dictate who is regarded as powerful and who has control over others. In many cultural and religious settings males are regarded as authoritative figures (Kobo, 2016:2). The Pauline book Ephesians states “the husband is to be the head of his wife” (Ephesians 5:23); the one who has the position of husband is the one who automatically has control and authority (Kobo, 2016:2). In Hagar’s situation, Abram was the authoritative figure, hence, when Sarai conspired against Hagar, she had to ask permission from Abram on both occasions. Abram was a male with a higher ranking than that of Sarai and Hagar.

Historically, women’s bodies are used for the male’s gaze. During colonisation Black women’s bodies were despised and exoticized. For instance, Sarah Baartman²⁴ was taken by the European colonisers and her body was displayed and auctioned, her dignity was violated. She was abused and minimised to a life of an animal. Black women bodies were seen as grotesque, aesthetically displeasing but sexually powerful (Mitchem, 2002:12). The use of women’s bodies is still evident in today’s societies, just like Hagar’s body was used as a trade, a commodity for surrogacy and sexual abuse. Homeless women’s bodies are also victimised, their bodies are used for gang rape, for sex as a survival tool, for drugs and for substance trade. For understanding the complexity of patriarchy and its contribution to practices such as sexism

²⁴ Saartjie (Sarah) Baartman was a Khoikhoi woman who was adopted and sold in England, where she was placed on exhibition and her body was sexually exploited and displayed for the amusement and curiosity of others (Saartjie Baartman centre for women & children).

and sexual abuse, it is important to grapple with this troubling text. To achieve this, a womanist approach will be used to understand Hagar's narrative from a womanist viewpoint.

3. Defining womanist theology

In her article "A womanist exposition of pseudo-spirituality and the cry of an oppressed African woman" Kobo problematises a cry of life, a cry for liberation. The article presumes a womanist framework, which tries to expose the nexus of racism, classism, and sexism. This womanist framework aims to liberate the spirituality of women, especially African women, and their wellbeing. In essence, God wants women to be holistically thriving. Therefore, womanist theology formulates a "framework to consider the social, political, religious, relational, and economic factors of Black womanhood" (Harris & Haskins, 2021:5).

What is womanist theology and why is it important to read this text from a womanist perspective? This study will analysis this, but firstly, a definition of womanist is necessary.

The term womanist was popularised by Alice Walker's book *In search of our mothers' gardens: Womanist prose*. As an African American author and activist, Walker influenced theological scholars like Katie Cannon²⁵ and Deloris Williams²⁶ to articulate their struggles and challenges through the lenses of womanism. In her book, Walker makes a distinction between feminism and womanism. Gafney (2017:6) argues that womanism is Black women's interpretation of feminism. Thus, it is understood as a "liberative paradigm; a cultural, political, social space and theological matrix with the experiences and multiple identities of Black women at the centre" (Gafney, 2017:2). Womanism separates itself from the cultural dominance of feminism, which marginalises women of colour by not addressing issues of racism and classism, which are normally distorted in the feminist movement (Gafney, 2017:6). Katie Cannon's essay entitled "Womanist ethics" addresses such challenges of Black women and their spiritual identities (Harris & Haskins *et al*, 2021:4). To Black women womanism demonstrates a balanced representation of "womandom," its philosophy is rooted in celebrating the life and ideals of Black women (Harris & Haskins *et al*, 2021:4). Walker conveys the definition of womanism in this poetic manner:

²⁵ Katie Cannon was an African American theological scholar, well known for her work on womanist ethics.

²⁶ Delores S. Williams is an African American Presbyterian theologian, notably known for her book *Sisters in the wilderness: The challenge of womanist God-talk*.

Womanist:

1. From “womanish” (opp. of “girlish”). A Black feminist or feminist of color. From the Black folk, expression of mothers to female children “You acting womanish,” i.e., like a woman. Usually referring to outrageous, audacious, courageous, or wilful behaviour. Wanting to know more and in greater depth than is considered “good” for one. Interested in grown-up doings. Acting grown-up. Being grown-up. Responsible, in charge, serious.
2. A woman who loves other women, sexually and/or non-sexually. Appreciates and prefers women’s culture, women’s emotional flexibility (values tears as natural counterbalance of laughter), and woman’s strength. Sometimes loves individual men, sexually and/or non-sexually. Committed to the survival and wholeness of the entire people, male and female. Not a separatist, except periodically for her health. Traditionally universalist, traditionally capable.
3. Loves music. Loves dance. Loves the moon. Loves the Spirit. Loves love, food, and roundness. Loves struggle. Loves the folk. Loves herself. Regardless.
4. Womanist is to feminist as purple is to lavender.²⁷

Womanism was established as a platform for Black women to respond to social constructs such as racism and classism which they faced in feminist movements, and the sexism they experienced in the Black liberation movement such as the civil rights movements, which placed Black men at the forefront (Gafney, 2014:6). It combines the radical egalitarianism of feminism and the “reverence for black physical and cultural aesthetics of the Black liberation movement” (Gafney, 2014:6). In a short story called “Coming apart,” Alice Walker describes a womanist as a feminist but only more common, which is a description of ordinary women with normal lives, common people (Sheppard, 2011:2). Katie Cannon argues that a womanist theological ethic prioritises Black women and challenges and un.masks all forms of domination that oppresses and threatens the well-being of Black women (Sheppard, 2011:3).

According to Harris and Haskins *et al* (2021:4), white women and Black men were responsible for formulating theological and theoretical frameworks which benefited their unique needs. As a result, Black women were left unrepresented. For instance, feminist and Black liberation

²⁷ Alice Walker, *In Search of our mothers’ gardens: Womanist prose* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1984), xi.

theology movements aimed at advocating for white women and Black men. Womanist theology, therefore, grew from the lack of emphasis of Black women's experiences and their theological interpretation of their lived experiences. However, Black women throughout history have expressed their resilience in the face of adversity and demonstrated strength in their struggles of societal marginalisation and oppression (Harris & Haskins *et al*, 2021:1).

In his famous speech in 1962 Malcolm X²⁸ stated that "The most disrespected person in America is the Black woman. The most unprotected person in America is the Black woman. The most neglected person in America is the Black woman." (Parrish, 2020:10). Even though Malcolm X advocated for American Black women, Black women globally face a similar injustice. Interestingly, church experiences were where many found hope. These church experiences included rituals of resistance also called protest rituals. These rituals were demonstrated in expressions such as songs, testimonies, prayers, ring shouts, and litanies "that served as tools of resistance against the backdrop of centuries of religious, social, and politically sanctioned acts of terror and oppression" (Parrish, 2020:10).

Therefore, like liberation theology, womanist theology allows Black women to be unapologetic about their spirituality, sexuality, and relationships with self, God, and others.

4. Womanist theology and the story of Hagar

As mentioned, this study analyses the intersectionality of gender, class, and race in Hagar's story. Gender, race, and class are indicators on how people treat each other. Although these are social constructs, each category places a person like Hagar at the "bottom of barrel." Hagar was an Egyptian slave woman, who later became homeless due to these intersecting issues. Intersectionality is a term coined by Kimberle' Crenshaw (Davis, 2008:68). The term is derived from the social injustices that Black woman face. Like womanist thought, the term separates itself from feminist ideals and Black liberation movements as both these initiatives do not speak to the struggles faced by Black women specifically. Therefore, intersectionality refers to the "interaction between gender, race, and other categories of difference in individual lives, social practices, institutional arrangements, cultural ideologies, and the outcomes of these interactions in terms of power (Davis, 2008:68).

²⁸ Malcom X was an African American political activist.

Hagar is marginalised because of her gender, class, and race; thus, these intersecting issues are discussed in the following section.

4.1. Gender and power in Hagar's story

Russell (2006:188) states that in this history Abram is the father who leads a patriarchal household, which was male dominated. The relationships also reflect the class division and the hierarchical structure within the family setting. Abram is a considerable influence in the lives of Sarai and Hagar. Firstly, his relationship with his wife is challenged on their way to Egypt. Abraham is frightened for his life; thus, he devises a plan that will help him. However, this plan favours him, more than his wife Sarai. For Pharaoh's officials to spare his life, he proposes to his wife that she state that she is his sister. However, in the situation Sarai is subjected and placed in a powerless situation (Pace, 1990:17). Pace (1990:17) argues that "Sarai is not so much an accomplice but a silent object."

Abram's behaviour demonstrates his understanding of his power. According to Tribble (2006:36), Sarai becomes an object of her husband's masterminded plan and "... Pharaoh's pleasure, she serves male desires. Although she is central to the story, patriarchy marginalizes this manhandled woman" (Pace, 2006:36). Sarai is placed in an exceedingly tricky situation because she is a woman. Her status has no value. Abram understands that men in power take advantage of women, and women are voiceless and unseen. The narrator does not give explicit details of what takes place in Pharaoh's house after Sarai is taken. However, Abraham is venerated by Pharaoh and his officials, gifted with cattle (sheep and donkeys), and is given male and female slaves. With this transaction, Tribble (2006:36) concludes, "Abram the pimp becomes a wealthy man".

The power dynamics change in Abram's household when they return to Canaan. Sarai's status is regained. Sarai adapts a similar approach to achieve her desires of having a child. Like Abram's behaviour in Egypt, Sarai abuses her authority over Hagar. However, Abram becomes complicit in Sarai's plan. Hagar in this situation is voiceless. This silencing can be traced back to her forced immigration, which occurred as a transaction between Pharaoh and Abram, and was evident before they left Egypt. Hagar was either sold, gifted, or traded to Abram. Because she is a woman, she was limited and marginalised from the very conception of this exchange. Bear in mind that immigration is one of the leading factors into homelessness (this is discussed in Chapter Two). However, in Hagar's case, this can be regarded as forced immigration, which is also one of the leading issues with homelessness. Hagar's narrative is traumatic. Using a

womanist theology lens exposes overlapping oppressions. Just like her gender played a role, her status and class also placed her in a position of oppression.

4.2. Classism and exclusion in Hagar's story

According to Reaves (2018:11), Sarah is the first woman to represent the theme of barrenness; the narrator defines her as a barren woman with no child (Genesis 16:1). She is pivotal to the introduction of other matriarchs related to her barrenness in Genesis, woman like Rebekah and Rachel (Reaves, 2018:11). Apart from her barrenness, Sarah is also introduced with the status of being Abram's wife. In ancient times a woman's self-worth and status centred around the family name, the husband's reputation and, importantly, how many children she had, preferably males (Weems, 1991:33) so that the males could inherit the father's wealth and social status. Because of Abram's social standing as a successful herdsman and prominent male figure, Sarai was also a wealthy woman, and as a Hebrew wife, she had social and economic influence (Weems, 1991:34). Unfortunately, with all the social and economic privilege, Sarai was scorned and shamed because she could not conceive (Weems, 1991:34).

Sarai is defined by her beauty in this story, but her childlessness makes her less of a woman in the Hebrew community (Weems, 1991:34). This social expectation is what propels Sarai to influence and persuade her husband Abram to have non-consensual sexual intercourse with Hagar. Sarai's position places her in a higher class than Hagar. This gives her power to manipulate her situation by using her handmaiden's body. To Sarai's advantage, Hagar is both poor and fertile. Automatically the child born from Hagar will be Sarai's because Hagar is her property. Hence, Sarai hopes that through her slave, her honour will be restored: "perhaps I will be esteemed through her" (Genesis 16:2).

Abram convinces Sarai to discard her wife status that can place him in danger even to the extent of death by the Pharaoh in Egypt. Abram asks Sarai to change her marital status to lie that they are siblings – because Sarai was beautiful in appearance and if she claimed they were married, their lives were in significant risk (Genesis 12:11-13). However, as Abram anticipated, Pharaoh's officials take Sarai to Pharaoh's palace. Unfortunately, in that context she is not the wife of Abram with high status. Her beauty and gender describe her (Trible, 2006:36). Pace (1990:16) argues that Abram uses Sarai's beauty as a commodity in return for favourable treatment from the Pharaoh. The context of the ancient Near East treated women as sexual objects that were used to satisfy men's desires and "bargaining chips used to secure men's wellbeing" (Reaves, 2018:12). As a result, Sarah is victimised in Egypt, firstly by her husband,

who uses her to save himself, and secondly by Pharaoh, who takes her as his possession (Reaves, 2018:12). The narrator does not give an account of Sarai's stay with Pharaoh. In discussing, Sarai's oppression, it can be argued that she was also treated unjustly; the patriarchal structures in place to benefit men and oppress women, also victimised Sarai. Sarai is first traumatised and humiliated; hence she is oppressed. In turn, she becomes the oppressor.

The relationship between Hagar and Sarai is one of struggle, with each other but also against the patriarchal society they exist in (Russell, 2006:185). Russell argues that the relationship between the children is affected by their mothers' estranged relationship. However, they can never be together because initially they do not have the same social, economic, and religious standing (Russell, 2006:185). This implies that they would never live together in harmony; it was an ominous beginning that ended in a tragic manner.

Isaac and Ishmael are crucial in the Hagar and Sarai narrative. Sarai is a matriarch; she is considered the mother of many descendants through God's covenant with Abram. Sarai is respected; however, she feels lacking because she cannot bear Abram a son. According to Russell (2006:186), their relationship was connected by the theme of motherhood and fertility. For her own personal gain, and the enhancement of her social status, Sarai uses Hagar's body for surrogacy (Trible, 2006:38). Because of her infertility she uses Hagar to fulfil the promise of God – the woman she does not consider as her equal, whose name she does not utter, calling her "Slave" (Trible, 2006:38).

The narrative of Sarai and Hagar found in Genesis has attracted attention in recent years. Feminist scholars are interested in bringing to the forefront the voices of women from the shadows. Womanist scholars use Hagar as historical figure to highlight their own unique experiences as African American (Claassens, 2013:1). Interestingly the narrative can be traced between the Christian, Jewish, and Islam religions and each unique perspective shows the interconnectedness between the two women due to their ethnic and social standings (Claassens, 2013:2).

Unfortunately, Sarai's story also shows how the oppressed becomes the oppressor. This causes Sarai to be blind to the abuse she inflicts on her fellow woman; she is focused on attaining a social expectation rather than seeing the suffering she causes Hagar. According to Reaves (2018:5), this blindness can be interpreted as crime. Furthermore, from a white woman's perspective, Reaves argues that "our privilege, despite our oppression within a patriarchal

system, makes us blind and frequently undermines the bonding potential of gender solidarity across class and racial lines” (Reaves, 2018:5).

4.3. Race and oppression in Hagar’s story

Black liberation theology from its conception argued that race, class, and gender are social constructs. These constructs are an impediment to the wellbeing of woman. The measurement of Black women’s success is narrowed down as they exist in a world that is predominantly white influenced, be it politically, economically, or socially (Kobo, 2016:3). Furthermore, Mitchem (2002:12) states that race is a category that has been used to determine the value of a human being. For instance, Mitchem, 2002:12) argues that Blackness has been used as a form of limitation. As a result, racism is used as a tool to degrade Black women’s bodies. The issue of racism is visible in the Hagar story. She is an Egyptian woman, which sets her apart from Sarai.

According to Doob Sakenfeld, Hagar’s nationality as an Egyptian makes her an African, a descendent from Ham, who was destined to a life of subjection just like African slaves, who later faced the same marginalisation. Genesis 16 introduces the theme of Hagar as a sold slave. This text is disturbing as the character of God is shown to be unjust – God supports Sarai by commanding Hagar to return to the household where she is oppressed. Hence Tribble describes this text as one of the “texts of terror.” It contradicts the Exodus traditional narratives, where God intercedes and identifies with the suffering of the ancient slaves and God delivers them from their bondage.

The narrator in this text makes Sarai’s behaviour understandable to the reader; her behaviour is seen as morally neutral and normative. As a matriarch of faith, she is the ideal woman, a position to aspire to. However, her behaviour towards Hagar is influenced by a patriarchal culture that is also informed by whiteness. Thus, Sarai discriminates against Hagar by calling her Slave, which places Hagar in a disadvantaged position while Sarai is elevated through privilege and power (Weems, 1991:34). Weems (1991:340) further argues that the differences between Hagar and Sarai went beyond reproductive capabilities and economic standing, their differences also centred around their contrasting racial identities (Weems, 1991:34). This racial difference also comes with power dynamics, which places the undervalued person in a position to be oppressed. In this case Hagar is oppressed threefold; she is oppressed because of her gender, class, and race. Interestingly, in the text, Hagar’s voice is not heard concerning her body, her opinion regarding the matter is not mentioned in this text. This indicates that she was

powerless in the matter. Also, Abram's non-protest and compliance is shocking. According to Russel (2016:187), there is little consideration when it comes to Hagar in the text. She is marginalised because she is a woman, slave, and Egyptian foreigner.

However, Hagar's attitude changes when she becomes pregnant, as a slave known to be carrying the child of a landowner. Especially if it were to be a son. The power dynamics between Sarai and Hagar change drastically; their terms and conditions need to be renegotiated. Weems (1991:25) argues that perhaps that Hagar's attitude changes because she is carrying a child of a prosperous man. Although she was defenceless and powerless before the pregnancy, now she possesses a power that evokes something that lay dormant. She regains her sense of self-worth, or she finds a new purpose and direction in her life (Weems, 1991:25). She no longer limits herself as a slave woman but sees herself as a woman and mother to be, something that Sarai desires. However, Hagar's behaviour affects Sarai as she becomes filled with resentment against Hagar, even though the idea for Hagar to conceive was Sarai's plan. No wonder this text is considered troubling and difficult to comprehend as a reader.

Furthermore, without Sarai's permission, Hagar is oppressed whilst she is pregnant. The text tells us that she is treated harshly by her slave master. One can only imagine the humiliation and punishment that Hagar faced. Reaves (2018:14) presumes that she endured verbal insults, ridicule, degrading tasks, beatings, and heavy work. Thus, Hagar's narrative is a common experience to that of many Black women who endured brutality throughout history. The pain and torture that Hagar experiences becomes unbearable, and she flees the household of Sarai and Abram. Hagar decides to flee into the wilderness, preferring the unknown dangers over being abused by her slaveowner.

As mentioned in Chapter Two, the pathways to homelessness include sexual abuse and domestic violence. Hagar embodies these critical issues that homeless women face today. Hagar was forced to immigrate from her country, as an Egyptian foreigner who became a slave to Sarai and Abram. Hagar's body is sexually abused, she is emotionally and psychologically tormented. Hagar is homeless and destitute. Sarai uses Hagar's body as a surrogate to fulfil God's promise of a child but becomes jealous when Hagar is pregnant. Interestingly, Hagar is the only one who names God *El Roi* (Genesis 16:13) (Reaves, 2018:8). Hagar is bought and serves in a state of invisibility.

Unfortunately, Sarai continues to demonstrate her oppressive power over Hagar, but this injustice is further extended towards Ishmael. It is surprising how Sarai acts as though she did

not give Hagar to Abram without Hagar's consent. Sarai disowns the child that she planned for, causing Hagar to risk her life and that of her child. Furthermore, years later, Sarai casts out Hagar and her son, putting them at risk of starvation. Reaves (2018:14) argues that, although the cultural norms sided with Sarai and forced surrogacy was legal at the time, negotiations should have been considered due to the power dynamics and to protect the rights of the surrogate (Reaves, 2018:14).

Okoye (2007:169) notes that Hagar's encounter with Yahweh in the wilderness depicts a sense of hopelessness. Hagar escapes her oppressors and then becomes homeless. In her distress, in her homelessness, she has a personal encounter with God, whom she names God (*El Roi*) (Genesis 16:13), which is translated as the God who sees her. Contrary to Abram and Sarai's home where she felt unseen, invisible, and her cries did not matter, God sees her, and this seeing surpasses the physical. Hagar was traumatised and had no one to defend her. Her dignity was tarnished. This led her to homelessness and isolation. One of the most difficult aspects of being a homeless person, is that you cease to be a person.

Black women share a common issue of victimisation by oppressive systems or social constructs like gender, race, ethnicity, and class discrimination (Weems, 1991:29). Hagar and Sarai's intersecting stories are an ideal narrative that exposes social ills that the womanist project tries to challenge. It places pressing theological issues like gender, economic exploitation, classism, and race on the table (Weems, 1991:29).

Another challenge facing womanist theology, which should be noted in this text, is how the narrators of the biblical text had a particular audience in mind. The Old Testament narrators were influenced by their context, a Hebrew, urban, wealthy, literate, male-dominated audience in the first millennium (Weems, 1991:30). Therefore, as a Black woman one can sympathise with Hagar. The Egyptian slave shares our African heritage; one comes to the text identifying with Hagar's narrative. Borrowing from Alice Walker, a womanist reading compared to a feminist reading is what purple is to lavender (Weems, 1991:30). Hagar is not only an oppressed woman; she is an oppressed Black woman.

Hagar's narrative exposes the social, economic, and sexual exploitation she endured in Sarai and Abram's household. African American women relate to these injustices, as they draw parallels between their story and that of Hagar. The story of Hagar is not far removed from the story of "our mothers, grandmothers, aunts, and women in our neighbourhoods, it is as if we know it by heart" (Weems, 1991:33). It is also a story worth considering on further levels.

According to Reaves (2018:1), the theme of Hagar's story is that of threat and survival. Womanist theologian Deloris draws a comparison between Hagar's story and African American women in this quote: "The common comparison between Hagar and African American women is the connection of their realities and lived experiences. Whereby they experienced enslavement, being raped, dehumanized, and impregnated by the oppressor. But to end their oppression many had no option but to run away" (Harrison, 2004:40). This disempowerment through oppression is what causes women to become homeless.

Exum (2009:4) argues the repetition of the story in two different forms functions out of difficulty and traumatic process. In Genesis 16 Hagar runs away whilst she is pregnant because Sarai harshly treats her, but she is told by Yahweh to return to Abram's household. Again, in Genesis 21 Hagar and her son Ishmael are expelled by Abram under Sarai's command, but God seconds Sarai regarding their forceful removal. This is really a troubling text. One can only imagine their pain and misery, being ejected, having no safety net, no shelter, and no financial stability. They were forced into homelessness. This is the reality of homeless women in our communities. Unfortunately, some must abandon their children in these difficult circumstances. Which is traumatic and a painful experience for any parent, especially one like Hagar, who was forced to have a child.

The story exposes tensions between Abram and Sarai, then in Sarai's relationship with Hagar. Womanist theology, by centring the story around Hagar, exposes and challenges intersecting issues such as gender, race, and class. Her multiple episodes of homelessness are traumatic. However, Hagar's narrative and experience of homelessness can relate to other contexts. For instance, South African women also share similar intersecting issues to those that Hagar faced.

Therefore, the womanist theological approach helps one to understand Hagar's story. Societal ills are exposed, such as racism, classism, and power, which are contributing factors to why women, particularly Black women, are marginalised and left vulnerable. Lastly, Sarai could not express commiseration or understanding with Hagar. However, in our modern society women can stand together and fight social ills that affect fellow women. This invitation is extended to all women and men who are in solidarity with this, and those who advocate for those that are treated unjustly in society. Reeves, as an American white woman, argues that the issue that Hagar faced thus stands against such social ills in society.

5. Hagar and South African homelessness

African American women have familiarised themselves with the Hagar narrative as many of their great-grandmothers and mothers were slaves and thus were oppressed by the supremacist system (Weems, 1991:33). However, African women also relate to Hagar's story, especially within the South Africa context. South African Black women face societal ills that perpetuate the cycle of poverty, and few are empowered women (Gqola, 2007:115). Many of the women are affected by social-economic and political factors. As a result, the influence of culture and religious beliefs keeps them entrapped in a patriarchal society that favours men (Maluleke & Nadar, 2007:7). Like Hagar, Black women's bodies are sexually exploited, their voices are silenced, and some are murdered by their partners (Gqola, 2007:115). The African girl child has limited access to resources; hence many are victimised. The feminisation of poverty is very evident in the African context, especially in South Africa, because most women come from disadvantaged and marginalised communities, which is a result of the apartheid system (Maluleke & Nadar, 2005:5). South Africa has experienced an increase in accounts of gender-based violence; it has been stated as a pandemic. Women's bodies have been beaten, bruised, raped, and burnt (Gqola, 2007:115). However, these women either remain in abusive relationships or become homeless. Unfortunately, neither choice is life-giving.

Chapter Two of this study offered a brief historical background of South Africa and how the systemic pillars of apartheid have impacted the country and how people are still marginalised, especially Coloured and Black women, due to the unjust systems that are still at play. Homelessness is an issue that affects all persons; however, social, political, economic, cultural, and religious factors influence the pathways to homelessness. South Africa is one of the most unequal countries in the world, due to the impact of the apartheid system. Black South Africans are the most disadvantaged, hence most poverty-stricken households are Black. Thus, my focus in this section is on the contributors to homelessness that Coloured and Black women face, including cultural and religious beliefs, lack of education, racism, classism, and gender subordination.

Kobo (2016:2) argues that in South Africa Black women suffer under what she calls a "double yoke." Firstly, they are oppressed because of their race; secondly, they are oppressed because of their gender. Madipoane Masenya is a South African womanist theological scholar. Her work reflects the injustices that Black women face. As a biblical scholar her work introduced the term womanist theology in the South African academic sphere (Kobo, 2016:3). Her research depicts the situation of Black South Africa women, which propelled her to

differentiate from feminist theology. Hence her engagement in womanist theology focuses on the liberation of Black women (Kobo, 2016:3).

On the other hand, for women in Africa, it is not only gender, race, and class which play a role in the way we as human beings are treated, but also the impact of cultural beliefs. Phiri and Nadar (2011:83) explain that for African women, issues of women's oppression go together with racism, economic injustice, and the practise of religious and cultural practices that can be injurious to African women. Culture is often the main justification for indifference, oppression, and injustice, especially to those whom culture defines as the "other," the outsiders (Kanyoro 2002:1). Kobo (2018:3) states that South African Black women face a triple oppression – class discrimination, gender subordination, and racial prejudices. However, these women struggle to challenge the oppressive patriarchal culture that is still pertinent within the South African context. Kobo (2016:1) notes that Black South African women are subordinate to the patriarchal culture and struggle to challenge its ideals, thus it is important to recognise the existence of patriarchal systems within Black churches. Some church communities are spaces where Black women seek refuge, however, these same spaces can be oppressive instead of being liberative (Harris & Haskins, 2021:5).

Patriarchal structures are developed to make women feel unworthy and silenced (Kobo, 2018:3). It is unfortunate, as they must navigate their lives within a system that was not designed to accommodate their needs and wants. She goes on to say that: "The subtle forms of violence women experience cannot easily be articulated but have for centuries been eating into the psyche of women, eroding their self-esteem" (Kobo, 2018:4).

According to Oduyoye (1995:480), Christian theology and the interpretation of the biblical text in the African context has had the effect of "sacralising" the marginalisation of women's experiences. Historically the oppression of women has been justified by Christian theology and sanctioned by the church (Kobo, 2018:3). Thus, patriarchy has been justified not only by culture, but sustained by religious rationalisations.

For instance, within the Xhosa traditional culture, *lobola* is a monetary transaction or the bearing of gifts in payment of a wife before marriage. This act is one of the reasons for gender-based violence, as it reduces women to objects and property that she is owned. Although cultures have values that should be treasured, however when cultural beliefs are manipulated to serve an agenda and oppress the other, the practices are not life-giving and should be called out. Although these customs have been traditionally practised and are symbolic, norms and

values are not absolute, change can occur (Maluleke & Nadar, 2002:14). Some cultural practices must be revaluated to check if both parties are represented and are happy in the union. Furthermore, some of these cultural norms have been used to perpetuate gender-based violence. Hence Maluleke and Nadar (2002:14) argue that these cultural norms have been preserved for the continuation of control and abuse over women. Another cultural custom that is practised in the Xhosa culture, especially in rural villages, is *ukuthwala*,²⁹ which leads young girls to be raped, abused by their male counterparts. Both *lobola* and *ukuthwala* are practices that benefit men rather than women. I argue that these painful experiences are women's pathways into homelessness. Like Hagar who was not given an opinion to voice her concerns, South African Black women are placed in similar positions where they must fight to be seen and heard.

As mentioned previously in the chapter, there are many spaces where women are oppressed and marginalised. For instance, women's *manyano* is a site that is meant to accommodate and liberate women. Kobo (2018:2) argues that the spiritual practices that are observed within this context point towards a pseudo-spirituality; the prayer content focuses on the hope that the suffering and pain experienced by these women will be dealt with in the next life, awaiting the second coming of Jesus. This, Kobo argues, is problematic, especially in a South African context, because it derives from a western theological perspective (Kobo, 2018:2). By not responding to their current problems, women are left to depend on this pseudo-spirituality which enhances the death of their consciousness (Kobo, 2018:2). For centuries, women have been made to feel worthless. This takes different forms, denying women the right of self-expression out of their own will and wisdom, which brings a unique perspective to the *status quo* or dominated mode which renders women invisible in society. Consequently, in both private and in public life, the traditional decision-makers are men. Women experience great difficulty in negotiating sexual practices in their relationships. Because of their subordinate cultural status, it is accepted that women's role is to please men sexually, and they have little say over the kinds of sexual practices they engage in (Haddad, 2005:35). Hagar's experience of sexual violation is like that of South African women who have experienced this gruesome violation and understand the pain and shame it brings. Especially if society sides with the men.

²⁹ *Ukuthwala* is a form of abduction that involves the kidnapping of a girl or a young woman by a man and his friends or peers with the intention of compelling the girl or young woman's family to endorse marriage negotiations. Accessed at [Justice/Resources/Publications/Ukuthwalahttps://www.justice.gov.za](https://www.justice.gov.za/Justice/Resources/Publications/Ukuthwala).

According to Reaves (2018:1), reading the story of Hagar as a white woman propels her to want to identify with Hagar. But as a Black woman I argue that the story of Hagar is rather traumatic and painful, thus identifying with her is rather counterintuitive, one can sympathy with Hagar. Hagar's narrative, like that of African American women and South African homeless women, shouts out a cry out of desperation for liberation. Social protests like #Blacklivesmatter, #MeToo, and #AMINEXT all engage this fight and a cry for a new life, a cry for liberation. A cry for a release from the shackles of racism, patriarchy, sexism, classism, and exploitation (Reaves, 2018:4). As God saw Hagar in Genesis 21:20 and responded and provided, God is a God of seeing. God sees the injustices of this world. A proclamation by African American women states that God is not an abstract idea but a God of relation who has been "the only one who was with them, who gave them a feeling of 'somebodyness' and who became the bedrock of Black identity and sanity" (Okoye, 2007:174). God sees the issues faced by homeless women in South Africa. In the South African context, cultural beliefs and practices can become hindrances to the livelihood of the girl child. Because some cultures still have rigid cultural practices that are not life-giving. These cultural issues leave women vulnerable. Thus, these issues are contributing factors to women ending up homeless.

6. Conclusion

The core of womanist thought is that Black women's experiences must be at the centre of the theologising we do (Sheppard, 2011:23). It is important for Black women to be able to articulate vulnerably about black suffering, black religiousness, and church experiences (Sheppard, 2011:43). This theology of liberation from racism, sexism, and classism moves them from the periphery and brings them to the centre. Thus, this liberative cry is a lament for the systems that are in place to perpetuate the cycle of poverty. By breaking these systems, these vicious cycles are broken, and the child of a homeless women can have a home.

Therefore, it is also important for institutions that cater for homeless women, to consider Hagar's biblical story as a lens, to establish programmes that empower women rather than marginalising them. African women's theology is prospering, according to Oduyoye (2001:16). From this viewpoint, theologians determine what improves, transforms, or advances our societies in such a way as to foster communities and relationships that are both life-giving and life-enhancing. Women study theology to support and enhance their enduring spirituality. The goal of African women's theology is to liberate women from patriarchy, which has permeated all spheres of life, and to build thriving communities.

Chapter 5

Case study review of Faith-Based Organisations catering for the homeless in the Western Cape

1. Introduction

Faith-Based Organisations (FBOs) developed to address the needs of the marginalised at grassroots level, as a response to socio-economic issues. While both government and local congregations have at times struggled to address these issues wholistically, FBOs have stepped up to provide for poor communities. It is interesting to note that, although FBOs were initially viewed with suspicion in the development sector, a shift has occurred recently in terms of scholarship and public perception; FBOs are increasingly being recognised for addressing the physical well-being of poor and marginalised communities. The government sector has also acknowledged the work of FBOs and co-operation between government and FBOs has increased. In social development settings FBOs have earned their place, and their role as stakeholders in response to the plight of the homeless cannot be ignored.

Therefore, this chapter will discuss the development of FBOs. The methodology employed in this chapter includes sample and data collection process, a historical background of three anonymised FBO homeless shelters, a discussion of the use of critical discourse analysis, and an analysis of the three FBOs' annual reports, developmental programmes for women, partnerships, and testimonials.

2. The development and nature of Faith-Based Organisations

The term Faith-Based Organisations refers to voluntary non-profit organisations with a religious origin and a service orientation. The term explains how religious players evolved into civil society stakeholders in development programmes. In the operation model it is indicated as a subgroup of Non-Government Organisations (NGOs). While FBOs are defined as religious, faith-based, and/or faith-inspired organisations, they can be run as legally recognised or unrecognised non-profit organisations (Nwaiwu, 2011:2).

Clarke and Ware (2015:41) note that FBOs can be named in two forms: firstly, as development agencies that seek to improve the well-being of poor and marginalised communities, and secondly, as having a religious foundation which influences their organisations. While they resort under NGOs, there are similarities and differences between the two groups. Both can be

characterised as independent and non-profit, and most often voluntary. FBOs are mostly operated according to a religious lens, usually in the form of Bible study, fellowship, and pastoral counselling. NGOs usually have a more secular structure and response to issues (Clarke & Ware, 2015:41; cf. Adonis 2017:36). In this thesis the broader definition of FBOs, which includes local congregations or denominational or ecumenical bodies, is excluded, and only grassroots actors at the grassroots level are included.

Despite the lack of a thorough historical account of the origins of FBOs' involvement in development, documentation dates this involvement to England in the 15th century (1552), with the church's register of the poor on which the state depended to care for the poor (Nwaiwu, 2011:3). The Elizabethan Poor Statute, which came into effect in 1601, was a consolidation of earlier welfare laws into a single law that gave the church more authority over the provision of social services. Later the Speenhamland Act of 1795 in England allowed the church to participate in the provision of social services to the underprivileged. The lack of religious freedom during this period may have contributed to the church's significant role in the provision of social services. In the 18th century mission groups endeavoured to spread their evangelistic message and provide social and humanitarian services to other regions of the world, particularly Europe and North America (Nwaiwu, 2011:3). It should also be noted that the rise of civil society as the dominant political construct influencing the discourses, institutions, and practices through which interactions and connections between Northern donors and African recipients would be organised, was a crucial prerequisite for the emergence of FBOs (Burchardt, 2015:11).

Although donors have ignored FBOs for decades, they have historically been at the forefront of social movements and service delivery in development. Many people consider religion to be anti-developmental and, as a result, FBOs in Europe have suppressed their religious character to survive in a secular environment. Nevertheless, FBOs are re-evaluating what their religious identity means to them and how it affects their work as the aid climate shifts from one of "estrangement" to "engagement" with faith (James, 2009:3). Religious organisations have assumed unprecedented levels of involvement in programmes and initiatives offering development aid and humanitarian help in Africa over the past 20 years or so. Academic studies have shown how religious bodies and communities have been invited to join as "partners in development" by governments, international organisations, and donor organisations. They have also shown how resource flows have made it easier for religious organisations to integrate themselves into the institutional webs of international development policy (Burchardt, 2015:3).

FBOs were among the well-known organisations that supported the liberation struggles in Mozambique and Zimbabwe, and it should be noted that FBOs contributed actively and admirably to the advancement of Liberation Theology in Latin America. Despite these contributions, religion received little attention in the field of development, perhaps because of the modernisation premise which is based on the ideology of secularisation. This has had a considerable impact on the acceptance of faith in development discourse, particularly because faith is comparable to tradition due to its traditionalist stances on aspects of life (Nwaiwu, 2011:4). The way a faith identity manifests itself in FBOs is extremely controversial and nuanced. Because there is no agreed-upon definition of what it means to be faith-based, the present catch-all word Faith-Based Organisation causes confusion and division. Failure to recognise the several types of FBO can result in making inappropriate decisions. We need a full wardrobe of possibilities because one-size-fits-all language leads to one-size-fits-all regulations. James (2009:7) identifies several key characteristics of FBOs. FBOs:

- offer productive development services to reach the most vulnerable
- are valued by the least fortunate
- offer a competing theory of development to the dominant secular theory
- inspire support from civil society
- encourage action

Numerous FBOs representing a variety of religious traditions agree that the services offered by FBOs and the way in which the services are rendered are deeply rooted in their religious beliefs. FBOs are seen as a practical expression of their religious beliefs attached to what they see as a calling to be positive agents of change in society (Bowers Du Toit, 2019:2). FBOs give people confidence, a sense of self-worth and contentment that in turn inspire hope and a sense of possibility and are often fundamentally motivated by the FBO's faith and worldview. While there is a place and a need for international NGOs, Indigenous and grassroots based FBOs are better able to adapt their organisational structures and activities to the local cultural and religious contexts because they are more sensitive to these circumstances (Bowers Du Toit, 2019:2).

According to Bowers Du Toit (2019), faith, at least within the South African context, influences an FBO's organisation, operations, and results, even offering a counterargument to more secular conceptions of development. For instance, many FBOs believe that the best way to alleviate material conditions is to additionally address the spiritual aspects of poverty. Other

scholars, however, assert that faith is associated with the promotion of idealised images of the needy and impoverished, which results in restricted engagement with the sense of needs in the community. It should be noted that, even in cases where FBOs engage in proselytization, the literature suggests anecdotally that poverty alleviation remains an integral and equally vital aspect of their purpose (Bowers Du Toit, 2019:2).

Donor money is another issue that directly affects how FBOs identify their religiosity. According to Sinha's study (2012:576), organisations that identify as more evangelical and consider their service delivery as a direct manifestation of allegiance to a higher authority, could find it difficult to receive government funds or contracts. It references several studies that demonstrate the "negative link" between religion and governmental or other secular financing, which frequently results in "mission creep"³⁰. As a result, the objectives of some organisations or programmes are changed to receive government or other secular support. FBOs are more likely to exist where they are affiliated with bigger, secular umbrella organisations (Nwaiuw, 2011:5).

The FBO sector is a significant actor in South African civil society and is renowned for its scope and function in delivering social development services to utterly impoverished people. Questions, however, need to be asked due to a lack of sufficient research.

In South Africa FBOs played a crucial role in offering alternative social services to the country's Black population during the apartheid era. In addition to their current work of addressing a variety of socio-economic issues in our nation, they frequently serve the most vulnerable and impoverished members of our society, working directly at the root of poverty and inequality in South Africa (Bowers Du Toit, 2019:1). However, there are many questions about Christianity's history of colonialism and apartheid. The cultural relevance of programmes and the conflict between justice and charity in South Africa, where poverty is still mostly a Black experience, remain problematic (Bowers Du Toit, 2018:25).

Gender is another issue which has not been thoroughly addressed with regards to FBOs. While FBOs are noteworthy for giving women access to educational, leadership, and organisational development opportunities, much remains to be done. The perception that religious beliefs justify gender inequality is a result of the divergent ways in which religious texts are interpreted by different faith traditions and remains a key challenge. As a result, the conservative cultures

³⁰ Mission creep is the gradual or incremental expansion of an intervention, project, or mission, beyond its original scope, focus or goals, a ratchet effect spawned by initial success

of most faith traditions encourage inequality, female subordination, and a variety of other social injustices. Gender is a development issue. Therefore, gender equality is important if we are to attain sustainable development. It is important to note that the development agenda did not take gender issues into account until the 1970s. As a result, “Development policies were directed at women only in the context of their roles as wives and mothers” (Momsen, 2010:12). Women were assigned what is known as the threefold duty of women; in most parts of the world, women’s roles are reproduction, productivity, and community administration (Chilongozi, 2017:30). The Women and Development (WAD) approach, which first appeared in the mid-1970s, concentrated primarily on the economic agency of women. WAD as strategy developed from feminism, prioritising gender equality, and was developed primarily by white women from the North. WAD concentrated on the economic agency of women without realising that, in addition to gender discrimination, women from the South also face class and racial discrimination, which further marginalises them (Chilongozi, 2017:31). This notion of gender in development is also increasingly recognised by FBOs in terms of their programming and approach. Adonis (2017) for example argues for a gender lens in a specific FBO programme and highlights the lack of this in its work.

3. Methodology employed

This study will analyse three FBOs in the Western Cape that seek to address the needs of the homeless population. The research will be done by using a qualitative approach. However, it should be noted that the research collection will not involve empirical field work but will instead sample the websites of three anonymised FBOs which work with the homeless in Cape Town. The study also restricts the scope of the FBOs to those of the Christian religion.

I will be using critical discourse analysis to analyse the websites of the three FBOs to ascertain whether gender is taken note of, especially with reference to issues faced by homeless women, and whether the wellbeing of women is considered. According to Van Dijk (2006:252), critical discourse analysis is interested in understanding complex social issues and is concerned with issues of power and justice. Critical discourse analysis wants to investigate how the economy, class, gender, religion, race, and sexual orientation construct, influence, and change social systems (Mogashoa, 2014:105). Critical discourse analysis also looks at how language operates in transmitting and constituting knowledge within organised social institutions. These elements are crucial for understanding the FBOs and their organisational structures with regards to issues of gender. Moreover, it is “a tool to help members of a profession understand the messages

they are sending to themselves and others and to understand the meanings of the spoken and written texts by others” (Van Dijk, 2006:252).

Thus, a close review of the websites will be done. The focus will be on reports, developmental programmes for women, partnerships, and supplies for women e.g., sanitary pads. The study will also explore whether gender-based violence is a critical issue that is addressed in these organisations for the homeless.

A womanist perspective will be employed because, as mentioned in Chapter Four, both the biblical character Hagar and homeless women face intersecting issues of power, class, and gender. These are contributing factors that perpetuate the cycle of homelessness. According to Lazer (2005:1), “there is a complex hierarchy of power and ideology at work in discourse which helps sustain a gendered social order.” Discourse analysis is reading the material carefully and examining the language used. In this case special attention will be given to the notion of gender. The importance of discourse analysis is further elaborated by this explanation discussed by Lazer³¹. This will, therefore, be a key area that will be investigated more closely especially with regards to the language used or not used in relation to gender.

It should be noted that, since I did not conduct field research, I did not require ethical clearance from the university. The organisations’ sampled websites are in the public domain so it can be assumed that the organisations agree that the information can be used by the public.

3.1. Sample and data collection process

This study will use purposive sampling, which consists of selecting units which have characteristics that are needed in a study (Campbell & Greenwood *et al*, 2020:653). I have

³¹ The cornerstone of critical discourse analysis, according to Lazer (2005:1), is a critical viewpoint on socially inequitable arrangements supported by language use, with the objectives of social transformation and emancipation. The analysis of discourse is the study of language. A close reading of the text and an examination of the language employed are two steps in the discourse analysis process. Lazer (2005:1) defines critical discourse analysis as a critical viewpoint on uneven social structures maintained by language use, with the goals of social transformation and emancipation. Lazer contends that discourse is governed by a complicated hierarchy of power and ideology that upholds a gendered social structure. Thus, one topic that will be investigated in this study is whether language is employed with power relations in mind. People interact with one another not only as individuals but also as members of diverse social and cultural groupings. Our language is something we receive from others; we did not create it (Adonis, 2017:9).

chosen three FBOs to focus on. Specific units in these FBOs will be analysed. This will be online based. All the details analysed are found on the websites.

This study will look at these areas on the website to collect data:

- Annual reports
- Skills development programmes (women)
- Partnerships
- Testimonials

3. 2 Reliability and validity

The reliability and validity of the research is based on the online information that the shelters present on their websites. Thus, the information presented is what the shelters want the audience to read. One can only trust that the information is valid and dependable.

3.3 Methodological limitations

I am limited to only secondary sources which are based on reports and programmes that are outlined on the websites. This may not provide a full picture of all their services rendered to the homeless. Nevertheless, it could be said that the key emphasis on a website is what the organisation wants the public to understand as most important to the work they do. Due to the anonymisation of the organisations and their websites, these are not cited as sources owing to the risk of identification.

4. Historical backgrounds of the FBO homeless shelters

This section will focus on the selected three homeless shelters based in Cape Town. I will, firstly, discuss the backgrounds of the organisations and their developmental work. However, as mentioned, all the information discussed is based on the websites, therefore, it might be limited in some cases because each organisation has its own unique website. Due to the sensitivity of homelessness, this research will anonymise the organisations; therefore, no organisational names will be mentioned. The organisations will simply be named FBO A, FBO B, and FBO C. All three-organisation analysed are situated in the Cape Metropole, faith-based, and aligned to the Christian faith.

4.1 FBO A

FBO A is a registered Christian NPO with its headquarters situated in Kenilworth in Cape Town. The website does not specify if there are any other branches. The organisation started

in 2000. This organisation has a different approach to homelessness than many others, as its focus is on equipping the homeless with increasing skills to ensure employability. The organisation implemented an innovative skills programme, which was formulated by occupational therapists. Because the organisation is Christian-faith-based, the programmes offered include Bible studies, fellowship, and what they term biblical counselling.

The organisation has a programme which is divided into three phases. It starts with basic needs provision like clothes and food. Secondly, it offers drug and alcohol rehabilitation support to the homeless, and finally it offers work-based learnership over a 19-month period (the life change programme). The last focuses on nurturing an individual's personal and vocational skills, as well as relapse prevention. Besides skills development, the programme also offers a work placement strategy that gives former homeless people a chance to work at the shelter's charity shop or laundry facility. Others are placed to help at the first phase service centre.

The skill development model includes stock taking, merchandising, customer service, and other skills which are not specified on the website. Participants also have access to weekly relapse prevention, formal training in English, literacy, information technology, and business management. The organisation team includes a director, personal assistant to the director, and connecting consultant, and departments include operations, retail supply, strategic partnerships, retail operations, and finance.

The organisation is a member of the National Homelessness Network which brings together various organisations in eight cities across South Africa. This movement includes NGOs, FBOs, local homeless forums, activities, academics, and practitioners, and importantly, former, and current homeless individuals. The network was established in 2017. The aim of the network is to collectively help prevent homelessness across South Africa and to improve the conditions of homeless people to find pathways out of homelessness. It is partnered with the City of Cape Town and various other companies such as Dundas Capital.

The organisation offers several ways in which people can assist the homeless. These initiatives are vouchers, donations of funds, recycling goods, and purchasing through the charity shop. The website also has a blog page, which is a platform for homeless individuals to articulate their stories.

4.2 FBO B

FBO B is a Christian-based social development organisation. The organisation was established in 1986 and has been active in inner cities like Cape Town, Kempton Park, Port Elizabeth, and Johannesburg. The founder organisers were inspired to start the organisation due to the increasing gap between the poor and rich, particularly within the South African context. This is exacerbated by the increase in local immigration as people come to cities in search of work but end up homeless due to external factors. Initially the organisation was started by the Johannesburg-East Dutch, Reformed Church as an outreach to hand out food parcels to the homeless and poor in Johannesburg, specifically in Hillbrow. However, in the year 1989 it was registered as a Section 21 Company with an independent board of directors. The organisation currently works as a non-profit company and is a public benefit organisation which provides for five focus groups: pre-schoolers, learners, school-leaving youth, adults at risk, and families at risk.

Thus, their mission is to empower people wholistically to live independent, sustainable, and meaningful lives. Their core values are to mould, empower, and serve. The website details their developmental journey from the organisation's inception in 1979. This journey includes community outreaches, services for the aged, HIV/Aids programmes etc. However, it is important to highlight development that is relevant to this study, particularly homelessness. For instance, in 1991 the organisation launched its first poor and needy programme which was aimed at addressing the needs of the homeless, and in the year 2001 it admitted its first intake of female street youth to an entrepreneurial programme.

The website includes a page on media and info which gives information on news, stories, vacancies, and newsletters. Assisting the organisation through donations and involvement in events and volunteering are specified avenues for support from the public.

4.3 FBO C

FBO C identifies itself as is a registered Christ-centred NPO with the mission to provide a loving and caring temporary home, food, and clothing to destitute homeless; abandoned, abused or unemployed women, children, and men. It was established in 1992 as a response to the extreme rise in homelessness in the Western Cape. It seeks to restore persons' dignity and self-respect and to return them to mainstream society equipped, restored, and fulfilling their God-given potential.

The organisation currently serves some 950 people – 205 women, 264 children/youth, and 475 men. The organisation receives referrals from various sectors, like trauma centres, business

sectors, religious institutions, and social services. The services provided range from Christian schools (registered primary and high schools Grade R to 9), Lambs-Edu care and provides skills development programmes. It also offers life skill training and a 50-day introduction course in the Word of God and spiritual counselling. The organisation is committed to helping communities; thus, it provides relief and semi-permanent work and general assistance to different schools, early learning centres, churches, and families. It also assists crèches, soup kitchens and other needs in the community like food, household goods, and clothes. The donors that support financially and with goods and services, are wholesalers and retailers, service clubs, business sector, churches, local and international individuals, health centres and Cape Town Central City Partnership. There are various departments, including men, ladies, youth boys and girls, skills ministries, kitchen, Christian school, and Bible school.

5. Analysis of websites

In this section I will analyse the various areas in the websites as identified and discussed in section 5.3 using critical discourse analysis with a gendered lens to determine whether and how gender is addressed. I will also seek to explore this considering my previous chapters and their findings.

5.1 Annual reports

In this section, I will review the annual reports of 2021-2022 with regards to the various organisations, critically analysing whether and how the organisations reflect on issues of gender, specifically with reference to women and what has been done in the past year to empower homeless women. As the study uses available online information on these three FBOs, all the categories of information are not available for all three FBOs. For instance, the website for FBO C offers no annual report. Thus, this section will be based on the two reports for the year 2021 that are available.

FBO A's report of sixteen pages provides an overview of the year 2021. The report outlines the organisation's work, which is fundamentally based on the rehabilitation and reintegration of homeless people. The report is introduced by the CEO, who is male and white; this section includes messages of gratitude for the annual report from colleagues. The financial aspects of the year are highlighted, and the report mentions that Covid-19 impacted on the number of homeless, which put strain on shelters, including this one. It provides data on how many people were recruited in the three-phase programme which is mentioned in the historical background section. Interestingly, no gender issues are mentioned or highlighted. These are the gender

issues identified in Chapter Two on critical issues faced by homeless women, which I expected to find in the reports – abuse, lack of antenatal care, reproductive health issues, lack of sanitary pads and hygiene care, and disclosure of sexuality.

According to the report, the FBO reached over 2 500 people sleeping on the streets of Cape Town. However, there is no indication of gender. There is no information on how many of these people are women and how they were catered. The FBO served over 23 000 meals across the city. Its system makes use of vouchers, which it argues helps reduce street solicitation and the flow of money on the streets. 19 891 vouchers were distributed in the year 2021.

In considering issues of power, the following should be noted: although one can understand the misuse of money on drugs and alcohol by homeless people, some are capable of using money wisely if given the chance; it could also be argued that vouchers can perpetuate the stereotype of criminality and dishonesty (as discussed in Chapter Three), adding to the burden of the homeless and affecting their dignity.

FBO B's report of forty-five pages is on the year up to February 2022 and can be considered an in-depth report on the work done in the different branches. The report covers the five pillars of the organisation, which focuses on pre-schoolers, learners, school-leaving youth, adults at risk, and families at risk. The chairperson and the CEO, both white males, and the director, a white female, introduce the report. This is again important to note in terms of an intersectional discourse analysis which seeks to highlight who has the power. In both FBO A and B the power holders do not reflect the race and inequality dynamics within the sector.

The report divides the four groups that the organisation caters for – each member of the board of directors contributes a section on what they do. It also covers the challenges it faced, like financial challenges during the Covid-19 pandemic, or shares stories of grace and its plans moving forward.

For this paper, I will solely focus on the group that homeless women fall under, youth and adults. The goal of the shelter is for youth and adults to overcome broken lives towards greater dignity, hope, and living independent and meaningful lives. Their target group is youth and adults in lower-income urban communities who are from typically poorer, disempowered, unemployed, and at-risk communities, and many are homeless. FBO B's theory of change for the youth and adults at risk focus group reflects on the services needed to support those on the street or in temporary shelters, where they are guided and helped to become civically empowered and economically engaged as they overcome addiction and learn coping skills to

deal with trauma to have productive and fulfilling lives. As mentioned in Chapter Two, substance abuse is a leading cause of homelessness, and implementing rehabilitation services for homeless people, wanting to change their lives, is a constructive way of eliminating homelessness.

However, it is problematic that issues specific to women are not discussed in the report, despite it being clear that they focus on both men and women. This raises the question as to whether these are spaces where the female homeless feel free to express themselves and their fundamental beliefs. It may be assumed that the organisation does not have a gender-conscious approach but a collective approach, hence its assumption that youth and adults fall into one category.

Both FBOs are run by white males. This is problematic, firstly because the issues of race and gender and class are crucial. Hagar's story highlights specifically the ways in which the issues of power, class, and gender intersect. The reports provided by the FBOs appear to highlight the hierarchy within the organisations and the ways in which this is gendered, raced, and classed. Thus, there is a power imbalance between the CEO and the homeless women – more especially as some of them are white men. For example, a white privileged male may not understand the necessity of sanitary pads monthly as this is not his lived experience; thus, this may not be an urgent issue on his agenda. However, for the homeless women with a lack of income, provision of sanitary pads is a form of bringing dignity to them. The video mentioned in Chapter Two in the section on critical issues faced by homeless women, shows interviews with street homeless women who describe how ashamed they become when it is time for their periods. Due to the unaffordability of sanitary pads, they use tissues, rags, or nothing at all. Also, it must be noted that these women require these sanitary pads every month. The reports do not discuss such issues, which are a cost, but a critical issue to be addressed for the dignity of the street homeless women.

Neither do the websites and reports discuss critical issues that homeless women experience such as child trauma and disclosure of sexuality. Again, it should be recognised that not all homeless women are cisgender and heterosexual. This raises questions as to whether religious beliefs play a role in addressing these issues? Institutions run according to religious beliefs that are embedded within a patriarchal system, for example, can become spaces of horror for the homeless broken women. These spaces can become spaces of exclusion instead of inclusion and flourishing. Although there are shelters for abused women in Cape Town, homeless FBO

shelters and organisations should not leave the issue of abuse to these shelters only but should discuss these situations and provide inclusive solutions.

5.2 Skills and development programmes for women

According to its website, **FBO A** does not have any ongoing programmes specifically for the female homeless – or at least, none are mentioned on the website. However, the organisation does provide testimonials or stories of women on videos and in the annual report.

FBO A also does not mention gender-specific issues on its website. However, its blog page is conducted by a woman who completed the phased programme offered at the organisation. This is a positive and constructive way of addressing gendered issues in homelessness. Financial stability is a priority because lack of employment can lead a person to homelessness and can place especially women in uncomfortable or abusive situations. Employing this woman to work for the organisation, gives her a step up to independence. It also gives voice to a voice which has been marginalised in the past.

In general, **FBO B** does not specify programmes or strategies aimed at equipping women, other than a sewing programme, but offers general services to all marginalised and disempowered persons through shelter and the job rehabilitation programmes. Nevertheless, FBO B did launch a “woman arising campaign” in one of its branches. The campaign was for the celebration of women during Women’s Month, which is celebrated during the month of August in South Africa. On the other hand, this was identified as a fundraising initiative that targeted donors and funders to give money to the organisation, rather than being focused on the female homeless population itself. The money raised was to support the homeless women at the shelter. The website does not provide any details with regards to what the money was used for. The organisation also promotes a skills development sewing programme, which was started during Covid-9, and which is promoted as giving the women who are part of this programme the confidence to learn a new skill and generate income through that skill.

FBO C clearly offers services targeted at women and this includes mothers and children, single women, elderly women, and those in frail care. The organisation accommodates approximately 175 women and 150 children at any given time. This organisation also appears to have had a positive approach to women issues as it provides a detailed view of various categories of women in their shelter. It touches on various aspects, works with a wholistic approach to addressing the complex issues that women face, and appears to identify the social, mental, spiritual, and economic aspects of eradicating homelessness.

5.3 Services and opportunities for women

Accommodation, food, and clothing

Provision of accommodation is one way of addressing homelessness; however, questions arose as I researched what is offered; for example, do the FBOs provide separate rooms or beds for different genders, or it is shared spaces? Do women feel safe and have private spaces? This is crucial and should be prioritised in all the shelters as many women have experienced abuse either in their homes or on the streets (see Chapter Two). This is emphasised, because street homeless women are harassed, raped, and manipulated; thus, these shelters should also consider these issues when providing accommodation.

Counselling, one-on-one and group sessions

Counselling is a valuable service to offer homeless women. However, particularly according to womanist perspectives in Chapter Four and issues of power identified through discourse analysis, race also plays a huge role in women sharing their experiences. For example, when talking to counsellors, are they afforded the opportunity to express what happened in their first language (such as Afrikaans or isiXhosa)? This question is posed because language can become a barrier to the process of healing.

In Chapter Two it is noted that the pathways into homelessness are complex, and poverty is one of the causes. Not many people from poverty-stricken communities are afforded the chance to further their studies, which sometimes leads to them struggling to express themselves. This also begs the question as to what the attitudes of the FBO workers are towards the uneducated, traumatised women in these homeless shelters. Do the people in higher positions consider diversity when addressing the homeless among the population so that everyone is represented and considered within the spaces?

Life and job skills training

Both FBO A and FBO C place emphasis on employability skills, which is good because unemployment is one of the causes of homelessness. It is, therefore, a positive approach to equip strong, independent women who will not relapse into the cycle of homelessness. Shelters should only be temporary homes that help homeless people to develop into wholistic beings capable of providing for themselves and their families. Thus, the capabilities approach,³² could

³² Nussbaum (2000:70-71) offers capabilities as a foundation for basic political principles that should underwrite constitutional guarantees; she argues that the capabilities approach offers the opportunity for

be implemented in these shelters. Simple tasks such as assessment texts can be conducted to know the women better so that their full potential can be reached. In many parts of the world women lack support for essential human life activities. They receive less nutrition than men, are less healthy, and are more susceptible to physical and sexual abuse. They are less likely to be literate than males are. Thus, greater barriers will stand in their way if they enter the workforce, and similar barriers frequently prevent them from effectively participating in political life. Some countries do not treat women as the legal equals of men. In all these respects, women's human skills are inferior due to unequal social and political conditions (Nussbaum, 2000:1).

Employment also brings financial stability and self-reliance, which is a positive factor. As discussed in Chapter One in the literature review, a lack of financial stability is a cause of women's dependency on men, leading to men taking advantage of women and issues such as gender-based violence. For instance, the book of Ruth discusses, how two widows became homeless. Thus, Ruth had to use her beauty and body to attract Boaz, who became a provider for them. In our modern society women also sacrifice their bodies so that they obtain certain things, and this can be problematic because it can lead to physical, emotional, and sexual abuse. In cultural contexts, as discussed in Chapter Four in the section on Hagar and South African homelessness, cultural practices like bride price (*lobola*) can become transactional if it is not understood in its correct context.

Spiritual teaching, training, and enrichment through the Bible (i.e., character building, honesty, integrity, child rearing)

The Hagar story also becomes an opportunity to integrate faith into programmes for the homeless – as many FBOs do. Hagar becomes an inspiration for the destitute homeless women: therefore, this story can be read to empower women, and most importantly, to demonstrate God's grace and power in their lives. Hagar's story can inspire them and assure them that God sees them and has a plan for their life, just as he had for Hagar.

Transport to and from hospitals

people's lives to be examined in their own contexts and environments. The goal of this strategy is to create a society where people are respected for who they are. A basic tenet of human potential is that every person has the potential that is sought after (Nussbaum, 2000:74).

Chapter Two discussed the importance of antenatal care for homeless. The provision of transport for hospital and clinic visits can prevent mothers losing their unborn children or risking their own lives through lack of antenatal care. It also allows homeless women to be educated about contraceptives, sexually transmitted diseases, and hormonal changes.

Additional services provided by FBO C:

- Secretarial services/aid – assisting inhabitants with writing CV's, applications for housing, applications for government grants (pension & child), applications for parental maintenance, legal assistance, job referrals.
- Childcare enabling mothers to attend lectures and courses and obtain employment.

These services are beneficial to the street homeless women, because they empower the women to further their education and assist with administrative issues like compiling CV's and house applications. Chapter Three discussed how the needs of street homeless people are overshadowed by that of the shack-dwellers population. The lack of policies on government level to provide for the homeless is a hindrance for them to escape homelessness, so the provision of these services is empowering the street homeless women.

5.4 Partnerships

All the organisations are partnered with various sectors that are donors; these partnerships range from private to corporate and business sectors. A variety of the partnerships are outlined on the websites. The question is: How influential are these donors in the decision-making of the organisations? The donors' influences on the running of the organisations are not clear. However, the attitude towards donors comes with high regard. It is clear in the reports. There is always a power difference between donors and FBOs receiving funding.

It appears that the issue of gender-based violence, identified in Chapter Two as a key issue facing homeless women, is not really mentioned on any of the websites. Obviously the FBOs will not state their shortcoming on the websites or mention such issues if not addressed, as this will not look good to the donors or public. But what happens if a sexual harassment incident occurs and how are the women treated? This can also break trust and perpetuate the cycle of homelessness. Again, such policies may be in place, but they are not mentioned on the websites – something which donors could and should require with regards to recognition of gender and vulnerability in the sector.

5.5 Testimonials

The following testimonials are from the websites of FBO A and B, as FBO C does not provide testimonials on its website. Due to the sensitivity of the homeless community, I have decided to choose one testimony from each organisation and anonymise the homeless women. This provides only glimpses of the stories of women and the impact of these organisations on their lives. This woman overcame addiction at one of the homeless shelters and this is her story:

Testimonial One (FBO B):

She left home because she felt like an outcast in her own home. She felt she did not belong with her family and left home with her two sons. Later she returned home to care for her ailing mother, who had a stroke. Unfortunately, after her mother passed away, her sister sold the property and left her homeless. She was recently hospitalised while at the FBO for alcohol addiction. Fortunately, with the help of FBO health staff, she is taking medication to help her to overcome the addiction and get her health back.

“Every day I can see myself steadily changing; changing for the good and becoming a better version of myself, I am so excited! I am attending Care Group classes here at the shelter, where we are encouraged to write down long-short term goals for ourselves on a regular basis. This has helped me to re-ignite my passion for working with young people and I can see my dream of opening a Youth Development Programme where I can help troubled young people from my hometown becoming a reality. Many young people where I come from are struggling with drugs and alcohol abuse and addiction and having gone through the same, I believe I can be able to help them get out of it.”

The FBO provides this testimony regarding the client’s transformation: “Her life has changed because she has now stopped using drugs and alcohol. She wants to become a better mother to her two sons. She has also expressed her interest in serving at the FBO, as she is enthusiastic about helping young people.”

This woman is currently involved in FBO B’s Johannesburg Gardening Project which was recently started with the aim of developing the shelter clients’ long-term skills that will help them to be able to sustainably exit the shelter environment. Her dream for joining the project is to see homeless people like herself being fed and not struggling for food. As soon as their harvest is ready, she wants to sell it to ensure there is money coming in to buy more seeds and

to feed more people in need. She says she cannot thank FBO B enough for what they are doing for her; no one has ever done this for her before! Every day she has something meaningful to look forward to, something that will make a significant impact on the lives of other people.

It is clear that the organisation helped this woman to transform her life, also revealing more about the work done to help the street homeless by this FBO shelter. Substance and alcohol abuse are leading factors in homelessness, acting as a coping mechanism for the street homeless due to the extreme conditions of living on the streets. Usually, street homeless people who are addicted to substance abuse relapse and participate in multiple episodes of homelessness. This woman provides a positive account after being rehabilitated. This demonstrates that these shelters can transform the lives of homeless women.

Testimonial Two (FBO A):

This client joined one of the shelters during lockdown and joined the sewing initiative. She was so inspired with her new skills, she wanted to return home to instruct the young girls in her village. She received a sewing machine before she went home. This is an empowering story of a homeless person wanting to inspire others.

This opportunity of offering a skills development programme such as sewing is important, especially during a time such as when Covid-19 affected everyone. A skills programme is also a form of boosting the confidence of the individual. As discussed above, employment and financial freedom is one way of eradicating homelessness and in providing women more especially with freedom. In this case the woman planned to take the skill she learned in the shelter to her village and teach others, breaking the cycle of poverty by empowering one woman at a time.

Testimonial Three (FBO A):

The third testimonial is from a young woman who went through homelessness and fortunately reached the shelter and underwent the phase programme that FBO A offers. Through her recovery journey she decided to change her life. Thus, she became an “I am a champion” on the FBO’s Phase 3 work-readiness programmes. Her passion is communication, and she became a member of the communication team. She is responsible for writing a blog post every week, where she expresses herself and reflects, empowering and inspiring others who are going through challenging times. She underwent a homeless journey and is now empowered and integrated into larger society.

The opportunity to be employed by the shelter that she was enrolled in, is a constructive response to ending homelessness. This shows how the organisation is advocating for the dignity of the women and the importance of women empowerment. The testimonials confirm many of the issues discussed in Chapter Two. Homelessness is a complex issue and there are distinct reasons why people become homeless. It is an inhumane situation, but people can overcome this problem. The testimonies show the vulnerability of women, placed in this situation by addiction, substance abuse, lack of employment, and poverty. Although these shelters do not seem to have a wholistic approach to helping homeless women, it is amazing to see their response to the immediate needs of the women.

6. Conclusion

As discussed in this chapter, FBOs are role players in responding to the issues of the marginalised and destitute such as the homeless. The organisations mentioned in this study are key role players in fighting the plight of homelessness and are at the forefront of addressing issues of homelessness in the Western Cape. Although the organisations supply different services to the homeless population in Cape Town, it is important to recognise the important work done by these organisations.

The study has argued, nevertheless, that it is important to investigate whether these organisations address issues of power, intersectionality, gender-based violence, and other wellbeing issues faced by homeless women to evaluate whether these organisations have programmes aimed at advocating for the voices of women. What this chapter suggests is that, while all three FBOs had some gendered perspectives and responses, their recognition of gender and the intersection of power, race, and gender remained sorely lacking as only one organisation offered programmes focused on women. However, it could be argued that relevant information pertaining to these issues may not be made available on the website.

Chapter 6

Conclusion and recommendations

1. Introduction

My passion for the homeless community started at an early age and this motivated my decision to research issues faced by the homeless with particular reference to female homeless people. Because FBOs are one of the sectors at the forefront of helping the homeless community, I investigated what approaches are in place to address the issues of homeless women with a particular focus on the Cape Town metropole. More specifically, I wished to research what FBOs are doing to address the issue of gender and the needs of the female homeless population. The three analysed FBOs are based in Cape Town, and all take homeless women into their facilities and provide services to this population. In this thesis I attempted to investigate what programmes and specific strategies have been put in place by FBOs which specifically work with the homeless to protect and empower women.

In this chapter I will summarise the findings of the research, followed by recommendations with regards to sectors involved in combating homelessness and a brief section on possible further study regarding this issue.

2. Summary of chapters

In **Chapter One** a problem statement was developed from which to analyse the work of FBOs with regards to the issue of female homelessness, namely: in what constructive ways are Faith-Based Organisations addressing the issue of gender and the well-being of the female homeless population?

From this statement, four objectives were identified. These objectives are firstly, to discuss the issue of homelessness in South Africa. Secondly, to explore the response of government and Non-Government Organisations more broadly with regards to this issue. Thirdly, to investigate what programmes and specific strategies have been put in place by FBOs who specifically work with the homeless to protect and empower homeless women. And lastly, to make

recommendations as to how FBOs can better address the issue of gender while serving the female homeless population. In exploring these objectives, a literature review was done to explore the work done in this field as well the urgent need for continued research.

Chapter One was, therefore, a summary of what the researcher was attempting to do, while supporting the decision through a literature review on homelessness, as well as outlining the methodology that would be used in the study.

Chapter Two explored the issue of homelessness from a global perspective and how certain countries perceive and respond to the issue of homelessness. However, because the study situates itself in South Africa, a contextual background was provided, and this exposes the socio-economic factors that influence and perpetuate the cycle of homelessness in the country. and this included exploring homelessness in four other countries

Homelessness was identified as a complex phenomenon, which requires a multi-faceted response. The chapter describes the reality of people living in inhumane circumstances that distort and damage their human dignity, including being referred to as beggars, vagrants, a nuisance, thieves, and troublesome, and being exposed to practices of social cleansing.

While Chapter Two clearly argues that homelessness is a global pandemic, it also highlights the fact that each country has a different approach and means of addressing the issue. Even developed countries such as Sweden, Britain, and America face the issue of homeless; it remains an urgent global issue that needs to be addressed. The South African context is unique, because the socio-economic setting of the country was influenced by previous regimes such as colonisation and apartheid. The chapter highlights the ways in which this had a huge negative impact on the black populace with the ultimate result that most of the homeless people in our country are Black.

Pathways to homelessness in South Africa are influenced by socio-economic and political factors: poverty, immigration and urbanisation, unemployment, and substance abuse. These factors push people into homelessness, and homeless women are often vulnerable. The chapter identifies the fact that women face critical issues on the streets such as abuse, lack of antenatal care, disclosure of gender identity, reproductive health issues, and lack of sanitary pads and hygienic spaces. The chapter also indicates that the issue of homelessness requires a multi-disciplinary approach.

Chapter Three discusses the current approaches by the South African government and NGOs in South Africa to address homelessness. This chapter also highlights the value of the homeless community's own advocacy.

Research on street homelessness is limited in the South African academic sphere and in South Africa there is often confusion between street homelessness and people living in inadequate housing classified as shacks. This is also a result of the apartheid government and its segregation laws.

The lack of an official headcount or a national census that includes the category of street homeless people, has resulted in grossly inaccurate statistics of the population without homes in South Africa. Research conducted by the HSRC emphasises that “national census data on the homeless is almost non-existent” and “the official census conducted by Statistics South Africa is unreliable and unsuitable for establishing absolute numbers or trends in homelessness” (Kriel, 2017:400).

Services provided by the National Department of Human Settlements, which include provision of cheap and decent housing or adequate housing with essential facilities i.e., running clean water, safe shelter, and toilets, excludes the street homeless. This is because there is no policy from a national governing body in this regard, as well as a lack of accurate information regarding the homeless.

However, local municipalities like the City of Cape Town and City of Tshwane are among the few municipalities that address the issue of homelessness. Due to the lack of policy on governmental level and lack of funding, municipalities argue that their capacity is too limited to help the street homeless. NGOs are among the leading role players in addressing the problem of homelessness in South Africa and on a global level.

The services offered by NGOs can range from personal and basic needs to programmes that focus on issues like poverty alleviation. In a focus study participants categorised the services as follows: skills training, attention to basic needs of beneficiaries, and psycho-social services that focus on social-emotional needs (Giliomee & Prinsloo, 2017:13). The chapter finds that “the NGOs have committed to a rehabilitation model as opposed to short-term welfare, and are actively encouraging all stakeholders in the sector, including the government, shelters and feeding schemes, to incorporate rehabilitation programmes to support their short-term relief” (SaferSpaces, 2021).

Homelessness as a social issue cannot have a singular response; hence a multi-agency approach is suggested, involving various governing bodies, whether from the state, society, or church, forming a coalition to address a critical problem. As already stated, homelessness as a social problem requires different sectors to collaborate and combine strategies and ideas that will help to eradicate homelessness. However, it is not only the responsibility of those in higher positions.

This requires the homeless community itself to participate, as they, too, have agency. Self-advocacy is imperative. Hence, the Homeless Action Committee (HAC) was formed to advocate for the rights of the homeless. SHAC (Strandfontein Homeless Action Committee) is specifically focused on decriminalization of the homeless. The homeless community has started to stand up for their human rights (Ntseku, 2021:1). This is elaborated on in the section on laws and regulations for treating homeless people.

Due to the lack of the prioritisation of gender issues and focus on the needs of women who are homeless in these organisations, it was decided to use a womanist framework to discuss the fundamental issues that cause women – particularly Black women – to become homeless.

Chapter Four, therefore, uses the Hagar narrative in Genesis to discuss intersectional issues such as racism, classism, and gender, employing Womanist Theology as a lens. These issues are still highly relevant in today's societies. Although it could be argued that womanist theology is an American perspective, it was chosen for this study as it provides helpful lenses which expose issues that leave women marginalised and homeless on the streets. The study discusses Hagar's story from a homeless woman's perspective. Hagar becomes the archetypal homeless woman.

As mentioned in Chapter Three, the focus of this study is based on those who are homeless by default. Women placed in this inhumane situation are not homeless by choice, but compelled by social, economic, cultural, and religious reasons. Hagar and other marginalised women are victims of these systems which oppress and silence them. The narrative revealed certain critical issues that contribute to the feminisation of poverty and homelessness. Patriarchy and the marginalisation of women is also discussed. Patriarchy is a system of institutionalisation of male ideologies to marginalise women in private and public spaces. These spaces include homes, churches, and work environments (Kobo, 2016:5). Hagar's story centres around patriarchy and its laws that prevailed in that era. Like Hagar, many women in today's societies still suffer due to patriarchal agendas that favour men.

Writing in a South African context, Kobo (2016:2) argues that foremothers (*volksmoeder*) are uncritical of culture and religion, hence they adhere to patriarchal structures and remain complicit. As a result, many women are denied a public voice. This keeps them in the shackles of patriarchy. Consequently, the next generations inherit this as a norm.

Women are sexually, emotionally, and financially exploited by men in both private and public spaces, including religious spaces. Furthermore, patriarchy is a tool used by its beneficiaries to oppress minorities. Black women experience this oppression especially through sexism and gender subordination. Sexism and sexual abuse are practices that stand on the shoulders of patriarchy. As a result, power and authoritarianism are two major driving tools for the patriarchal system. For instance, sexism is implemented by social structures which dictate who is regarded as powerful and who has control over others. In many cultural and religious settings, males are regarded as authoritative figures (Kobo, 2016:2).

Using womanist theology as lens to analysis Hagar's narrative revealed three major themes:

- Gender and power in Hagar's story
- Classism and exclusion in Hagar's story
- Race and oppression in Hagar's story

The story exposes tensions between Abram and Sarai and then between Sarai and Hagar. Using a womanist lens, intersecting issues such as gender, race, and class are exposed and challenged. The trauma of Hagar's multiple episodes of homelessness is also discussed.

Hagar's narrative and experience of homelessness can relate to contexts. For instance, South African women also deal with similar intersecting issues. South African Black women face social ills that perpetuate the cycle of poverty and there are few empowered women (Gqola, 2007:115). Many women are affected by social-economic and political factors. Often the influence of culture and religious beliefs keeps them entrapped in a patriarchal society that favours men (Maluleke & Nadar, 2007:7), as discussed in the section on Hagar and South African homelessness. In the South African context cultural beliefs and practices can become hindrances to the wellbeing of the girl child, because some cultures still adhere to rigid cultural practices that are not life-giving. In this sense cultural issues can also leave women vulnerable and can contribute to women homelessness.

Chapter Five focuses on FBOs working with the street homeless using critical discourse to analyse the role played by shelters and institutions for the homeless in Cape Town. Special

reference is made to whether these organisations indicate evidence of a gender lens when addressing the needs of the street homeless. The chapter discusses a historical background of FBOs and analysed three homeless shelter FBO websites.

This study looked at the following areas on the websites to collect data:

- Annual reports
- Skills development programmes (women)
- Partnerships
- Testimonials

The three analysed FBOs are all well-established organisations with various partnerships and donors. It is important to note that all three cater to the basic needs of the homeless community. These basic needs include accommodation, food, and services such as rehabilitation facilities etc. However, the issue of gender, particularly issues faced by street homeless women, is not addressed, or found on the websites. FBO C is the only organisation that highlights a specific programme and services that cater for women. The services provided only focus on some of the issues discussed in Chapter Two regarding the critical issues faced by homeless women.

3. Key research findings

- **Homeless women face quadruple intersecting issues.** This sets women up to be in oppressed positions as they are continually excluded from spiritual harmony, economic stability, impactful social networks, and political empowerment.
- **Socio-economic factors are key role-players in the perpetuation of homelessness.** This is discussed in depth in Chapter Two discussing pathways to homelessness in South Africa.
- **The lack of representation of street homeless people on government level is a critical factor.** Hence, there is a lack of policies to protect and empower the homeless.
- **Lack of data and an accurate census of the street homeless population, and lack of government policies in this regard, has led to little progress in improving the homelessness situation in South Africa.** There is no distinction between the shack population and street homeless population in the country, therefore, interventions largely tend to address the shack population's issues.
- **Racism, classism, gender subordination, and abuse of power are contributing factors towards homelessness,** particularly for Black women who have been excluded and marginalised for years. Regimes such as colonisation and apartheid

compounded and institutionalised these social ills. However, this study takes a theological perspective by analysing Hagar's story found in Genesis 16:1-6 and 21:8-19, using a womanist theological lens to highlight the fact that these intersecting issues contribute towards homelessness.

- **Within the South African context, culture plays a role in communities**, and leads to a lack of questioning of certain cultural beliefs and practices, also making women vulnerable. This leads to homelessness.
- **The study finds that although the three FBOs analysed are doing important work in addressing homelessness, there is not sufficient gender focus and programming in their work.** This could result in homeless women's issues such as gender-based violence and other wellbeing issues not being addressed at these institutions.

4. Recommendations

The following are recommendations in response to the above findings.

- **As a starting point, both national and local government should ensure that policies are in place for the street homeless community.** The implementation of policies will protect the homeless from social cleansing that criminalises and dehumanises them.
- **Effective and intense research should be done on this population by researchers; and the street homeless should be included in the national census.** This will provide accurate information to base future research on. In light of the gendered nature of homelessness highlighted in this thesis, gender should also be included in this census.
- **Hagar's story can be used in FBOs and shelters as a means of empowerment for homeless women**, particularly in Bible studies and reflection. She can be a matriarch and inspiration to homeless women, for God (*El Roi*) sees her. The text can be used as a biblical reference.
- **The FBO's identified should consider gender and racial diversity**, especially with reference to leadership positions in these FBOs. Employing more, Black woman and previously homeless people as part of their leadership teams, will not only bring

important perspectives to the table, but will also inspire other homeless people to improve their lives.

- **FBOs should place more emphasis on gender issues** as discussed in Chapter Two. Critical issues faced by homeless women are not mentioned on the websites, neither are responses and how these issues are addressed.

5. Suggestions for future research

One of the critical limitations of this study was that I was not able to interview the FBOs. Further research in a PhD programme would allow further investigation of the topic. Primary research could deepen the work and further extend understanding with regards to the needs of homeless women and in what ways these women think they can be helped to reach a place of *shalom* and be reintegrated into larger society.

6. Conclusion

Homelessness is a complex and multi-faceted issue, which, therefore, requires a multi-faceted response. This calls for different sectors to be involved so that the issue of street homelessness can be addressed. What this study has highlighted, is the fact that the issue of gender needs to be recognised when addressing this issue as, sadly, homeless women face particularly complex challenges related to their person and wellbeing. Theologians such as James Cone and Bonhoeffer have challenged us that we should not be silent with regards to issues of social injustice (Kuvuna & Von Sinner, 2018:615). Homelessness is clearly still one of these issues in South Africa and, therefore, we should be challenged to advocate for human rights and justice for the marginalised – particularly for the most marginalised among us such as homeless women.

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