

PSYCHOLOGICAL RESEARCH ON HOMELESSNESS: THE RELATION BETWEEN PSYCHOLOGICAL AND EXTERNAL HOMELESSNESS¹

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Abstract

External and psychological aspects of homelessness were investigated based on the Theory of External and Psychological At-Homeness – Homelessness Continuum (Kántor & Dúll, 2018). A structured questionnaire was presented to 181 adult individuals living in different housing conditions. Four groups were identified through cluster analysis: 1) externally and psychologically at-home, 2) externally homeless, psychologically at-home, 3) externally at-home, psychologically homeless, 4) externally and psychologically homeless. Eight variables were used to compare the clusters. The main results: 1) Among those psychologically at-home, the externally homeless are lonelier ($t=-1.92$, $p=0.059$) and less happy ($t=4.50$, $P=0.000$) than the ones that externally have a home, with higher levels of perceived stress ($t=-2.07$, $p=0.047$), dissatisfaction ($t=3.62$, $p=0.000$), hopelessness ($t=-2.69$, $p=0.008$) and search for meaning in life ($t=-3.14$, $p=0.002$). 2) Among the psychologically homeless, externally at-home are happier than the externally homeless ($t=2.26$, $p=0.027$), and exhibit lower levels of perceived stress ($t=-2.73$, $p=0.008$). 3) Among the externally at-home people, those psychologically at-home are happier ($t=4.19$, $p=0.000$), more satisfied ($t=5.16$, $p=0.000$), more hopeful ($t=-2.35$, $p=0.021$), with a lower level of perceived stress ($t=-2.25$, $p=0.027$) and higher self-efficacy ($t=2.01$, $p=0.048$), than the psychologically homeless. 4) Among the externally homeless, those who psychologically feel at-home are happier ($t=2.05$, $p=0.043$) and more satisfied ($t=2.88$, $p=0.005$) than the psychologically homeless, with lower perceived stress ($t=-2$, 46 , $p=0.016$). These results suggest that psychological at-homeness can be considered an important protective factor for psychological well-being, which goes hand-in-hand with a number of other psychological qualities that are significant elements of healthy psychological functioning.

Keywords: homelessness, at-homeness, psychic home, psychological homelessness, psychological at-homeness, HAOT questionnaire, Theory of External and Psychological At-Homeness–Homelessness Continuum.

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Absztrakt

A külső és lelki otthonosság–otthonalanság kontinuum elmélete (Kántor & Dúll, 2018) alapján vizsgáltuk az otthonosság külső és objektív oldalát. Strukturált kérdőívet vetünk fel 181 különböző lakhatási státuszú felnőttel. Klaszteranalízissel négy csoportot azonosítottunk: 1) külső és lelki otthonosak, 2) külső otthonalan, lelki otthonosak, 3) külső otthonos, lelki otthonalanok, 4) külső és lelki otthonalanok. A négy klasztert nyolc, a lelki egészség mérésére használt konstruktum mentén hasonlítottuk össze. Eredményeink: 1) A lelki otthonos személyek közül a külső otthonalanok a külső otthonosoknál magányosabbak ($t=-1,92$, $p=0,059$), boldogtalanabbak ($t=4,450$, $P=0,000$), nagyobb az észlelt stressz szintjük ($t=-2,07$, $p=0,047$), elégedetlenebbek ($t=3,62$, $p=0,000$), reménytelenebbek ($t=-2,69$, $p=0,008$) és erősebben keresik az élet értelmét ($t=-3,14$, $p=0,002$). 2) A lelki otthonalan emberek közül a külső otthonosok a külső otthonalan embereknél boldogabbak ($t=2,26$, $p=0,027$) és alacsonyabb az észlelt stressz szintjük ($t=-2,73$, $p=0,008$), más különbséget nem találtunk a két csoport között. 3) A külső otthonos mintán belül a lelki otthonosak a lelki otthonalanoknál boldogabbak ($t=4,19$, $p=0,000$), elégedettebbek ($t=5,16$, $p=0,000$), reménytelibbek ($t=-2,35$, $p=0,021$), alacsonyabb az észlelt stressz szintjük ($t=-2,25$, $p=0,027$) és nagyobb énhatékonyaságot élnek meg ($t=2,01$, $p=0,048$). 4) A külső otthonalan emberek közül a lelki otthonosak a lelki otthonalanoknál boldogabbak ($t=2,05$, $p=0,043$), elégedettebbek ($t=2,88$, $p=0,005$) és alacsonyabb az észlelt stressz szintjük ($t=-2,46$, $p=0,016$).

Ezek az eredmények abba az irányba mutatnak, hogy a lelki otthonosság fontos pszichológiai védőfaktorok tekinthető, mely együtt jár több az egészséges lelki működés szempontjából fontos konstruktummal.

Kulcsszavak: otthonalanság, otthonosság, lelki otthon, lelki otthonalanság, lelki otthonosság, HAOT kérdőívesomag, Külső és lelki otthonosság–otthonalanság kontinuum elmélete

INTRODUCTION

Differences in the cultural context and among research traditions have given rise to divergent policy considerations and methodological approaches to a crucial social problem: homelessness (Toro, 2007). While among American researchers representing various sociological and public health disciplines, there is a significant amount coming from a background in academic psychology, here in Europe the field is primarily dominated by research on policy, and centers around urban and housing studies (Toro, 2007; American Psychological Association [APA], 2010; Kántor & Dúll, 2018). Probably owing to differences in the orientation and focus of training, researchers outside the US are less likely to adopt meticulous quantitative methods and psychometrically sound measures or to publish statistical results on the topic. At the same time, European researchers are more prone to take into account the political and cultural characteristics of social phenomena as well as the impact of social problems on the community (Toro, 2007).

Reviewing the psychological research on homelessness in Europe from 1970 to 2001 Philippot, Lecocq, Sempoux, Nachtergaele, & Galand (2007) identified 172 publications addressing psychological, social, or health-related issues involving homelessness. Though growing rapidly, literature on homelessness is still limited, with significant variation across nations. Analysis showed that only a relatively small number of studies on eastern countries are available in English, and none on Hungary (Philippot et al., 2007). Surveying the field until 2001, the authors pointed out that the international visibility of Hungarian researchers on the subject of homelessness was very restricted since the majority of their publications, being in Hungarian, were difficult to access for the international audience.

Mercifully, this situation has gradually started to change, in line with the efforts of the European Federation of National Organisations Working with the Homeless (FEANTSA²), providing access to a European network that can apparently surmount language barriers.

Taking stock of Hungarian research on homelessness, one can see that the lion's share of publications deals with psychological care, social work, sociology and social policy, as well as the disciplines of law, political science and housing policy (see e.g., Győri, 1990, 2016; Pik, 1994; Iványi, 1997; Bényei, Gurály, Győri és Mezei, 2000; Ferge, 2000; Albert & Dávid, 2001; Kozma, 2003; Szoboszlai, 2011; Nagy, 2009; Fehér, 2009; Udvarhelyi, 2014). There is close to zero literature on the psychological aspects of homelessness in Hungary. For the most part, those addressing psychological parameters related to homelessness are born out of the efforts of authors in the fields of sociology and social work (such as Breitner, 1999; Fehér, Somogyi, & Teller, 2012; Szoboszlai, 2010). In the Hungarian Periodicals' Tables of Content Searchable Database, there are only three registered articles on the psychological aspects of homelessness produced by psychologists (Barabásné Koller, 2006; Kántor, 2011; Kántor & Düll, 2018) and one written by a mental hygiene expert (Kiss, 2015). Otherwise, we know of no other published psychology-related work in the Hungarian research literature, with the exception of our own articles (Düll, 1995, 1998, 2015a, 2015b). The same applies for the works of Hungarian authors publishing internationally (see for example the articles published in the *European Journal of Homelessness*). This study aims to contribute to the deeper understanding of the psychological aspects of homelessness, as well as to enrich local literature and encourage research on the field.

² FEANTSA is the acronym based on the original French name of the organization (Fédération Européenne d'Associations Nationales Travaillant avec les Sans-Abri), which in English is referred to as the European Federation of National Organisations working with the Homeless.

CONCEPTUALIZATION:
EXTERNAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL HOMELESSNESS

The most frequently used definition in literature (FEANTSA, 2005; Toro, 2007; Philippot et al., 2007) delineate the concepts of home and homelessness as based on „external” characteristics. According to one of the typologies with the greatest significance for researchers, ETHOS (European Typology of Homelessness and housing exclusion, FEANTSA, 2005), having a “home” can be understood as having an adequate dwelling over which a person and his/her family can exercise exclusive possession (physical domain); having a legal title to occupation (legal domain) and being able to maintain privacy and enjoy social relations (social domain). (For further details, see Busch-Geertsema, Edgar, O’Sullivan, & Pleace, 2010). From this standpoint *homelessness* means a standard of housing that falls significantly short of the relevant adequacy threshold in one or more of the three “domains of home” (Busch-Geertsema, Culhane, & Fitzpatrick, 2016). This definition can fruitfully be applied for both practical and research perspectives, for it considers the physical, legal and social dimensions of homelessness at the same time. As such, it covers extensively the facets that in this study were referred to as “external” homelessness. *External homelessness* is the totality of the features that can be observed from the outside, features that can be described without recourse to the personal experience of the individual impacted by homelessness. The characteristics of external homelessness include: objective indicators of one’s housing (size, condition, type etc.), objective indicators of social relationships (e.g., family status, number of friends, time spent with others etc.), legal status of the dwelling and one’s lifestyle.

Besides external home and homelessness, research literature also emphasizes “*internal, psychological homelessness*”, or “*the feeling of homelessness*” (meaning the subjective experience of homelessness), and the concept of “*psychic home*”. According to Kennedy (2014), the “*psychic home*” is a primordial psychological structure encompassing several human functions. The psychic home is from a certain perspective the idea of a home, the basis of our identity and the impression of where we come from. Our original home did not only consist of bricks and other building materials, nor did it consist purely of the physical environment and internal spaces, but also of an emotional atmosphere and relationship experiences. Kennedy (2014) states that the psychic home is the internal experience that our life has a basis, that we can rely on a secure home base, and that there is a place where we inalienably and unquestionably belong. The psychic home acts as an organizing psychic structure for the evolving identity. Several authors approach the importance of a psychic home from the perspective of a lack or absence, through the description of “*psychological homelessness*”. This expression has several synonyms, among which the most widespread are mental homelessness, (Melamed et al., 2004), the lack of a family hearth (Moore, Canter,

Stockley & Drake, 1995), emotional homelessness (Bernstein & Foster, 2008) and psychic homelessness (Hoksbergen, 1999) (for further details, see Kántor & Dúll, 2018).

For capturing the quality of having a home, the most commonly used term is “*at-homeness*” (Buckley, 1971; Seamon, 1979; Moore & Carter, 2012; Öhlen et al., 2014). The feeling of „at-homeness” refers to both the quality and the internal state of being at home (Merriam-Webster dictionary, 2019), and such as, it indicates both external and psychological aspects. *At-homeness* according to Seamon (1979) is “the usually unnoticed, taken-for-granted situation of being comfortable in and familiar with the everyday world in which one lives and outside of which one is ‘visiting’, ‘in transit’, ‘not at home’, ‘out of place’ or ‘travelling’.” (70.p.)

Regarding the characteristics of psychological homelessness and its opposite, psychological at-homeness, several interview-based qualitative studies are available. Results show that psychological homelessness is just as threatening for the identity of a person as external homelessness (Riggs & Coyle, 2002; Melamed et al., 2004; Kennedy, 2014). The physical and/or psychological experience of homelessness is highly stressful and often undermines hope, satisfaction, the achievement and maintenance of self-esteem, continuity, positive distinctiveness and self-efficacy (Riggs & Coyle, 2002; Bernstein & Foster, 2008). According to Kennedy (2014) the state of psychological homelessness is characterised by loneliness and unhappiness, while opposed to this, the full sense of having a psychic home is a state in which one is more likely to be happy and engage in relations of the social world. Melamed et al. (2004) emphasize the inability to form lasting relationships as one of the main characteristics of people who are unable to find a home, despite their sufficient financial and mental resources. Riggs and Coyle (2002) analysing young people’s accounts on homelessness found that on a psychological level, they experienced homelessness as not belonging, feeling isolated, rejected or alienated, lacking an emotional attachment to or identification with a place and having no safe space for psychological ‘belongings’ such as thoughts and feelings. Psychological homelessness is accompanied by loss of meaning (Kennedy, 2014). “The home is the accepted framework, which habitually contains our life. To lose one’s psychic container is to be cast adrift, to become a wanderer upon the face of the earth” (Barrett, 1959, p. 25, in Kennedy, 2014).

THE THEORY OF EXTERNAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL AT-HOMENESS – HOMELESSNESS CONTINUUM

Based on theoretical foundations drawn from the above concepts, the authors developed a continuum model, which integrates both psychological and external

homelessness: “*the theory of external and psychological at-homeness – homelessness continuum*” (Kántor & Dúll, 2018³).

The main proposition of this theory are as follows (for further details, cf.: Kántor & Dúll, 2018):

1. Our psychic home (Kennedy, 2014) is a vitally important psychic structure which fundamentally defines how we feel, how we live in the world and what emotions, attitudes, etc. we have regarding our immediate and broader socio-physical environment. For example, it defines our basis of life, where we consider ourselves to belong to, and whether there is an internal or external place in our world where we belong unquestionably and as a matter of inalienable right.

2. The creation of our psychic home can be linked to our early childhood experiences of our own socio-physical home. For instance if one grew up in a family that protected, sustained and reflected on them while providing them with a home, for that person it can be the source of an intrapsychic structure that endows them with protection, holding, containment, mirroring and internal security, etc. – which is a maternal, self-object’s function (Melamed et al., 2004). Individuals whose psychic home was established in a maladaptive way as children, or whose psychic home gets injured during life might end up as more-or-less psychologically homeless. These people will find it difficult to feel at-home in the world, in society, in their relationships, or to be sufficiently connected to a suitable physical environment, so that it can be turned into an adequate external home (Dresser, 1985; Hoksbergen, 1999).

3. Psychological at-homeness does not necessarily go hand in hand with the physical housing one has from a legal and public administration perspective. External homelessness and the experience of homelessness create two dimensions that are often, but not always, in correlation with each other.

4. Full-blown homelessness and at-homeness represent the extremities of a continuum between which there are numerous intermediate or transitory states (e.g., Watson & Austerberry, 1986; Neil & Fopp, 1992 see Cooper, 1995). This thesis applies to both external and psychological levels. At the same time, a number of discrete categories can be posited along the continuum (see Bényei et al., 1999 or the ETHOS typology referenced above), by which the phenomenon can be optimized for public administration, legal, care service and support, etc. perspectives, as well.

5. Just as in the case of external homelessness (Arce & Vergare, 1984), it is also important in the case of psychological homelessness to differentiate between people falling into the (a) chronically, (b) situationally, (c) episodically homeless categories.

³ In a previous article (Kántor & Dúll, 2018) it was referred to as “the theory of the psychic homelessness – psychic homeness continuum”, but the authors had changed the name to “the theory of psychological and objective at-homeness – homelessness continuum” which is more apt to capture the fact that the model jointly deals with the external and the psychological aspects.

6. From the point of view of at-homeness and rootedness in the world, we distinguish the following levels: (a) the physical level (being-at-home in the physical world); (b) the interpersonal level (being-at-home in the social world and the world of human relationships); (c) the transpersonal level (being-at-home in the universe); (d) the auto-personal level (being-at-home within oneself, in one's body and psychological world).

THE AT-HOMENESS – HOMELESSNESS (HAOT⁴) RESEARCH

Research objectives and central questions

In 2005, the authors started to conduct a research on the psychology of at-homeness and homelessness in Budapest.⁵ The research plan was approved by the Research Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Education and Psychology of Eötvös Loránd University (license number: 2013/40). Our aim was to jointly study external and psychological homelessness in the light of life events and various psychometric indicators relevant to homelessness. This study presents the answers received to the following questions raised in this exploratory research.

- Can we separate the psychological (experiential, internal) and external (observable, physical) aspects of homelessness? If so, by means of what indicators?
- Do at-homeness and homelessness behave as dichotomous phenomena in stark opposition to one another, or rather as two extremes of a single continuum, between which a number of intermediate states are to be found?
- What groups can be created through the joint investigation of the experience of homelessness and observable homelessness? What differences exist between the respective groups in terms of the variables relevant in case of psychological homelessness specific constructs? What are the differences between these groups regarding the examined psychological homelessness related constructs?

Research methods employed: The HAOT Questionnaire

The HAOT questionnaire, which was developed during the course of the research collects data from the following four categories:

⁴ HAOT is the acronym based on the original Hungarian name of the research (Hajléktalanság és Otthonosság kutatása).

⁵ In the 14 years since the research started, the situation of homeless people in Hungary changed notably and a number of seminal works have been published in the field (see e.g., Udvarhelyi, 2014). These changes nevertheless increased the need for a better understanding of the complex interplay of external and internal factors affecting the lives of the homeless.

1. basic socio demographic parameters (gender, age, level of education, family status, employment)
2. external at-homeness – homelessness (type of residence, where do they spend their nights, housing conditions, financial status)
3. psychological experience of at-homeness – homelessness (homeless identity, satisfaction with housing, the feeling of at-homeness – homelessness)
4. characteristics which according to the research literature usually accompany psychological at-homeness – homelessness (self-efficacy, happiness, satisfaction, loneliness, meaning of life, hopelessness, stress)

The survey set used is a structured toolbox, which consists of both qualitative and quantitative units and contains tests, questionnaires, and individual questions alike. It was important to find a means of measurement that fits the communicative abilities of the homeless population, so that answering would not require more than an elementary level of education. In order for the questionnaire set to be recordable in a single session, it was also important to make sure that the measurement tools were relatively concise. This was especially relevant because the homeless population is relatively difficult to reach, and in light of the peculiar lifestyle of this group, more than one meeting per person would be difficult or impossible to arrange. In addition to the already available items, scales, and tests, a number of measurement tools developed by the authors were also included in the questionnaire set.

This article presents the data collected by the following quantitative measurement tools:

Single item measurement tools

▪ *Current housing*

Assessing Current housing yields one of the most grounded indicators of external homelessness. This item was intended to survey where the individuals in the scope of the research currently stay. The questions used were as follows: “Where do you live? Where do you spend your nights?” It should be highlighted that Current housing played an important role in the selection of the sample because the authors aimed to have 36 individuals from each of the five groups defined (individuals living rough, at night shelters, in temporary hostels, in rented accommodation and living in their own flat).

▪ *Homeless status*

The indicator of the Homeless status was generated from the same variable that was used for the Current housing indicator. Based on the questions: “Where do you live? Where do you spend your nights?”, the individuals in the first three research groups according to the definitions set up by Bényei et al. (2000) were assigned the status of homeless, that is to say those who are effectively without home in terms of “sleeping rough” (cf. Larsen, Poortinga & Hurdle, 2005), or

staying in institutions for the homeless (night shelter or temporary hostel). Individuals in the other two research groups, i.e., those living in rented accommodation or their own flat, were given the status of not homeless.

▪ *Level of at-homeness*

This item was developed in order to measure the psychological aspect of at-homeness – homelessness. The following question was used: “On a scale of 1 to 5, please rate how much you feel being at-home or homeless in your present life conditions?” Beside this direct single question, more subtle qualitative measurements were used as well, to be presented in a further publication.

▪ *Homeless identity*

For the measurement of homeless identity, the interview was based on a question that had already proved its worth in previous Hungarian research (see item 1 of the questionnaire used by the February 3 Working Group, Gurály et al., 2002) “Do you consider yourself homeless?”. This question was selected due to its simplicity, ease of understanding and quantifiability. More complex qualitative measurements were used as well to investigate homeless identity, but they are to be presented in a further publication.

▪ *Adequate housing*

One of the simplest items used, “To what extent can you afford a home that is adequate for both yourself and for your family?” applies to both the external and the psychological aspects of homelessness. This item has originally been employed in the Daily Routine Questionnaire of the research project entitled “Biology of Everyday Life” (Kopp et al., 2009) exploring the relationship of well-being and health status. The research implemented by Kopp et al. classifies this question as exploring difficulties of a financial origin. Following this consideration, the authors also assumed that the answers to this question would be related to the psychological aspects of Adequate housing but would nevertheless first and foremost measure the financial situation, and as such one of the aspects of the external at-homeness.

▪ *Satisfaction with housing*

The other item covering both the external and psychological aspects of homelessness was referred to as “Satisfaction with Housing”: “How satisfied are you with your current dwelling?” The responses to this question were expected to predominantly reflect the psychological aspects of Adequate housing.

▪ *Happiness and satisfaction*

For measuring happiness and overall satisfaction two single item estimation scales were chosen which have originally been employed in Hungarian surveys (Martos & Kopp, 2011). Specifically, the following questions were asked: “On the whole, how much do you consider yourself happy? Please rate on a scale of 1 to 10. 10 means that you consider yourself completely happy, whereas 1 indicates that you consider yourself completely unhappy.”, and “Please rate on a scale of

1 to 10, how satisfied you are with your life, on the whole, these days? 10 indicates that you are completely satisfied, while 1 means that you're completely dissatisfied.”

Complex measurement tools employed

- *UCLA Loneliness Scale*

The UCLA Loneliness Scale (Loneliness Scale, Russell, Peplau, & Fergusson, 1978) has not been standardised yet to a Hungarian sample, (Russell, 1996), but it has already been employed in Hungarian research due to its easy setup and use (e.g., Csóka, Szabó, Sáfrány, Rochlitz, & Bódizs, 2007). Nevertheless, the results of the present research show that the reliability of the scale is within acceptable range (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.77$).

- *Self-efficacy Scale*

The Self-Efficacy Scale (Schwarzer, 1993) measures the competence of coping with difficult and stressful situations, so to say the efficiency of coping. In this research, the Hungarian version of the scale (Rózsa et al., 2003) was applied (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.88$). The reliability value of this scale for the present survey is acceptable as well (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.856$).

- *MLQ – Meaning in Life Questionnaire*

The Meaning in Life Questionnaire – MLQ (Steger et al., 2006) assesses the extent to which life is considered to be meaningful in the present (MLQ-P, Presence) and the search for meaning in life (MLQ-S, Search). In this research, the Hungarian 10 item version (Martos & Konkoly Thege, 2012) was included. Two subscales of the latter, i.e., Search for Meaning (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.786$) and Presence of Meaning (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.881$) were used as independent variables.

- *The Beck Hopelessness Scale*

Beck's Hopelessness Scale (Beck, Weissman, Lester, & Trexler, 1974) is a widespread instrument measuring suicide risk. In this research the Hungarian version of the scale, which contains three items on one factor was included. It shows a tight correlation with the original scale ($r=0.88$). The internal consistency of the items is also rather high (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.88$), thus the items measure reliably the same phenomena (Perczel Forintos, Sallai, & Rózsa, 2001). The reliability of the three items can also be considered high in the context of the present survey (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.817$).

- *PSS - Perceived Stress Scale*

The Perceived Stress Scale or PSS (Cohen, Kamarck, & Mermelstein, 1983) measures the thoughts and feelings of the individual related to the perception of stress in terms of the number of stressful situations they had to face in the preceding month and the extent to which they consider their everyday life as being unpredictable, uncontrollable, or overbearing. The abbreviated Hungarian version of the scale (Stauder & Konkoly-Thege, 2006), which involves four items

exhibiting equally good measurement characteristics (Cohen & Williamson, 1988) and acceptable reliability (Cronbach’s $\alpha = 0.79$) was used in this research. According to the results, the internal consistency of this measurement tool has been quite low (Cronbach’s $\alpha = 0.688$).

PRESENTING THE SAMPLE

Due to the sensitive nature and relatively limited accessibility of the research population, and the fact that the sample selection might influence greatly the outcome of the research, the sample is presented here in detail.

A combination of quota sampling and snowball sampling methods were used to provide an adjusted sample of the five groups. The key consideration behind quota sampling was to provide an identical amount of respondents for each group in terms of housing categories (see Current housing variable above). The gender and age ratio of people having a homeless status in the city of Budapest (Bényei et al., 2000; Bánlaky, 2001; Kovács, 2002) were used to define the sample.

The researchers’ plan was to have in the sample 180 adults between the ages of 30 and 60 – 36 women and 144 men: 36 sleeping rough, 36 sleeping at night shelter, 36 living in a temporary hostel, 36 in rented accommodation, and 36 flat owners living in their own flats. Respondents were recruited with the assistance of Oltalom Charity Society and Only One Mission in Budapest. One-to-one interviews with respondents were conducted by social workers in the course of nearly four years (May-October 2013-2016) to assess a sufficient number of individuals in all the subgroups. The interviews were conducted at the respondent’s current place of residence. The duration of the interviews ranged between 1-1.5 hours. Ten interviewees and three interviewers terminated the process, due to the emotional challenges faced by the questionnaire and interview set up. The methodological and ethical concerns of interviewing homeless individuals were discussed in an earlier presentation (Kántor, Berze, Brózik, & Dúll, 2019). Data procession and clarification showed that the actual sample differs from the one originally defined in the research plan.

Table 1. Gender distribution by housing category

		Current housing					Total
		Sleeping rough	Sleeping at night shelter	Living in a temporary hostel	Living in rented accom	Living in one’s own flat	
Gender	Male	30	36	30	23	30	149
	Female	6	7	7	6	6	32
Total		36	43	37	29	36	181

Instead of 36 individual in each group, 43 were included in the night shelter category, 37 assigned to the temporary hostels category and 29 living in rented accommodation (see Table 1).⁶

Among the 181 respondents, 149 were male (average age 45.7 yrs, std. dev. 9.6, min=28, max=68) and 32 were female (average age 43.6, std. dev. 9.3, min=30, max=62). The average age did not significantly differ by gender ($t=1.12$, $df=179$, $p>0.26$).

The distribution of men and women within the categories were slightly different from the one determined in the research plan in the cases of the night shelter (16.3% female), the temporary hostel (19% female) and the rented accommodation samples (20.1%). In fact, the ratio of women has been increasing among the homeless population of Budapest and is presently approaching 20% (Gyóri, 2014). Given that, it has been a favourable coincidence that the actual sample happens to be a better representation of the current state of affairs, as the proportion of female respondents was 17.7%, compared to the 16.7% that was originally anticipated.

At the same time the analysis proved that even with the incorporation of the differences from the original research design, the sample was balanced in terms of differences in housing ($\chi^2=2.73$; $p=0.604$) and the groups can be considered identical also in terms of the gender distribution included in the latter ($\chi^2=0.33$; $p=0.988$).

In terms of age, the respective housing categories within the sample were characterised by the following data (see Table 2.):

Table 2. Age-related characteristics of various housing category groups

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Sleeping rough	36	46.89	9.689	30	64
Night shelter for the homeless	43	48.95	9.611	30	68
Temporary institutions	37	47.16	9.152	30	64
Rented accommodation	29	39.10	7.442	28	54
In privately owned flats	36	42.42	8.364	30	61
Total	181	45.30	9.541	28	68

⁶ The differences between the sample obtained and sample as originally planned reflect the fact that some subgroups of the sample proved very difficult to reach. The trend one can observe among the homeless population is that people sleeping rough in public spaces tend to be relatively younger. Temporarily shelters tend to be used more frequently by somewhat older people furthermore the other, specialised shelters receive even higher numbers of the elderly (Gyóri, 2014). In the course of quote sampling, the researchers had to face the fact that it is much harder to find respondents between the ages of 50 and 60 that live in rented accommodations, than it is for the other four categories.

While meeting the condition of homogeneity of variance (Leven $F=0.88$, $df_1=4$ $df_2=176$, $p=0.476$) variance analysis indicates significant differences among the groups in respect of the average age ($F=6.845$, $p<0.001$). A Bonferroni post hoc test demonstrated that the groups of tenants and flat owners did significantly differ from the other three groups, i.e., that these two groups were on average younger than the other three.

Based on the above, we can state that the characteristics of the sample might influence the results.

RESULTS

The researchers first examined the relationship between the Current housing (as one of the indicators of external homelessness) and the Homeless identity (one of the indicators of psychological homelessness). 179 participants answered the question formulated as “Do you consider yourself homeless?”. 91 of the interviewees agreed and 88 disagreed. Based on this question the sample can be consequently separated into two groups of roughly equal size ($Chi^2=0.05$; $p=0.823$). Among female respondents, 16 responses were given in each of the categories, whereas among men, 75 reported being homeless and 72 reported they were not. The data shows, as likewise demonstrated by the statistical analyses ($Chi^2=0.011$; $p=0.917$), that the response rates were similar in the respect of the gender of the respondent. The homeless identity is distributed as follows by housing category.

Table 3. Assessing homeless and non-homeless identity in various groups by housing category

		Current housing					Total
		Sleeping rough	Night shelter	Temporary Hostels	Rented accommodation	Privately owned flat	
Do you consider yourself homeless?	Yes	32	31	22	4	2	91
	No	4	11	14	25	34	88
Total		36	42	36	29	36	179

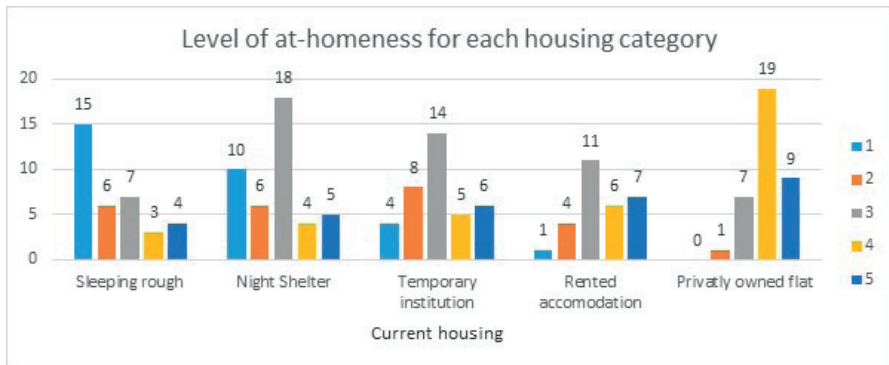
As expected, the proportion of individuals self-identifying as homeless was larger among those living in poorer housing conditions. At the same time, it should be highlighted that the psychological and external aspects of the question can be clearly separated: housing category and the homeless identity do not clearly overlap. Each housing category observably include both kinds of individuals: those that identify themselves as homeless and not homeless (albeit in differing proportions). Though these findings invite further analysis perhaps conducted by

tools allowing for higher resolution measurements, the results support the hypothesis that neither it is true that those normally considered homeless will necessarily self-identify as such, nor that those perceived as not homeless will indeed agree with that presumption. Thus, homeless identity is not solely a consequence of housing conditions. The tendency exhibited by the results (the more stable the housing, the lower the number of people identifying as homeless) suggests (and perhaps even seems to confirm) that the homeless identity (the psychological dimension) might also be modelled through a continuum theory.

Current housing and Level of at-homeness

A second and somewhat more refined measure of psychological homelessness is provided by the item assessing the level of at-homeness – homelessness. In the following section, the authors examine the relationship between psychological and external homelessness regarding this variable.

Diagram 1. Level of at-homeness for each housing category



The at-homeness – homelessness continuum is displayed here even more clearly, demonstrating that on the one hand, the rate of at-homeness correlates with housing conditions as might be expected ($r=0.451$; $p<0.001$). On the other hand, as indicated by the medium strength of this correlation, the extent of at-homeness – homelessness can only partially, be explained by housing conditions. The more stable an individual’s form of housing, the more likely that the person is at-home (see Diagram 1.; ‘1’ represents “not at all” and ‘5’ represents “totally”). At the same time, the findings show that individuals report different levels of at-homeness – homelessness in each housing group, with the exception of the group of home-owners, among which none reported to be feeling fully homeless (see the corresponding value 0 for the light blue column). This seems to prove that owning one’s physical dwelling is a fundamental protective factor against the feeling of complete psychological homelessness.

The external and psychological indicators of homelessness

The investigation has confirmed the assumption that a distinction can be made between the external and psychological aspects of homelessness by the concept of Current housing, Homeless identity and Level of at-homeness. The research was extended by 3 further indicators (Homeless status, Housing satisfaction, Adequate housing) that might also provide significant guidelines for the dissociation and definition of the dimensions of external and psychological homelessness. The total of six indicators were used:

- *Current housing*
- *Homeless identity*
- *Level of at-homeness*
- *Homeless status*
- *Housing satisfaction*
- *Adequate housing*

Two of the above indicators (Homeless status and Current housing, generated from the same variable) were classified as clearly belonging to the external dimension of homelessness, given that both focus solely and exclusively on the issue of one's housing. Homeless identity and Level of at-homeness, on the other hand, were treated as measures of the psychological aspect of homelessness, in so far as they grasp the psychological experience of homelessness (as discussed above) and refer to a quality separate from external homelessness. The remaining two variables (Housing satisfaction and Adequate housing), however, are linked to both external and psychological aspects of homelessness. In view of the results, we assumed that Housing satisfaction reflects more on the psychological aspects of homelessness, whereas, based on the research by Kopp & al. (2009), the item related to Adequate housing could be connected to the external aspect of homelessness.

In the course of further analysis, it was also an important consideration that among the indicators, Homeless status and Homeless identity are dichotomous variables while the others are five-grade discrete variables. We continued our investigation with an examination of the relationship between the four five-grade variables (for our results, see Table 4.).

Table 4. Correlation of the major variables used to measure psychological and external at-homeness

		Adequate housing	Housing satisfaction	Level of at-homeness
Current housing	r	0.599	0.231	0.451
	p	0.000	0.002	0.000
Adequate housing	r		0.371	0.417
	p		0.000	0.000
Housing satisfaction	r			0.503
	p			0.000

Our results confirm that Current housing and Adequate housing correlate the strongest. It can also be seen that these two variables are only weakly correlated with Housing satisfaction, while there is a medium correlation between Level of at-homeness and Housing satisfaction. Although the remaining variables still correlate in pairs, we can also see that the strength of these correlations is medium in each case (below a value of 0.5).

These findings confirm that Current housing and Adequate housing are, to a larger extent, indicators of external homelessness, while Housing satisfaction and Level of at-homeness are more indicative of psychological homelessness. Complementing this with the variables of Homeless status (a variable belonging to external homelessness) and Homeless identity (a variable referring to psychological homelessness), we end up with the following classification:

Measures of external homelessness/at-homeness:

- *Homeless status*
- *Current housing*
- *Adequate housing*

Measures of psychological homelessness/at-homeness:

- *Homeless identity*
- *Level of at-homeness*
- *Housing satisfaction*

*Considering both external and psychological aspects of at-homeness:
four groups*

At this point, conclusion was reached that it would be worthwhile to delineate four groups of participants: 1) those homeless externally and psychologically alike; 2) those externally homeless who psychologically are not; 3) those who are neither homeless externally nor psychologically; 4) those homeless psychologically only, but not externally.

This classification has been established on the basis of the data through cluster analyses. Four variables, all of them measuring over a five-point scale, were used to create the clusters (Current housing, Adequate housing, Level of at-homeness, Housing satisfaction), while the two dichotomous variables (Homeless status and Homeless identity) were only used in the investigation of the cluster characteristics. Consequently, the first stage of the analysis was still carried out based on three psychological measures and external measures of homelessness, respectively.

The analysis yields the following four clusters:

Table 5. Characteristics of the four clusters created by jointly considering psychological and external at-homeness

		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Min.	Max.
Current housing	1	57	4.26	1.044	1	5
	2	49	2.10	.823	1	4
	3	33	3.58	.792	2	5
	4	41	1.56	.634	1	3
	Total	180	2.93	1.409	1	5
Adequate housing	1	57	3.81	.833	2	5
	2	49	1.18	.486	1	3
	3	33	1.36	.653	1	3
	4	41	1.07	.346	1	3
	Total	180	2.02	1.370	1	5
Current housing	1	57	3.84	.960	1	5
	2	49	3.98	.829	3	5
	3	33	2.09	.723	1	3
	4	41	2.05	1.094	1	5
	Total	180	3.15	1.288	1	5
Level of at-homeness	1	57	3.93	.997	1	5
	2	49	3.65	.925	2	5
	3	33	2.76	.792	1	4
	4	41	1.46	.711	1	3
	Total	180	3.08	1.305	1	5

The clusters show the following distribution according to Homeless identity and Homeless status:

Table 6. The distribution of homeless identity over the four clusters

		Homeless identity and clusters				Total
		1	2	3	4	
Identified with homeless	Yes	6	34	16	34	90
	No	51	15	16	6	88
	Total	57	49	32	40	178

Table 7. Distribution in terms of homeless status in the four clusters

		Homeless status and clusters				Total
		1	2	3	4	
Having a homeless state	Yes	11	47	16	41	115
	No	46	2	17	0	65
	Total	57	49	33	41	178

Based on the above, the characteristics of the four groups are as follows:

Cluster 1: consists of individuals who do not regard themselves as homeless, are *externally more at-home*, who regard their housing as more adequate than not, and who, displaying high marks for both of the indicators of the psychological level, are *psychologically at-home* as well.

Cluster 2 and 4: Groups of individuals of predominantly homeless status who consider themselves homeless, living in temporary hostels or sleep rough, and who also profess not to have Adequate housing, and such as can be considered *externally homeless*. The difference between the two clusters can be traced back to two more differentiated indicators of psychological homelessness. In the *4th cluster* we can see more *psychologically homeless* individuals who are also less satisfied with their dwelling and will regard themselves rather homeless, whereas, in the *2nd cluster*, there are people who, even though they are externally homeless, are fundamentally satisfied with their housing and feel at home, they are *psychologically at-home*.

Cluster 3: This cluster describes a mixed group both in terms of identity and status, as it is comprised by individuals of both homeless and non-homeless identity, as well as of homeless and non-homeless status of similarly identical proportions. At the same time, we can see that the average value of Current housing is high, close to 3.6 (indicating that from among the homeless population, it is people living in better housing conditions who belong here), and not a single person sleeping rough is included in this group (see “Current housing” 3rd cluster, min value = 2). In our assessment, given that physical housing is a more precise indicator of external homelessness, this group can rather be considered *externally at-home* even in spite of the low value of “Adequate housing”. At the same time, it is also interesting to note that the indicator of Adequate housing is at a significantly low value in this group, and external homelessness does not correlate with the key indicator of the external level, i.e., with “Adequate housing”. In this cluster both Level of at-homeness and Housing satisfaction variables indicate that this group is more *psychologically homeless*, even though it consists of individuals with homeless and non-homeless identities to 50% each.

It is an interesting result calling for further clarification, that the identity variable correlates with the two more differentiated indicators of psychological homelessness in the two groups where the external and psychological aspects of homelessness go hand-in-hand (Clusters 1 and 4). In the two other groups,

however, where the external and psychological levels of homelessness follow contradictory trends (Clusters 2 and 3), identity does not correlate with the other indicators of psychological homelessness.

This “confusion” of the identity indicator in our assessment might be due to the fact that when the external and psychological levels of the people’s lives are in sharp contrast, their identities can also be blurred. Understanding this might contribute to the apprehension of what someone not seeing themselves as homeless might experience when the world treats them as such, or, vice versa, when they are regarded by society as having a home, whereas they do not find their place, and identify as psychologically homeless.

Arranged in a matrix, the four clusters take the following form.

Table 8. The matrix of the four clusters

	Psychologically at-home (high psychological at-homeness)	Psychologically homeless (low psychological at-homeness)
Externally at-home (high external at-homeness)	Cluster 1.: at-home both at the psychological and external levels	Cluster 3.: rather at-home externally, but homeless at the psychological level
Externally homeless (low external at-homeness)	Cluster 2.: externally homeless, while psychologically at-home	Cluster 4.: homeless both at the psychological and external levels

Relationship between the four clusters and other measured constructs

In order to investigate the way the clusters “function”, we compared them in terms of the measured constructs in pairs with an independent-samples t-test. (The detailed statistical findings are presented in the Appendix.)

Table 9. Comparing clusters by constructs

	1—2		1--3		1--4		2--3		2--4		3--4	
	t	p	t	p	t	p	t	p	t	p	t	p
Loneliness	-2.59	0.011	-1.92	0.059	-4.06	0.000	0.46	0.645	-1.26	0.212	-1.67	0.099
Happiness	4.450	0.000	4.19	0.000	7.06	0.000	-0.19	0.851	2.05	0.043	2.26	0.027
Perceived stress	-2.07	0.047	-2.25	0.027	-5.65	0.000	-0.03	0.977	-2.46	0.016	-2.73	0.008
Satisfaction	3.62	0.000	5.16	0.000	7.11	0.000	1.27	0.209	2.88	0.005	1.61	0.113
Self-efficacy	0.48	0.635	2.01	0.048	1.56	0.123	1.42	0.160	0.99	0.327	-0.49	0.626
Hopelessness	-2.69	0.008	-2.35	0.021	-4.26	0.000	0.43	0.666	-1.05	0.295	-1.59	0.117
Presence of meaning	1.74	0.085	1.00	0.319	1.96	0.053	-0.62	0.539	0.18	0.856	0.81	0.419
Search for meaning	-3.14	0.002	-0.97	0.336	-2.52	0.013	1.97	0.053	0.54	0.590	-1.48	0.144

1. For every cluster pair, there is a construct displaying significant difference. This provides further confirmation that we have indeed created qualitatively different subgroups.

2. At the same time, there are a number of conspicuous differences in the extent to which we were able to differentiate between the clusters by these constructs.

As for our results:

- Cluster 1 stood apart from the other three by displaying significant differences in the highest number of constructs (5 out of 8). Thus, it can be said that individuals both externally and psychologically at-home are in a better mental state, less lonely, happier, more satisfied, more hopeful, and have lower levels of perceived stress, than those who are externally and/or psychologically homeless.
- Cluster 4 was the other cluster differing significantly from the other three clusters, in terms of two variables. The results indicate that those who are both externally and psychologically homeless are less happy and have higher levels of perceived stress than those who are either externally and/or psychologically at-home.
- No variable sets aside Cluster 2 or Cluster 3 from all the other clusters. Furthermore, only the “search for meaning” variable differentiates Cluster 2 from Cluster 3. Which is surprising, given that the two clusters are connected by the fact that external and psychological homelessness do not coexist in these two cases. People who are externally homeless but psychologically at-home search more for the meaning of their lives than the externally at-home but psychologically homeless.

Below we examine the differences between the clusters in terms of the psychological and external aspects of homelessness.

The two psychologically at-home clusters (1.: externally at-home, 2.: externally homeless)

- For most constructs, (6 constructs out of 8), the externally homeless people in spite of their psychological at-homeness, were in a worse psychological condition than those who live in externally good circumstances, i.e., who are at-home. They are more lonesome, more unhappy, with higher levels of perceived stress, and also less satisfied, less hopeful, but more eagerly searching for something to provide meaning and purpose for their lives, than those who were externally at-home. At the same time, among the psychologically at-home people, the externally homeless experienced the same level of self-efficacy and saw their lives as being meaningful to the same extent as those who were at-home at the external level as well.

The two psychologically homeless clusters (Cluster 3: externally at-home, Cluster 4: externally homeless)

- Despite psychological homelessness, externally at-home people are happier and have lower levels of perceived stress, than those who lack a physical

home. At the same time we can see that externally at-home, but psychologically homeless people are not in a significantly better psychological condition in terms of most of the constructs (6 constructs out of 8), than those who are both psychologically and externally homeless. They are just as lonely, hopeless, dissatisfied, experience the same low levels of self-efficacy, they deem their lives to be just as meaningless, and are searching for the meaning of their lives to the same degree.

The two externally at-home clusters (Cluster 1: psychologically at-home; Cluster 3: psychologically homeless):

- Individuals in the externally at-home sample who were also psychologically at-home were less lonely, more satisfied, more hopeful, had lower levels of perceived stress, and experienced greater levels of self-efficacy, than those who were psychologically homeless. On the basis of this, and the above mentioned results we can say that people who are both externally and psychologically at-home are in a significantly better psychological condition in terms of most of the constructs (6 constructs out of 8) than those who are externally at-home, but psychologically homeless.

The two externally homeless clusters (Cluster 2: psychologically at-home; Cluster 4: psychologically homeless):

- Among externally homeless individuals, those psychologically at-home are happier, more satisfied, and have lower levels of perceived stress, than those who are also psychologically homeless. At the same time, the two clusters display no significant difference regarding the other five constructs.

DISCUSSION

In the last three decades, while the foundations of Hungary's homeless care system were established, representatives of the concerned professions mostly focused on the structural and social factors that contribute to homelessness. Meanwhile, the more subtle (e.g., psychological) aspects that affect individual life paths were pushed to the background, even though addressing them might prove helpful in making the care system more efficient (Bényei et al., 2000). In spite of the fact that there is a theoretical consensus among professionals involved in homelessness care regarding the importance of personal factors, research on the psychological and intrapersonal aspects of homelessness appears to remain a neglected endeavour. Our research aims to respond to this vacuum. The authors developed a theoretical framework, i.e., the Theory of External and Psychological At-homeness – Homelessness Continuum (Kántor & Düll, 2018). Within this framework, they established a few research questions to explore the individual experience of at-homeness and homelessness, as well as the relationship between external and psychological aspects of homelessness.

According to the findings of this study, *whether someone identifies as homeless is not solely a consequence of their housing conditions*. Not all the people that we usually identify as homeless (given that they are sleeping rough, for instance), would consider themselves homeless, and vice versa, people generally not perceived as such, might still self-identify as homeless. In light of our findings, it makes sense to think of homelessness along a continuum. This is in line with the theory of Bényei et al. (2000), namely that identification with homelessness may be a gradual phenomenon and occur in the lives of people with a variety of housing conditions.

“During the course of altering life situations people experience their own positions in psychologically diverse forms, and thus can identify themselves as homeless in various circumstances: when they are sleeping rough, or when they have lost their long-term housing arrangement, or when they do not find their place in an overstuffed and uninhabitable dwelling.” (Bényei et al., 2000, 68. o.)

It has also been confirmed that a continuum can be set up concerning this idea i.e., the continuum of at-homeness – homelessness, for there are numerous interim states between complete at-homeness and complete homelessness. This continuum can be observed both at the external and psychological levels. The external level represents whether and to what extent a person is considered homeless or “home-dweller” in the eyes of “others”: society, the legal system, the care system, or public opinion. The psychological level tells us about a person’s individual experiences on feeling homeless or at-home, and whether they are identifying themselves as such.

The present findings show that *the difference between external and psychological levels of homelessness can be identified through several variables and the extent to which one feels at-home can only be partially explained by their housing conditions*. We established six indicators *to track and isolate the external and psychological aspects of at-homeness – homelessness*. Three out of these six indicators, i.e., “Homeless status”, “Current housing” and “Adequate housing” can be taken as measures of external at-homeness – homelessness, whereas the remaining three, including “Homeless Identity”, “Level of At-homeness” and “Housing satisfaction” express the rate of psychological at-homeness – homelessness. Through cluster analysis of the six variables, four groups of respondents were defined.

Respondents in the first group can be considered equally at-home on the external and psychological levels as well. People who are externally homeless but psychologically at-home belong to the second group. Respondents in the third group are at-home externally, but homeless on a psychological level. Those who are both externally and psychologically homeless constitute the fourth group. Among the participants, those who were both externally and psychologically at-home enjoy the best mental well-being, while those both externally and psychologically homeless appeared to be in the worst psychological state.

Results show, that the eight examined variables regarding *psychological at-homeness – homelessness are highly dependent on the level of synchronicity between external and psychological homelessness at a given respondent. Those who are externally at-home but psychologically homeless at the same time are in a very similar psychological state they scored similarly on the loneliness, satisfaction, happiness, hopefulness, experienced self-efficacy, perceived stress and meaning of life scales as the externally homeless, but psychologically at-home respondents.* The only difference we found between the two groups was that the psychologically at-home, but *externally homeless people are more prone to search for meaning in their lives.* This is a further sign that the psychological states of the externally homeless and externally at-home people do not diverge steeply. We think that the contradiction between psychological and external homelessness in one’s life causes a specific psychological state, without regard to which aspect does the person feel at-home or homeless.

Results show that regardless of the rate of psychological at-homeness, externally at-home people are in a better psychological state, than the externally homeless. At the same time, *the psychological difference between the externally homeless and the externally at-home is influenced by whether they are psychologically at-home or psychologically homeless.* Comparing the two psychologically at-home groups, we found that the externally at-home people were in better psychological condition than the externally homeless. They were more hopeful, happier, more satisfied and less lonesome, perceived lower levels of stress and struggled less with answering the question of what could provide meaning to their lives, than the externally homeless. This means that those lacking a physical home, are in worse psychological condition, in spite of having retained their psychological at-homeness. Comparing the two psychologically homeless groups, the externally at-home are happier and have lower levels of perceived stress than the externally homeless, while they show no significant difference in terms of the other six constructs. This result is of utmost importance, as it indicates the limits of psychological at-homeness as a protective factor insofar as it is a necessary but insufficient condition for psychological health. This calls attention to the fact that psychological at-homeness will not provide overall protection against the psychological damage caused by the lack of a physical home, and that not every related psychological deficiency and injury can be accounted for by the psychological aspects of homelessness. These considerations support rehabilitation programs based on the “Housing First!” principle, (see Pleace, 2012, 2017; Fehér & Balogi, 2017), emphasizes that the arrangement of Adequate housing is one of the most efficient means, and also an inevitable cornerstone for, supporting homeless people.

Psychologically at-home individuals (in both the externally at-home and the externally homeless groups) are in a better psychological condition than those who were psychologically homeless: they are happier, more satisfied, with lower

levels of perceived stress, and also in a better psychological state in terms of several other constructs as well.

At the same time, the psychological difference between psychologically homeless and psychologically at-home individuals is influenced by whether they are externally at-home or externally homeless. Comparison of the two externally at-home groups show that externally at-home people who are psychologically at-home at the same time are happier, more satisfied, more hopeful, characterised by lower levels of perceived stress and experience greater self-efficacy than those who are psychologically homeless. Comparing the two externally homeless groups shows that those among the externally homeless who are psychologically at-home are happier, more satisfied and have lower levels of perceived stress than those who are psychologically homeless as well. Psychological at-homeness can be an important protective factor given that it is a construct that goes hand-in-hand with a number of psychological qualities that are proven to be significant elements of healthy psychological functioning. This supports the assumption that having an external home is not a sufficient condition in itself for psychological at-homeness, and that within the population of externally at-home individuals, those who are psychologically homeless represent a more vulnerable subgroup in a worse psychological state (being more unhappy, less satisfied and exposed to higher levels of stress).

This is also important from the perspective of homelessness care. On one hand, previous studies have indicated (Riggs & Coyle, 2002; Melamed et al., 2004; Bernstein & Foster, 2008) that a subset of externally at-home, but psychologically homeless people, i.e., those “exposed to the risk of homelessness” in fact represent the future supply of the homeless population (American Psychological Association, 2010; Bényei et al., 2000; Gyóri, 1990). On the other hand, this implies that two markedly different groups can be distinguished among the externally homeless (the psychologically at-home and the psychologically homeless people), and a better understanding of the latter may contribute to greater efficiency in rehabilitation.

In any case, the fact that both the psychologically at-home and the psychologically homeless are represented among the externally at-home indicates, that the phenomenon of psychological homelessness is not exclusively specific to the “homeless status”. Consequently, we should probably pay more attention to the detection and recognition of psychological homelessness on all levels of the external homelessness – at homeness continuum (for example by developing a questionnaire that facilitates its recognition) and explore the possibilities of psychological treatment.

FURTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Based on the presented findings, it seems that the Theory of External and Psychological At-homeness – Homelessness Continuum is suitable to describe the psychology of homelessness in a detailed manner and is effective in the joint examination of the external and psychological aspects of homelessness (Kántor & Düll, 2018). It appears that it might be worthwhile to further explore homelessness within this theoretical framework, for example, regarding age group differences. As mentioned in the article, the condition of variance homogeneity was met in all groups investigated, but there were also significant differences between the groups in terms of age, which could have an effect on the presented findings. This calls for further research on age-related aspects, as does the fact that the constructs detailed above do not exhaust all the psychological phenomena that could be relevant for understanding the psychological aspects of homelessness and at-homeness. Yet within the boundaries of the present research, we were merely able to begin the exploration on the field.

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Árpád Kántor: leader of the research; developed the theoretical background and the research plan for the research, coordinated the collection of data, and wrote most of the article

Péter Brózik: was in charge of the statistical analysis, took part in the interpretation of findings and the writing process

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STATEMENT OF CONFLICT OF INTEREST

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APPENDIX

Group Statistics: Pair-by-pair comparison of clusters constructs employed - detailed statistics.

Comparison of clusters 1 and 2.					
	Clusters	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Loneliness	1	55	36.55	7.02	.95
	2	45	40.58	8.57	1.28
Happiness	1	57	7.11	1.91	.25
	2	49	5.20	2.48	.36
Perceived stress	1	57	5.25	2.80	.37
	2	49	6.63	4.05	.58
Satisfaction	1	57	6.86	2.11	.28
	2	49	5.18	2.66	.38
Self-efficacy	1	56	31.93	4.85	.65
	2	47	31.45	5.42	.79
Hopelessness	1	57	1.70	1.94	.26
	2	49	3.02	3.06	.44
Presence of meaning	1	56	25.61	6.83	.91
	2	48	22.98	8.57	1.24
Search for meaning	1	57	21.14	9.36	1.24
	2	49	26.65	8.60	1.23

Comparison of clusters 1 and 3.					
	Clusters	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Loneliness	1	55	36.55	7.02	.95
	3	32	39.69	7.97	1.41
Happiness	1	57	7.11	1.91	.25
	3	33	5.30	2.07	.36
Perceived stress	1	57	5.25	2.80	.37
	3	32	6.66	2.89	.51
Satisfaction	1	57	6.86	2.11	.28
	3	33	4.48	2.09	.36
Self-efficacy	1	56	31.93	4.85	.65
	3	31	29.71	5.09	.91
Hopelessness	1	57	1.70	1.94	.26
	3	32	2.75	2.17	.38
Presence of meaning	1	56	25.61	6.83	.91
	3	32	24.09	6.81	1.20
Search for meaning	1	57	21.14	9.36	1.24
	3	33	23.00	7.69	1.34

Comparison of clusters 1 and 4.					
	Clusters	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Loneliness	1	55	36.55	7.02	.95
	4	38	42.87	7.91	1.28
Happiness	1	57	7.11	1.91	.25
	4	41	4.20	2.12	.33
Perceived stress	1	57	5.25	2.80	.37
	4	41	8.46	2.75	.43
Satisfaction	1	57	6.86	2.11	.28
	4	41	3.63	2.40	.37
Self-efficacy	1	56	31.93	4.85	.65
	4	41	30.32	5.29	.83
Hopelessness	1	57	1.70	1.94	.26
	4	41	3.66	2.61	.41
Presence of meaning	1	56	25.61	6.83	.91
	4	41	22.66	7.97	1.24
Search for meaning	1	57	21.14	9.36	1.24
	4	40	25.70	7.86	1.24

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Comparison of clusters 2 and 3.					
	Clusters	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Loneliness	2	45	40.58	8.57	1.28
	3	32	39.69	7.97	1.41
Happiness	2	49	5.20	2.48	.36
	3	33	5.30	2.07	.36
Perceived stress	2	49	6.63	4.05	.58
	3	32	6.66	2.89	.51
Satisfaction	2	49	5.18	2.66	.38
	3	33	4.48	2.09	.36
Self-efficacy	2	47	31.45	5.42	.79
	3	31	29.71	5.09	.91
Hopelessness	2	49	3.02	3.06	.44
	3	32	2.75	2.17	.38
Presence of meaning	2	48	22.98	8.57	1.24
	3	32	24.09	6.81	1.20
Search for meaning	2	49	26.65	8.60	1.23
	3	33	23.00	7.69	1.34

Comparison of clusters 2 and 4.					
	Clusters	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Loneliness	2	45	40.58	8.57	1.28
	4	38	42.87	7.91	1.28
Happiness	2	49	5.20	2.48	.36
	4	41	4.20	2.12	.33
Perceived stress	2	49	6.63	4.05	.58
	4	41	8.46	2.75	.43
Satisfaction	2	49	5.18	2.66	.38
	4	41	3.63	2.40	.37
Self-efficacy	2	47	31.45	5.42	.79
	4	41	30.32	5.29	.83
Hopelessness	2	49	3.02	3.06	.44
	4	41	3.66	2.61	.41
Presence of meaning	2	48	22.98	8.57	1.24
	4	41	22.66	7.97	1.24
Search for meaning	2	49	26.65	8.60	1.23
	4	40	25.70	7.86	1.24

Comparison of clusters 3 and 4.					
	Clusters	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Loneliness	3	32	39.69	7.97	1.41
	4	38	42.87	7.91	1.28
Happiness	3	33	5.30	2.07	.36
	4	41	4.20	2.12	.33
Perceived stress	3	32	6.66	2.89	.51
	4	41	8.46	2.75	.43
Satisfaction	3	33	4.48	2.09	.36
	4	41	3.63	2.40	.37
Self-efficacy	3	31	29.71	5.09	.91
	4	41	30.32	5.29	.83
Hopelessness	3	32	2.75	2.17	.38
	4	41	3.66	2.61	.41
Presence of meaning	3	32	24.09	6.81	1.20
	4	41	22.66	7.97	1.24
Search for meaning	3	33	23.00	7.69	1.34
	4	40	25.70	7.86	1.24