

An exploration into poverty in families in Wales.

According to the Senedd Cymru child poverty progress report(2022) approximately 30% of children in Wales live in relative income poverty , incomes of families in Wales are below 60% of the national median . Larger families especially those who have more than three children face significantly higher levels of poverty showing rates of about 43% . Income is also hit harder for larger families due to the two child benefit limit which was introduced in 2017 . This would impact lower income families greatly as some are reliant of benefits and with cost of living rising and money lowering will impact families and open up different other worries such as debt or even mental health issues. Wales's first minister in May 2025 issued her concern over the two child limit and is concerned over the rates of poverty in Wales , calling the limit damaging to the majority of families in Wales . The Welsh minister has taken her worry to the parliament where they are holding discussions on whether to end the two child benefit limit .

Children in the early years age bracket which is aged under five are in the highest poverty category . This is due to a numerous number of factors . Taking into consideration the price of childcare . Corums data(2025) shows that parents in Wales are paying the most for childcare in the United Kingdom , if a parent in Wales were to send their child under the age of two into full time care they would be paying on average £2600 more . In Wales some areas that fall into the correct catchment areas will be offered flying start when the child reaches the age of 2 which will either be a morning or afternoon session of two hours which can be helpful but trying to find a job which will cater for those hours could be difficult and also some families may have the struggles of being the child's only parent and then will have to be there for pick ups and drop offs . Eligibility of Flying Start for families is often shared by other multi organisations such as health advisors or the midwife team . They also offer a wider programme of support to the families and with the child's development and wellbeing . Funding is a big part of childcare and being offered support on childcare , the Welsh Governments 30 free hours of childcare for children was introduced to help families but only families that were in employment were eligible which would not have supported families that were not in employment .

Housing is also a major factor to contributing to poverty , the increase of private rental has a major impact . In the Financial Year Ending (2024) the average price of private renting was £704 a month representing 25.9% of the median private renting , this affordability level is considered to be below the typical 30% threshold to be concerned . Also if families claiming universal credit and privately renting they will get help towards their rent but may not always be the exact amount of rent , depending on their Local Housing Allowance(LHA) .Wales is also struggling to keep up with their demands on social housing . In 2024 the Senedd addressed the need for more housing as Wales has

hit a housing crisis and is working alongside the Welsh government to build numerous social housing in various locations which will help lower the amount of families who have been placed in unsuitable temporary accommodation due to being made homeless due to loss of their income , home.

Once a child reaches the age of school , families on low incomes will be eligible for free school meals which will ensure the child gets a warm meal daily and also provides snacks . Children in poverty may rely on this support as they may only eat this meal a day . According to Senedd(2024) children who receive free school meals are 19% less likely to achieve higher grades at GSCE than the 28% of children who do not receive free school meals . Their research also shows that pupils in year six that receive free school meals shows that they are two years behind in numeracy and literacy . These figures are concerning as Wales is struggling with poverty figures and it showing for children who are living in poverty during their education journey which will lead to higher unemployment figures once the children reach the age of work .

The children and families measure Wales(2010) was introduced to improve services for vulnerable children which includes children in poverty . These measures work with various multi organisation which allow children play opportunities usually funded by government which will set out activities after school or in the holidays . These groups wont single children out for living in less deprived areas . They can also support parents or guardians offering help and advice and can get in contact with the relevant support paths.

Part Two-Methodical Considerations

The importance of identifying poverty in early years children and intervention is paramount , as poverty in children can lead to future problems that could possibly become long term if left unaddressed . The research that is being used aims to explore poverty in early years by gathering information and insights from the parents. For this study it will focus on a random sample of 20 parents , using qualitative open ended questionnaires to gather more in depth data on their perspectives and also their own experiences . The methodical considerations will be outlined for the study whilst including the rationale for choosing the sample size , the selection of qualitative methods, and also the potential of the limitations and challenges that could arise by taking this approach.

The research design for this study is qualitative in nature , merely focusing on the understanding the experiences of parents regarding the growing figures of poverty in young children in Wales . Qualitative research is the best approach to considered for exploring complex , subjective experiences , which will then allow for richer and more defined data than quantitative methods . From using qualitative method it means that we

understand the lived experiences and hear the perceptions of parents about the rising number of children in Wales living in poverty . Using the qualitative method also gives a more in depth research method and is not used for generalize finding .

This research aims to gather a deeper understanding of the factors contributing to the substantial increase of children living in poverty in Wales. This will allow a parents perspective being taken into consideration who will personally understand living in poverty . Using open ended questions in this study will enable parents to share their own experiences and insights in a flexible and unrestricted manner . This approach contrasts with structured surveys which may limit responses and perhaps may lead into failing to capture the complexity of the ongoing issue. Creswell(1998) points out that in qualitative research to goal is to achieve , as best as possible. Creswell believed that Lincoln and Guba's criteria of trustworthiness , credibility and authenticity should be employed when evaluating qualitative research .

Troy(2023) noted that qualitative research allows for a more in depth exploration of beliefs, attitudes and experiences that may not be easy to capture through using quantitative measures . For this study , using the qualitative method provides the opportunity to examine how parents interpret the level of poverty and allowing for the exploration of the underlying social, cultural and environmental factors that will contribute with poverty .

To be able to collect the data , the study will use a random sampling technique . This technique will select 20 parents who have children that are under the age of 11 . Using the random sampling technique reduces the risk of the results being bias and does not categorize parents. Using this method will also ensures that every parent within the population has a fair chance of being chosen, which will then enhance the studies broadness of parents. The study will use the random sampling to reduce the risk of bias which can happen people are chosen based on their availability.

Using 20 participants may sound small but by using a smaller group it seems the most positive way to collect qualitative research on poverty in children in Wales. The goal from this research is to collect data. Qualitative research is often used for smaller sample sizes rather than the larger group quantitative research uses. Qualitative research focus is on collecting deep detailed insights from the participants.

For this research using the sample size of 20 is manageable and will allow for a more in depth exploration of the parents life experiences and perceptions without being overwhelmed with all the research . However using this sample size still allows for robust understanding of the phenome without the need for statistical analysis.

The parents used for this study will have children under the age of 11 .This age range is crucial to use for this study as the children are early years as well as being in an educational setting . The early years age is where a child needs the use of the hierarchy

of needs , which links to what children need for their health , well being and development. The inclusion of parents is crucial as they are experiencing living in poverty and will notice how it impacts their children's life .

During the recruiting of participants , ethical considerations will be taken into consideration. Informed consent will be obtained from each participants to ensure that they are fully aware of the purpose of the study , how their data they have submitted will be used and that they take into account that they have the right to withdraw at anytime without any consequences . The key to any research methods is confidentiality and personal identities will be removed from the data to ensure all information that has been collected is anonymous. Additionally the study will not require any invasive or sensitive questions , but if the participants feel uncomfortable in answering any questions they are freely allowed to skip if they do not want to answer or feel its too personal.

Data in this research will be collected through a qualitative questionnaire consisting of open ended questions . Using this open ended format allows for flexibility which will enable the participants to respond in a personal own worded response . They will be allowed to express their views , experiences and perceptions freely . It will also allow parents to raise concerns which once data is collected to be passed on to the relevant departments. Open ended questionnaires are used as they are useful when researchers want to learn about peoples feelings , beliefs and own experiences. These are hard to measure but are important to understand and reach a deeper meaning of an issue .

Using open ended questions also aligns with being able to explore the lived experiences of parents , as it allows them the space to elaborate on how they perceive their experiences of living in poverty and how it impacts their child . Also considering the factors that contribute to living in poverty . This aligns with qualitative research's focus on depth and richness of data rather than the breadth of data.

Triangulation according to (Hassan,2024) is used as a method of research that involves using multiple sources of data , methods or perspectives for the study of a single topic . It allows for the making of findings more trustworthy and detailed by checking that results are similar across various different types of information . Using triangulation for this study will increase credibility and give a more in depth finding . Using the data used during the questionnaires , will allow a more in depth development of picturing parents living in poverty's experiences . Using the triangulation method will also address the Hawthorne affect which is where the participants may change their behaviours if they are aware that they are being observed , which could hinder the results from doing the research.

Qualitative research has many advantages . Firstly they can be administered at a time and place in which is convenient for the participants. This ensures minimal disruptions to the participants daily lives. Taking into consideration that each participants have different lives and cannot always be flexible because of work or childcare . There is a bigger chance of participants taking part in the study if the data collection is less intrusive of their daily lives . Secondly, the open ended nature of the questions which will be used allows for a wide range of responses, which is ideal when exploring a complex issue such as poverty. Using the flexibility will be one of the key strengths of this qualitative method , as it will allow for the discovery of any new insights that may not have been anticipated at the beginning of the study .

Using the data from the open ended questionnaires will be then analysed using thematic analysis , which is used widely in qualitative research for identifying , analysing and also reporting patterns or themes within the data. This will allow for thematic analysis to identify recurrent themes related to the experiences of the parents who alongside their children live in poverty.

In order to ensure the analysis is carefully used , we will ensure that all research collected is read through thoroughly to get a better understanding and sense of the data collected , identifying important features and information from the data and questions . This will allow a search on any potential themes in whilst the parents are disclosing . Finally , a report will be written up on possible connected themes and seeing if they can be used to identify why poverty in children in Wales is increasing .

Whilst using the methodological approach can offer several advantages there are also some limitations . One of the primary limitations to consider when using a smaller participant group of 20 is that perhaps the findings may not be generalizable to the larger population of parents. This is a common limitation when using qualitative research but it is also important to be aware that the goal of the study is not to generalize but rather to get a more in depth insight into a specific population.

Also another potential limitation to take into consideration is the reliance of self reported data . The accuracy of this data depends on honesty and the self awareness of the participants. Parents might have the biases in self reporting , especially regarding their own personal experiences in poverty , this could then have an impact on the findings. To lower the risk of this happening it is important to ensure the environment is inviting and they feel comfortable about expressing and sharing their personal experiences.

In conclusion , the aim of this research is to explore the increase of the children in Wales living in poverty . Using the qualitative method to gather the qualitative data from 20 parents using open ended questionnaire . The methodological considerations outlined in this paper highlight both the strengths and limitations of this chosen approach .

Which focuses on the use of random sampling ensuring participants have an equal opportunity to participate. Linking qualitative methods to thematic analysis . By adopting a qualitative approach , using this for the study can provide a more detailed and rich understanding of parents' approach on poverty outlining their experiences with the perception of living in poverty.

Part Three – Ethical Considerations

Conducting an open ended survey with parents of young children who live in Wales and are living in poverty , addressing ethical considerations is essential to ensure the research that is carried out is respectful and responsible. Ethical research protects many factors including dignity , rights and the wellbeing of all the participants whilst also upholding the integrity and credibility of the research process. Taking into consideration the sensitivity of the chosen topic, children living in poverty. The study requires particular care in its planning and execution to prevent causing distress to the participants .

In this section the key ethical principles that are relevant to the study will be discussed . This will include informed consent , data protection under the GDPR(Local Government Association 2018) and also the UK Data Protection Act(GOV UK,2018), confidentiality , the wellbeing of all participants and researchers, the researcher's responsibilities , and also the ethical review process. Individuals have the reinforcements of The Department for Digital , Culture , Media and Sport (2017) allowing them the right to access their personal data and to object to the processing of such data, which is critical in ensuring participants retain control over their information.

Tham, Gomez and Garasic(2022) emphasize that informed consent ensures participants are fully aware of the study's nature , purpose , risks and also benefits before any participant agrees to take part . This empowers individuals to be able to make voluntary informed decisions about participating in a study. Within this study parents or participants must be provided with clear , accessible information about what the survey aims to achieve . They must also be given information on the questions they will be asked and also on how their responses will be used . Participants must also be advised on their rights to withdraw or refuse at any point or time without any negative consequences .

It is vital that the information provided avoids complex language , instead using simple , straightforward communication . Consent must always be freely given whilst being specific , informed and direct , which is inline with the General Data Protection

Regulation (GDPR).using this regulation ensures participants that they have given genuine choice and control over their personal data , including any survey responses that may contain sensitive or personal information . Consent ,must be treated as not merely a procedural step but as an ongoing ethical commitment that respects the autonomy of every participant .

The GDPR(2018) and the Data Protection Act 2018 operate alongside each other and impose additional obligations on researchers , handling sensitive or special category data. Information on children living in poverty fall under this act as it may reveal personal and potentially vulnerable aspects of a child's or family's wellbeing. Therefore the questionnaire must implement robust technical and organisational measure to protect such data. This will include securing data through encryption , restricting access to authorized personnel , and also anonymizing personal identifiers to prevent individuals being identified .

Confidentiality also plays a vital role in qualitative research , especially when open ended questions are being used, which prompts the individual participants to share rich , personal narratives about their situations and well being . Ensuring parents that their identities and Individual responses will remain private and confidential is essential to be able to build a trusting relationship with the participant. This will then lead to participant answering questions honestly , truthfully and also confidentially. It is clearly important to ensure participants that all data collected will be securely stored and that only approved team members will have access to the data.

However , it is also crucial to be transparent about the limits of confidentiality . If a participant reveals information that shows that there are safeguarding concerns or concerns over the safety or wellbeing of the child , it may be legal or ethical duty to report these concerns to the relevant authorities. Participants will be made aware of the limitations of confidentiality before they give consent to participate. This will ensure they understand that absolute confidentiality cannot be guaranteed when there is a concern on safeguarding .

The participants well being must be taken into consideration when taking part in this research. Engaging in conversations that are about poverty which can lead to other concerns can be mentally challenging for some participants. This could also surface some distressing memories or feelings . Ensuring the participant has knowledge that they are free to skip any questions they might find to personal or feel uncomfortable is very important.

Inclusivity and accessibility are also critical, ethical concerns. Ensuring that the study captures a diverse range of perspectives, the questionnaire will be designed to accommodate parents from a varied social, educational , and cultural background. Offering different modes of participation , such as online , paper based , or telephone

options to reduce any barriers and to accommodate different accessibilities. It is essential to provide translations or assistance for those with limited literacy or language skills further promotes fair participation. It is also important to minimise the burden on participants , especially those who may already be managing significant caregiving demands . Respecting participants time and circumstances by offering flexible completion options and keeping the questionnaire length resonate supports ethical engagement and also improves the likelihood of high quality and meaningful results of data .

The research used must undergo a comprehensive ethical review by a review board or research ethics committee. The process of review will assess the potential risks to participants and researchers . Researchers will ensure that all data protection measures have been met alongside the legal and ethical standards.

Accurate records of data processing activities should be maintained throughout this project . Once the research is complete , data should then be anonymized before it is shared , published or archived . Any direct link between the identities of participants and their responses will be destroyed once it is no longer required. In line with the relevant data retention policies and ethical guidelines.

Conclusion-

In conclusion , conducting an open ended survey with parents about the rise of children in Wales living in poverty involves a wide of ethical considerations . Ensuring participants have an understanding of the legislations that are in place when they provide their data is important and allowing them to freely withdraw their rights is important to ensure the participant. Respecting informed consent, ensuring data protection in line with GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018 . This research will also pass ethical review , incorporate an inclusive approach and be transparent about safeguarding responsibilities .

