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Incorporating Students' Knowledge Towards the Management
of the Private Rental Housing Challenges at the University of
Padova, Italy

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Il candidato dichiara che il presente lavoro è originale e non è già stato sottoposto, in tutto o in parte, per il conseguimento di un titolo accademico in altre Università italiane o straniere.

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A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of several stylized, overlapping letters and flourishes, positioned above a horizontal line.

Dedication

Firstly, this thesis is dedicated to the relentless spirit of curiosity that has fueled my journey through the realms of knowledge. It is a testament to the unyielding support of those who believed in me, even when doubt cast its shadow.

Secondly, to the vibrant minds of the University of Padova who have walked these cobblestone paths, breathed the air thick with knowledge and potential, and forged their unique journey through the corridors of learning, who continue to push the boundaries of human knowledge, question the status quo, and inspire generations to come, this work stands as a tribute to your unyielding spirit.

Acknowledgement

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As I penned down these acknowledgements, I am reminded of the collective effort and collaboration that have culminated in completing this thesis. Each of you has played an essential role in shaping this work and my personal growth; I am eternally grateful.

Abstract

Housing is one of the basic necessities for students as far as their success in their academics and other extracurricular activities is concerned. The management of private rental housing poses significant challenges for universities across the globe, particularly in urban centers where access to affordable and suitable accommodation for students is crucial. This thesis investigates the specific case of the University of Padova in Italy, exploring how students' knowledge can be harnessed to address the complex issues surrounding private rental housing for students. To achieve this, the study used a mixed-methods approach combining surveys and qualitative interviews to gather comprehensive insights from the university's student community and relevant stakeholders. Quantitative data was analyzed using spatial and non-spatial techniques, whereas qualitative data was analyzed thematically. The study found that the main cause of the housing challenges for students was increased housing demand coupled with high rental prices of private housing in Padova. Similarly, causes such as lack of investment in public housing, increased student enrollment, especially international students, and the Covid-19 pandemic exacerbated the housing challenges in Padova, as revealed by some stakeholders. The study highlighted that even though most students found their private rental housing through social media, scam rental listings dominated the nature of fraudulent activities. In general, fraudulent activities were highly prevalent among students living in privately rented on-campus housing rather than privately rented off-campus accommodation. Moreover, the study showed that students were unsatisfied with the University of Padova's effort to tackle the housing challenge. In order of importance, students prioritized increasing the availability of affordable housing and reusing or converting abandoned structures into student housing/dormitories as management strategies for tackling the housing challenges. Based on the findings, several recommendations were made, and further areas of future research were proposed to advance knowledge in a better understanding of student housing to serve as a resource for policymakers, housing providers, and student organizations in Padova and other cities facing similar challenges.

Riassunto (Abstract in Italian)

La sistemazione abitativa è una delle necessità di base per gli studenti per agevolare il loro successo accademico e altre attività extracurricolari. La gestione degli alloggi in affitto privato rappresenta una sfida significativa per le università di tutto il mondo, in particolare nei centri urbani dove l'accesso a alloggi accessibili e adeguati per gli studenti è cruciale. Questa tesi investiga il caso specifico dell'Università di Padova in Italia, esplorando come la conoscenza degli studenti possa essere sfruttata per affrontare le complesse questioni legate agli alloggi in affitto privato per gli studenti. Per raggiungere questo obiettivo, lo studio ha utilizzato un approccio misto, combinando sondaggi e interviste qualitative per raccogliere approfondite informazioni dalla comunità studentesca dell'università e dalle parti interessate pertinenti. I dati quantitativi sono stati analizzati utilizzando tecniche sia spaziali che non spaziali, mentre i dati qualitativi sono stati analizzati tematicamente. Lo studio ha riscontrato che la principale causa delle sfide abitative per gli studenti è stato l'aumento della domanda di alloggi, unito ai prezzi elevati degli affitti per alloggi privati a Padova. Allo stesso modo, cause come la mancanza di investimenti in alloggi pubblici, l'aumento dell'iscrizione degli studenti, in particolare degli studenti internazionali, e la pandemia da Covid-19 hanno aggravato le sfide abitative a Padova, come rivelato da alcune parti interessate. Lo studio ha evidenziato che, nonostante la maggioranza degli studenti trovi la propria sistemazione in affitto privato attraverso i social media, gli annunci di affitto fraudolenti dominano la natura delle attività fraudolente. In generale, le attività fraudolente sono molto diffuse tra gli studenti che vivono in alloggi privati in campus anziché in alloggi privati fuori campus. Inoltre, lo studio ha mostrato che gli studenti non sono soddisfatti degli sforzi dell'Università di Padova nel affrontare la sfida abitativa. In ordine di importanza, gli studenti hanno dato la priorità all'aumento della disponibilità di alloggi accessibili e al riutilizzo o alla conversione di strutture abbandonate in alloggi per studenti/convitti come strategie di gestione per affrontare le sfide abitative. Sulla base dei risultati, sono state formulate diverse raccomandazioni e sono stati proposti ulteriori ambiti di ricerca futura per avanzare nella comprensione delle questioni legate alla sistemazione degli studenti, al fine di servire come risorsa per i decisori politici, i fornitori di alloggi e le organizzazioni studentesche a Padova e in altre città che affrontano sfide simili.

List of abbreviations

COVID:	Coronavirus Disease
DiSSGeA:	Department of Historical and Geographical Sciences and the Ancient World
DSU:	Agenzia Regionale Dritto allo Studio Universitari (Right to Study)
ESU:	L'Azienda Regionale per il Diritto allo Studio Universitario (Regional agency for the right to study in the Veneto region)
ERSU:	Ente Regionale per il Diritto allo Studio Universitario (Regional Body for the University Study of Catania)
GPS:	Global Positioning System
MIUR:	Ministero dell'Istruzione, dell'Università e della Ricerca (Ministry of Education, University and Research)
MUIR USTAT:	Italian Ministry of Education Portal for higher education data
OECD:	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
SDGs:	Sustainable Development Goals
UDU:	Unione Degli Universitari (Union of University)
UNESCO:	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Background of research

A person's health, education, financial stability, and social life are all positively impacted by having a safe and secure place to call housing. The United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) state that providing everyone with a decent place to live at an affordable price is crucial to ending global poverty and promoting equality. There is a growing need for private rental housing to accommodate students due to the rising number of people enrolling in higher education worldwide, despite the SDGs' need for affordable housing. Private rental housing may be a good, inexpensive choice if a student cannot access on-campus accommodation or would like to live off-campus.

Higher education enrollment is predicted to climb to more than 420 million students by 2030, 21 percent increase from 2015, according to research by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)(OECD, 2018, p. 33). Universities and colleges have had trouble keeping up with the rising demand for student accommodation brought on by rising student enrollment. Over half of the student housing market in some countries is now provided by private providers, demonstrating the importance of private rental accommodation (*Spotlight---Global-Student-Housing-Investment-2019*). Students may better regulate their living space, privacy, and noise levels in rented private housing, making it a better option for those looking for a study atmosphere. In addition, the freedom and responsibility that come with living in private rented property can significantly benefit students' emotional and psychological well-being. Overcrowding, unsanitary conditions, and skyrocketing costs are only some of the results of the shortage of private rental accommodations for college students in recent years.

For this study, "private rental housing challenges for students" refers to a subset of the larger "housing challenges," directly impacting college and university students seeking accommodation. Students face challenges when there aren't enough private renting units that meet their price, quality, and security needs. There are several potential causes for this scarcity, including insufficient funding for student housing, a mismatch between supply and demand, and sharply rising rental prices. Overcrowding, substandard housing, financial difficulties, and increased student stress and anxiety are all possible outcomes of this situation. Both the student's academic performance and health can suffer from the effects. Students' access to

private rented accommodation is critical in promoting academic excellence. The private rental housing challenges for students is a growing social and economic challenge in many cities worldwide. Foreign student enrollment in Italy has risen in the last two decades and continues to rise as a desirable study-abroad destination (Ince, 2019, p. 109). It was also argued that the shortage of student housing is a worldwide problem, not just an issue in Italy, because residential units were not developed to keep up with rising student populations, as the percentage of the global student population that is housed in Italy is among the lowest in the world.

Padova, Italy, is experiencing a developing private rental housing challenge, which is disproportionately negatively affecting the city's student population. Padova is home to one of Europe's oldest and most prominent universities, the University of Padova, which draws in tens of thousands of new students each year). Students from low-income families are given precedence regarding housing allocation as part of the DSU's student services, including annual scholarship awards. Halls of residence and flats on campus are available to students, but they fill up quickly and are highly sought after. Since on-campus housing options are limited, many students must resort to the more difficult and stressful private renting market. There is a severe lack of affordable private rental housing for the many Italian and international students studying at the University of Padova in Italy. These students have had difficulty finding inexpensive and adequate private rental housing in Padova since 2021. Because of how this affects students' health, grades, and likelihood of sticking around in school, as well as the local economy and community, it has far-reaching social and economic ramifications. Many students have to live in poor housing or travel a long distance to get to the university.

University enrollment in Italy for the 2021–2022 academic year was reported 1,822,141 by the country's Ministry of Education and Research (USTAT, 2022). Similarly, throughout the past decade, there has been an upward trend in international students enrolled at Italian universities (see Figure 1). In addition, the registered number of international students enrolled for the first time at the University of Padova has steadily increased in the last four academic years (see Figure 2). This indicates a growth in the demand pool for private student housing. Undoubtedly, numerous international students have chosen Italian universities as their study-abroad destination of choice. Factors such as the internationalisation of Italian universities through increased English-taught curricula may have contributed to many overseas students enrolling at Italian institutions. Because of this, both international and Italian students benefit from a rich cultural milieu that encourages learning, relearning and unlearning.

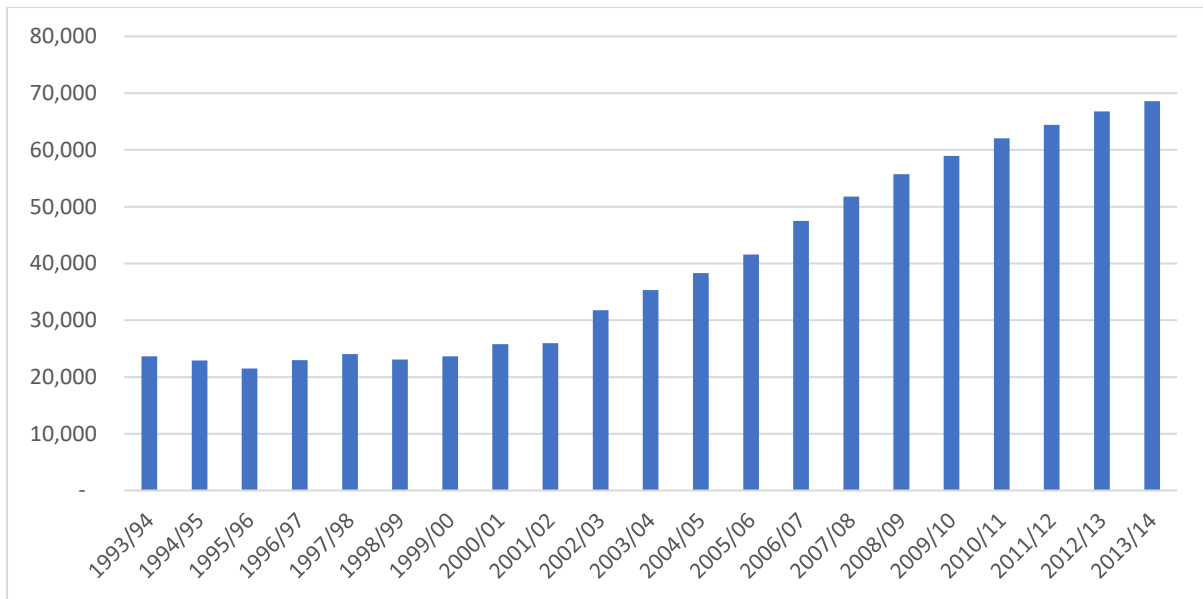


Figure 1. International students in tertiary education (University) in Italy
 Data source: Author’s compilation of data from USTAT, MIUR, 2022

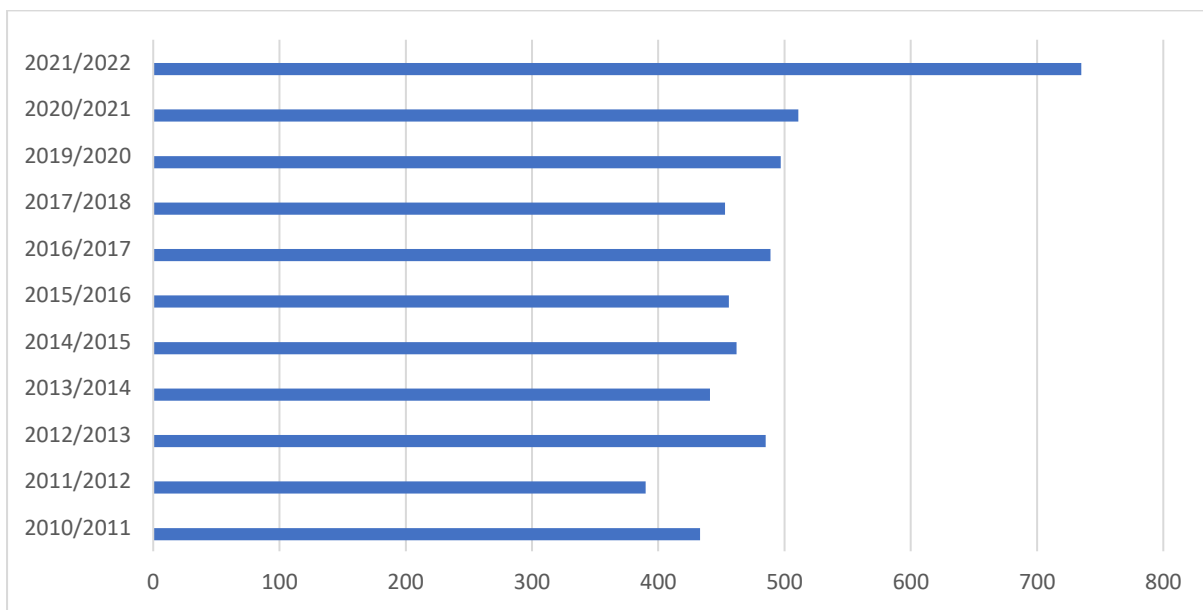


Figure 2. Registered number of international students enrolled first time at the University of Padova
 Source: Author’s compilation of data from USTAT MIUR, 2022, National Registry of University Students – October 2022

In 2021, following the challenges most incoming University of Padova students faced in getting private rental housing, the university developed a housing subsidy initiative to assist off-site students. This group of students were entitled to a “maximum daily amount of €50.00 and a maximum total gross amount for the recipient of €500.00” when they met the appropriate requirement conditions. This housing subsidy initiative presented a short-term solution to the

private housing challenges. Hence, students were still unable to find affordable and decent private rental housing because the previous intervention wasn't sustainable in solving the challenges of the current private rental student housing. Moreover, the initiative was seen as unfair because it only targeted offsite students. Students' knowledge has not been considered fully and is not quite conspicuous in tackling Padova's current private housing challenges. According to some international and Italian students at the University of Padova that the author of this thesis interviewed in a preliminary survey, it was evident that these students have difficulty searching for private rental housing in Padova. On several occasions, students have registered their displeasure by launching demonstrations, protests and awareness campaigns on several social media platforms to the management of the University of Padova. Even though the grievances of students are known to the university authorities and management, students are not pleased with the measures the university has taken so far to address these private rental housing challenges. A recently held protest spearheaded (see figure 3) by the Student Union of the University of Padova known as "Unione Degli Universitari" (UDU Padova), spanning from May 10, 2023, to May 15, 2023, can be explained as a determined effort by this group of students in registering their displeasure against the housing shortages and soaring prices of rental housing accommodation. Some groups of students aboded in tents mounted opposite the historical building of "Palazzo del Bo" in the city centre of the university. These groups of students were unhappy about the increased cost of rooms and flats in Padova by 49 per cent after the Covid-19 pandemic (UDUPadova, 2023).

"IL MATINO", a local newspaper in Padova which reported on the student protest, brought into perspective the response gathered by Antonio, a student involved in the protest who said, "It is my wish to get an accommodation at a low cost because I can't spend EUR 1,000 per month because taxes are expensive". Some Instagram post on "udupadova_world" an official page for the Student Union of Padova students, highlighted the protest's purpose. They said, "We decided to demonstrate and bring to light the housing challenges we are living: one that, with the start of the next academic year, will worsen further". The post ended with a strong remark: "We will not stop until the Rector, the Mayor, and the Regional Councilor Donazzan will answer us!". According to the Student Union of Padova, four requests were highlighted further on the students' demands. These were; "new funding from Veneto region for public residences, expansion of student rent to municipalities around Padova, and a limit on touristic rental, immediate availability and requalification of abandoned buildings, and lastly

free public transport subscription”. Undeniably, the protest transcends matters related to housing and seeks solutions to other trivial issues regarding student welfare.

The city of Padova, where the university is located, is called a campus city because its buildings are spread throughout the historic district and the city's contemporary neighbourhoods. This is due to the University of Padova's location in Padova, where a sizable portion of its facilities are located, while other facilities for research and instruction are dispersed around the Veneto area (Botton, 2021, p. 6). The city-university relationship has historically undergone numerous changes, but this relationship has remained constant despite the city changing. Therefore, referring to "the university hunting for a city" and the contrary (Botton, 2021, p. 45) makes sense. To some extent, the students at the University of Padova might be more familiar with their socio-cultural environment than professionals in the city of Padova in proposing solutions to problems affecting them, the students themselves. This makes student knowledge of the university community an asset in bridging the gap regarding the students' private rental housing challenges. In recent times, professional knowledge in tackling this issue has dominated students' knowledge, undermining the latter's capability.

Many earlier studies on student housing have focused on other diverse concerns such as academic performance (Adama et al., 2018), the rise in student loans (Amromin et al., 2016), housing satisfaction and facilities (Gbadegesin et al., 2022; Najib, 2011), students' experience and housing insecurity (Hallett & Freas, 2018), and housing preferences (Johari et al., 2017). There have been several studies conducted in Italy that have focused broadly on rental housing (Belotti & Arbaci, 2021), design concepts in student housing (Carla, 2009), recovery and reuse of abandoned buildings for student housing (Cascone & Sciuto, 2018), and private purpose-built student accommodation (Ince, 2019). However, In Padova, studies on housing have focused on the intersection between the University and the urban real estate market (Botton, 2021). A critical literature search showed a scanty number of studies on student rental housing challenges. Whilst some of these studies have highlighted critical issues related to student housing on university campuses in Italy, there is not much known on understanding how students' inability to find private rental housing is becoming an emerging issue in some Italian Universities such as University of Padova. Although some studies have highlighted student housing challenges (Dimmendaal & van Steen, 2022; Faherty, 2022; Wood & Schuch, 2021) on various university campuses globally, there are limited studies on understanding how students' knowledge can be leveraged in contributing to the solution associated student housing challenges in Padova and Italy as whole.



Figure 3. Student housing protest in Padova

Source: UDU Padova, 2023

1.2 Research Goals

Comprehending the student private rental housing challenge in the light of the student's knowledge cannot be underestimated since the university and the local community seem not to be detached. The University of Padova is referred to as a city-based university, as was already said. As a result, insufficient effort has been made to prioritise student knowledge to support the University of Padova administration's efforts to meet students' unmet need for private housing. Students probably have some knowledge, abilities, and expertise in addressing the situation in private rental housing. This knowledge could include specifics about the challenges' root causes, prospective solutions, suggested policy changes and recommended best practises from other nations that have dealt with comparable problems. Since the private rental housing challenges in Padova is a complex issue that requires not only professional knowledge and expertise, student knowledge can also be a great asset in providing valuable insights and solutions to address this emerging problem. For this research, student knowledge in managing private rental housing is defined as the specific knowledge students of the University of Padova have acquired through their educational experience and training that prepares them to contribute their quota in providing lasting and sustainable solutions to ensure academic and social wellbeing for all. Therefore, addressing Padova's private rental housing challenges

requires a comprehensive and collaborative approach involving stakeholders, including policymakers, housing providers, and students. Students' knowledge can help in identifying a potential solution to these challenges. This background has heightened the attentiveness of the author of this thesis to understand how students can play a role in addressing the private rental housing challenges in Padova and how their insights and experiences can be incorporated into policy and management decisions to improve the situation.

1.3 Main research question

What is the potential of incorporating students' knowledge in addressing the private rental housing challenges for students and their associated problems in Padova?

1.4 Secondary research questions

1. What are the causes of the private rental housing challenges?
2. What is students' level of awareness and perception of the private rental housing challenges?
3. What coping strategies are adopted by students facing private rental housing challenges?
4. Where are the fraudulent activities prevalent, and how did students fall victim to them in their search for private rental housing?
5. What are the potential solutions for managing students' private rental housing challenges?

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

Various theoretical frameworks explain how housing affects students' integration, retention, and participation in extracurricular and academic activities. However, the author of this study employed the Tinto theory of student integration propounded by Vincent Tinto in 1975 to explain the private rental housing challenges. More over, the author adapted a conceptual model of student retention and integration based on Tinto's model of dropout to explain how student housing challenges affect their integration and retention rates. In addition to the theoretical framework, several concepts, such as Maslow's pyramid of needs, private rental housing for students, higher education in Italy, student housing in Italy have been reviewed.

2.1 Theoretical Framework

To start with, Tinto's theory of student integration, also known as the student integration model, is a theoretical framework that explains how students become integrated into a university or college's academic and social communities. Vincent Tinto, a prominent educational theorist, developed this model. According to Tinto's theory, student integration is a multi-dimensional process involving academic and social factors. This model emphasizes the importance of creating a supportive and inclusive learning environment that fosters student engagement and promotes academic success. Presumably, a lack of integration into the social system of the college will lead to a low commitment to that social system. It will increase the probability that individuals will leave college and pursue alternative activities (Tinto, 1975, p. 92). Tinto's model highlights the importance of pre-entry qualities, social and academic experiences, and institutional commitment in determining students' ability to integrate and persist in their studies. According to Tinto's concept, student persistence and graduation rates are increased when students feel a strong sense of belonging to the school community. However, students are in danger of dropping out when they don't feel connected to or engaged in their education.

Tinto's theory of student integration can be used to explain the private rental student housing challenges in Padova by looking at how the lack of suitable and affordable student housing can negatively impact students' ability to integrate into their academic and social communities. According to Tinto's theory, one key factor influencing student integration is

social and academic experiences, including interactions with peers, faculty, and staff. Students who cannot find suitable and affordable housing may be forced to live in substandard conditions or commute long distances to campus, making it difficult to participate in social and academic activities. This, in turn, can lead to isolation and disengagement from the academic community, which can negatively impact their academic performance and increase the likelihood of dropping out. Furthermore, Tinto's model emphasizes the importance of institutional commitment in supporting student integration and retention. If universities and colleges do not provide sufficient resources and support to help students find suitable housing, they may be less likely to persist and complete their degrees. This can lead to declining retention rates and negatively impacting the institution's reputation. Tinto (1975, p. 94) explained in his theoretical model of dropout the process of dropping out of university or college can be seen as an ongoing series of interactions between the student and the academic and social environment of the educational setting, during which the student's exposure to and reflection on these systems shape his goals and institutional commitments in ways that can either lead to his continued enrollment or his eventual departure from the educational system. Tinto's theoretical model of dropout has been adapted into a conceptual model to explain how student housing challenges affect their retention and integration in Figure 4.

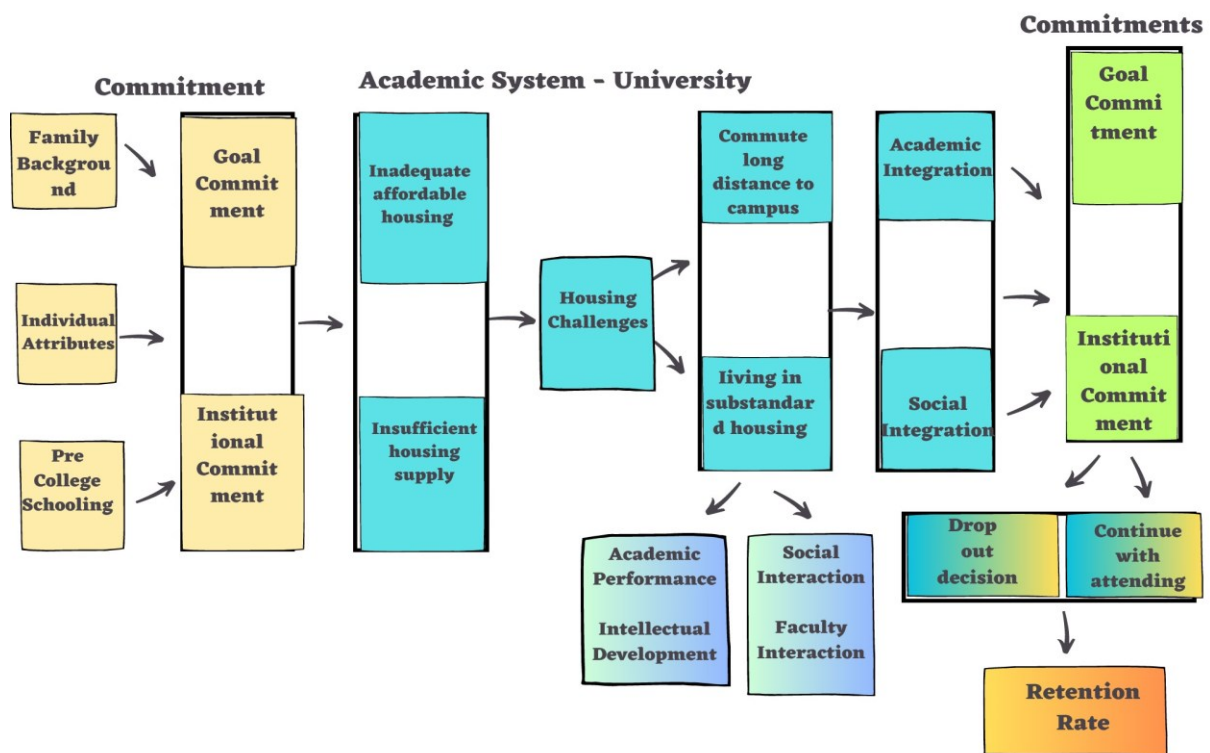


Figure 4. Conceptual model on student retention and integration
 Source: Author's construct based on Tinto's theoretical model of dropout

2.2 Review of Concepts

2.2.1 Student housing needs – Maslow’s Pyramid of Needs

Maslow's pyramid of needs is a theory that describes human motivation and needs in a hierarchical structure, first suggested by Abraham Maslow in 1943. Maslow's hierarchy of needs places physiological and safety demands at the bottom, followed by esteem, self-actualization, and needs for love and belonging. According to Maslow's (1943) need hierarchy, people are driven to attend to their most basic requirements before tackling more complex ones. After meeting the demands at one level, people are more driven to meet the needs at the following level. Realizing one's full potential and leading a purposeful and satisfying life is the ultimate aim of self-actualization. Maslow's pyramid of needs is a concept used in many other disciplines, including education, where it is used to understand better students' needs and how those needs might be met to improve their academic performance and well-being. To ensure that students are happy and healthy in their living situations, it is important to provide their basic needs, as outlined in Maslow's Pyramid of Needs, as shown in Figure 5 below.

The bottom level of the pyramid for student accommodation includes basic needs such as spacious beds in good shape and steady internet services. The second level includes safety needs and conveniences such as security and protection from harm, accessible transport and road network and all-inclusive rent with expenses—the next level includes social needs by providing common spaces for students to interact and form relationships. Finally, fulfilment is the top level of the pyramid, which encompasses providing facilities that enable students to pursue their passions, interests, and goals. When university administration and housing providers are aware of students' varying demands on their living arrangements, they can better meet those demands. As a result, students may feel happier and more satisfied, improving their performance in school and wellbeing.

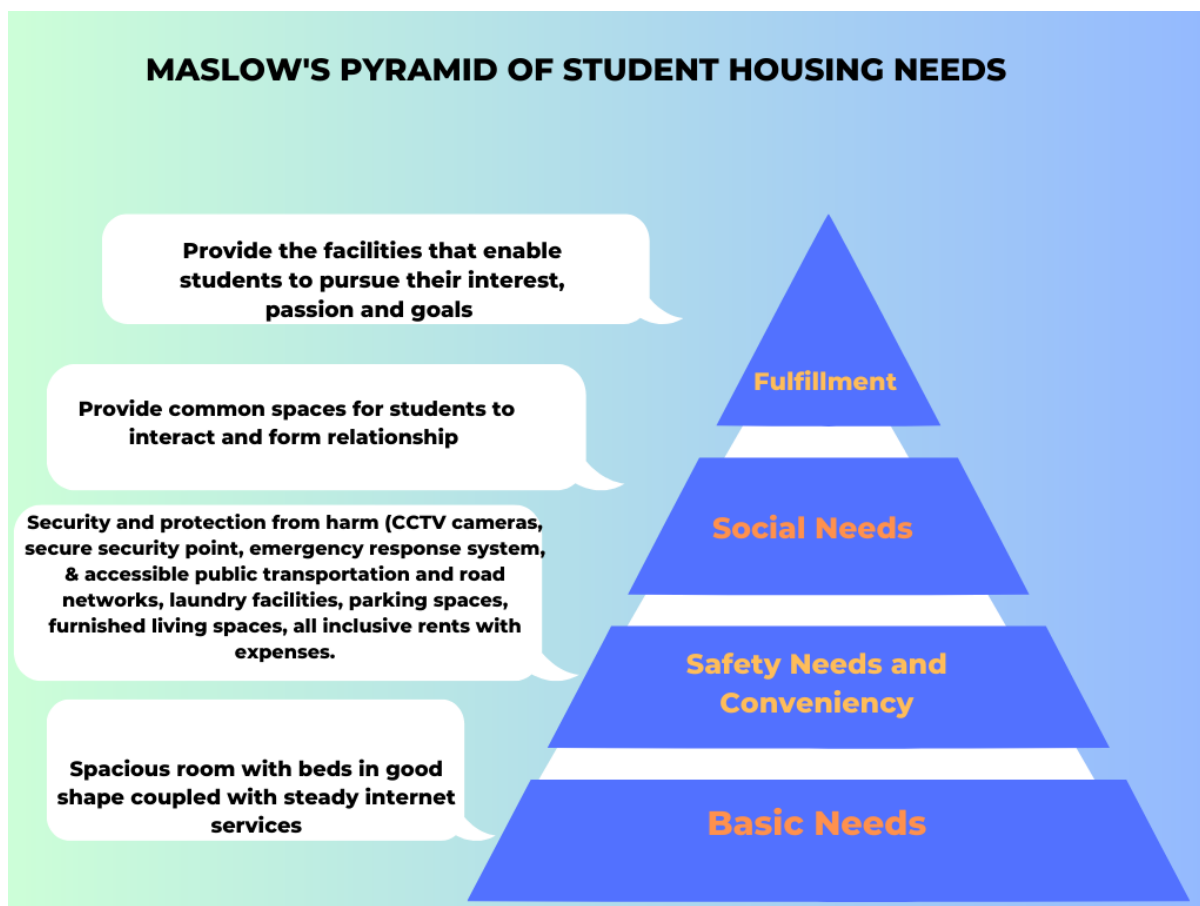


Figure 5. Maslow's pyramid of student housing needs
Source: Author's construct adapted from Ince (2019)

2.2.3 Private rental housing for students globally

Housing is one of the most important factors in a student's success in a university or college. Because of its importance, it is impossible to ignore the consequences that housing has on students. A rise in the number of students attending universities has led to a strong demand for student housing. For students to properly perform the essential tasks related to their education, comfortable living is necessary. Consequently, the residential setting impacts a student's ability to succeed in school (Kowalski, 2022). It's no secret that universities spend a lot of money advertising themselves to prospective students and that housing options are an important consideration for many, especially out-of-town and international students (Macintyre, 2003, p. 110). The private housing market fills the gap when universities can't accommodate all their students (Snaith, 1998, p. 438). A study conducted by Pillai et al. (2021, p. 16) demonstrated that universities' limited financial resources have prompted them to increase the number of beds available to students by developing business plans that capitalise on the increased demand for high-quality, state-of-the-art dorms. For universities with limited

resources, public-private partnerships have presented an attractive and even entrepreneurial paradigm for meeting the housing needs of their students. Universities may now keep debt off their books and gain access to private funding thanks to the emergence of student housing as a selling point, as universities can now outsource the creation of contemporary housing to private-sector developers. In many towns with higher education institutions, students have difficulty finding residences for rent on the private market since there is no significant supply of private housing, and students do not know the housing market. Because of the difficulty of the situation, many students end up renting a dwelling that does not meet the minimum requirements for student housing because of inadequate or nonexistent infrastructure, facilities, or services. Because there is a shortage of rental properties on the open market, students must pool their resources and live in shared apartments or rooms. On the flip side, renting a home is too high for most students to justify on their own, so they pool their resources to find cheaper housing options.

Italian students only make up 4% of the European average of 23% who live in university residence halls, despite the country's strong demand for student housing. Students at the University of Catania who did not apply for university residences or who did not meet the criteria for the Catania Regional Office for University Students known as “Ente Regionale per il Diritto allo Studio Universitario” (ERSU) allocation of accommodation are forced to turn to the private market for student room rentals or become commuters (Cascone & Sciuto, 2018, p. 511). Despite the variety of provision strategies universities adopt, such as head tenancy schemes and private-public partnerships, no institutionally provided accommodation meets the needs of more than 20% of the student population. The private rental sector is the go-to for most students because it has the widest housing options. Housing under multiple occupations, where many students share an apartment, has become increasingly common due to the available private renting space shortage. Since university housing is often inadequate in quantity and quality, many students opt to find private accommodations. Living in a shared apartment can help foster self-reliance and accountability. However, students renting from private landlords risk being victimised by scammers, living in substandard or unhygienic conditions, or being drawn into local disputes (Ince, 2019, p. 16). Therefore, the participation of the private sector relieves universities of the burden of generating accommodation spaces, allowing them to redirect their attention and resources to their primary objectives (Ince, 2019, p. 80)

2.2.4 The rental housing market and increasing demand

Student accommodation has become increasingly in demand over the past decade as university enrollment has skyrocketed (Ong et al., 2013). Similarly, as the higher education industry has expanded, so has student accommodation. As universities have struggled to provide this need, students have been forced to turn to the private renting market (Ong et al., 2013, p. 143). Therefore, colleges and universities should do whatever they can to ensure that new student housing developments are planned to be sustainable and beneficial to the community (Macintyre, 2003, p. 117). A study by Dimmendaal & van Steen (2022, pp. 22–23) on increased tension and anxiety about housing, leads to a markedly diminished sense of safety regarding housing security and impacting community integration among international students. The study also revealed that overseas students were compelled to return to their home countries due to this experience, which they described as "nightmarish" and "hell." Ong et al., (2013, pp. 144-148) found that high rent costs are the leading cause of student homelessness, followed by unemployment and the breakdown of personal relationships or the dissolution of a family unit. Smith & Knechtel, (2020, p. 7) research conducted at the University of California, Santa Cruz found that the city's housing challenges not only makes it harder for students to obtain accommodation in the community, but also contributes to the growth of inequalities. The argument continued that students who lived further away from campus were more likely to miss courses, spend more time travelling, and have less access to support and auxiliary services that could have a favourable impact on retention rates and student achievement.

Finding accommodation at an international university can be difficult for many international students since they lack the social and cultural capital necessary to accomplish so (O'Connor, 2017, p. 823). According to Fang & Van Liempt (2021, p. 823), social capital refers to the personal social network individuals can draw on when finding student housing. Similarly, cultural capital refers to knowledge of housing-market practices and being 'culturally compatible' with the local housing context, for instance, by speaking the local language. Additionally, although many resources on housing markets and laws can be located online for international students, not everything is written in a language they understand, easily accessible, helpful or accurate. International students who are unable to access rooms via the student housing had to look for accommodation in the private sector, mainly on dedicated social media website such as facebook groups related to housing. More so, it was remarked that a sizeable portion of rooms was categorically unavailable, with many landlords refusing to rent to international students, which was described as an act of discrimination against international

students (Fang & van Liempt, 2021, p. 830). Botton (2021, pp. 94–95) investigated whether and how the University of Padova's annual presence of students and all the other amenities affects the real estate. Based on the data provided, it was determined that the institution's presence had a beneficial effect on housing market prices but no on rental prices. A report by Immobiliare.it based on data from the previous year found that the Padova had a supply explosion of 180 percent as a result of the lack of tourists and students. Despite a large increase in supply, average rents have not yet decreased significantly. This is mostly because the student renting market will collapse by 60% in the 2021 academic year, costing the city a monthly loss of 200,000 euros. Twelve months after the pandemic's commencement, in the first quarter of 2021, rental prices show their first tangible dip, falling by 0.9%. Study by Cascone & Sciuto (2018, p. 519) showed that the University of Catania's proximity to the Minerva Cinema, which is being repurposed into student accommodation, is stressed in the study's conclusion that this location's accessibility by foot or public transportation is crucial. They also stated that the area around the site being repurposed or recovered for student housing should feature shops, eateries, and entertainment venues, including public roadways, pedestrian plazas, and cultural amenities. Most students opt to live with private landlords rather than on campus. Housing in various occupations refers to the usual practise of several students sharing a single dwelling unit. The private rental sector has advantages over university-provided housing, including more privacy and freedom, fewer individuals to share common areas with, and a larger number of available units. (Ince, 2019, pp. 60–61)

Large influxes of students into local residential markets can affect the market and how it is supplied because students are a notably large and unique group in terms of their housing demands and consumption. One effect is a decline in homeownership, while another is a rise in the number of rental units in shared occupation and price inflation due to increasing demand in the housing market. Having more students in a location also usually results in more cultural and social events and more places to shop and eat. Student demand also created a subset of residential rental markets with landlords targeting students as tenants; nonetheless, many students fall prey to wrongdoing in the private rental sector, including fraud, withheld deposits, poorly kept homes, and unhygienic conditions (Ince, 2019, p. 28).

2.2.5 Effect of Off-campus student accommodation and on-campus student Accommodation on students' overall wellbeing

Generally, some characteristics distinguish students living in on-campus accommodation from those living in off-campus accommodation. This section offers a general understanding of some research studies examining cases concerning on-campus and off-campus student housing and its effect on students' overall well-being. Two main forms of student housing can be defined by their proximity to the school's main campus: on-campus and off-campus housing (Ghani & Suleiman, 2016, p. 166). It's widely accepted that having a place to live on campus can positively affect a student's productivity in the classroom. This is because students living on campus have several benefits that those living off campus do not, including easier access to university resources like professors, classes, laboratories, libraries, and other buildings (Ghani & Suleiman, 2016, p. 167). On-campus accommodation has many benefits for students, including those listed below. High-speed internet access/Wi-Fi, leadership roles, social integration, and personal growth; low cost; a sense of security; access to academic support facilities and use of school resources; proximity to instructors (Ghani & Suleiman, 2016, p. 169). Ultimately, students who live off-campus face issues such as an insufficient housing supply in the private market, a lack of facilities essential to a student's academic success, or facilities that aren't in good working order, a significant commute to class, prohibitive rental prices, and a heightened risk of being the victims of crime (Ghani & Suleiman, 2016, p. 170). Adama et al. (2018) found that students who live on campus seldom miss classes because of travel time, but those who live off campus likely to miss classes more frequently because of the greater distance between their university and their residence. According to Aziabah et al. (2022), investors in the rental property market differentiate themselves from the competition by offering perks beyond the standard fare, such as on-site security, high-speed internet, and en suite bathrooms. This is a fantastic feature of a place to stay away from campus. In addition, the survey found that rents students have to pay vary depending on factors including location and accessibility to housing services. The study's conclusion that student housing amenities are a major factor in determining rent helps to debunk the widely held belief that location is the most important factor in determining housing costs.

'Shared' house apartments, the most common off-campus student housing, often have three to four bedrooms, a living area, shared bathrooms, and a kitchen. Students living in off-campus accommodation are more likely to foster personal growth and independence. Individuals can pursue their interests without their parents' interference or a restrictive

environment. There are some young people for whom the independence provided by off-campus student housing represents a chance to join the adult life cycle free from parental and institutional supervision (Ghani & Suleiman, 2016, p. 169). According to Kowalski (2022), Student's academic performance is influenced by the variety of housing options available. Furthermore, his study found that first-and second-year students who resided in university-owned housing performed better academically than those who resided in university-affiliated housing. Students of all sexes, races, abilities, and socioeconomic backgrounds benefit from living in a college dormitory, and this effect is seen across all educational settings (Astin, 1984, p. 523).

Additionally, Ritterbush (2009, p. 365) revealed a positive relationship between the number of local students and library visits. This suggests that on-campus students have greater access to library resources than their off-campus counterparts. (Ajala et al. (2022, p. 73) inferred that on-campus dorms were livelier than off-campus dorms but that off-campus residence halls were less expensive overall.

Off-campus students placed a higher value on privacy than those residing in on-campus hostels did. In contrast, on-campus students placed a higher value on low hostel costs and consistent access to electricity. It has been suggested, however, that living on campus positively affects students' academic achievement and participation in extracurricular activities (Gbadegesin et al., 2022, p. 18). Yunus. (n.d., p. 369) conducted a study examining where students at Bayero University Kano live off-campus, what influences their housing preferences, and what difficulties they experience. It was shown that closeness, social activities, freedom, privacy, and sanitation are among the most important when deciding where to live off-campus in the immediate area. To feel safe, many students want to live near one another and the campuses, creating a clustering pattern of residential distribution.

2.2.6 Higher Education in Italy

Currently, the Italian Ministry of Education and its regional bodies for the Right to Study (DSU) supply the vast majority of institutional student housing in the country (MIUR). In addition to the yearly distribution of scholarships, prioritised for students from low-income backgrounds, the DSU's housing allocation is one of the 68 regional bodies' student services. Article 34 of Italy's constitution guarantees that "the talented and deserving, even without means, have the right to acquire the greatest grade of study." Scholarships, family allowances, and other benefits awarded through competitive means contribute to the republic's realisation

of this right. Higher education enrollment in Italy skyrocketed after the 1990s due to enhanced accessibility brought about by education decentralisation changes and global increases in mobility. Foreign student enrollment in Italy has tripled in the last two decades and is still rising, indicating that the country is a popular choice for international students. There has been little change in total enrollment, but the rising number of international students suggests there will be more competition for available student accommodation. Due to a lack of attention paid to the increasing demand for student housing, residential units are in limited supply in many nations, Italy included. However, Italy's provision is extremely low, serving barely 3% of the country's student population (Ince, 2019, p. 109). Based on their mobility, Italian students can be divided into three groups. The first group consists of those mentioned above Italian "in sede" ("on-site") students who live at home with their parents while attending university in the same city or town where they work or study. The second category consists of "fuori sede" ("off-site") students, sometimes known as "away-from-home" students, who live in a place other than where they grew up while attending university. Fewer than one-third of Italian students identify as Fuorisedegroup. The third and final group comprises a subset of Italian students whose population has grown exponentially over the past two decades to become the country's dominant student demographic. This group of students, known as "pendolari" ("commuters"), is so named because they frequently travel between their hometown, where they live with their parents, and their place of higher education, which is often located in a separate city. About half of Italy's student population lives independently (among the pendolari), while the remaining third lives at home with their parents (among the insede). Commuter life has become increasingly common among Italian students for several reasons, the most important of which are the high quality of education offered by some institutions and the scarcity of affordable housing in the country's most popular cities, many of which are also considered educational centres. Students from low-income families can use this technique since it's cheaper than renting in the private market, which is already struggling to meet demand (Eurostudent, 2015).

2.2.7 Student Housing in Italy

A safe and affordable place to live is a necessity and a crucial part of university studies and the passage into adulthood. As defined by Ghani and Sulaiman (2021, p. 6002), student housing consists of residences made available to students for their education. In addition, "student housing" refers to residences designed to accommodate young adults while they pursue higher education away from their families. The need for student housing depends on various variables, including institutional housing policies, student enrollment, educational

attainment, and housing preferences (Ghani & Sulaiman, 2021, p. 6005). The proximity of on-campus student accommodation to a school's academic facilities is, thus, a major consideration for prospective students (Ince, 2019, p. 15). Italy's university campuses tend to cluster in major cities, which results from historical considerations more than a well-thought-out organic development strategy for higher education. The lack of structures, the social and economic transformations, and the historical and geographical configurations all played significant roles in the development of the Italian university, the end consequence of which is the current arrangement (Carla, 2009, p. 361). The quality of the accommodation a student lives in profoundly affects many aspects of their personal and civic development. Housing offers a safe and secure place to live and fosters a community where students may interact and form connections outside of the classroom.(Ghani & Suleiman, 2016, p. 164). Expanding and contracting periods of university settlements are determined by the ebb and flow of student populations, which has always had a significant impact on Padova's urban and building development, for better or for worse (Botton, 2021, p. 50)

In conclusion, having a safe and secure place to live is crucial to a student's ability to thrive in college and graduate with honours. The academic, rental market, retention, and integration dimensions are only a few of the areas explored in the research on student housing. Housing shortages at several schools have impacted the demand for rental properties near campuses in urban areas, like the University of Padova. The literature assessment showed that few studies on student housing focused on the increased need for private rental housing among the University of Padova students. The rising demand for student housing in Italy can be traced back to the country's increasingly diverse student population. The literature research has provided some theoretical frameworks, such as Tinto's theory, for comprehending the integration and retention of students amid the current student housing problem. Again, the Maslow hierarchy of needs was adapted to fit the student housing requirements to explain why some factors are more important than others for academic achievement. In the end, a conceptual model was created to shed additional light on the study's aim by utilising data from previous studies of student living. Some related concepts were reviewed to understand better which aspects of student housing have received attention and which must be focused on in addressing future housing challenges.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This study explored the potential of incorporating students' knowledge towards managing the private rental housing challenges for students and its associated problems in Padova. Hence, this chapter highlights the research area and methodological approaches employed in the study.

3.1 Study Area

The research was conducted in Padova, specifically the University of Padova, which, in recent years, has seen a rise in the number of students looking for private rental accommodation. With over 60,000 students and over 2,200 faculty members, the University of Padova is one of Europe's oldest and most distinguished academic institutions. It is a city university with eight schools and thirty-two departments located all over the city, except the four departments that make up the School of Agriculture and Veterinary Medicine, which are situated on the Agripolis campuses (less than ten kilometres from downtown Padova) in order better to meet the needs of such fields of study (*Campus Life | Università Di Padova*, n.d.). In 1222, a group of students and teachers from the University of Bologna (the world's oldest university) decided to go to Padova for greater academic freedom. Thus, the University of Padova was born (*libertas scholastica*). They formed their academic community and organised its members by nationality. The students of each nation drafted and passed their legislation, elected their rettore (rector or chancellor), and selected and compensated their instructors. The University of Padova adopted as its motto, *Universa Universis Patavina Libertas*, or "Padovan freedom is universal for all," in recognition of its importance in protecting academic independence (Botton, 2021, p. 44).

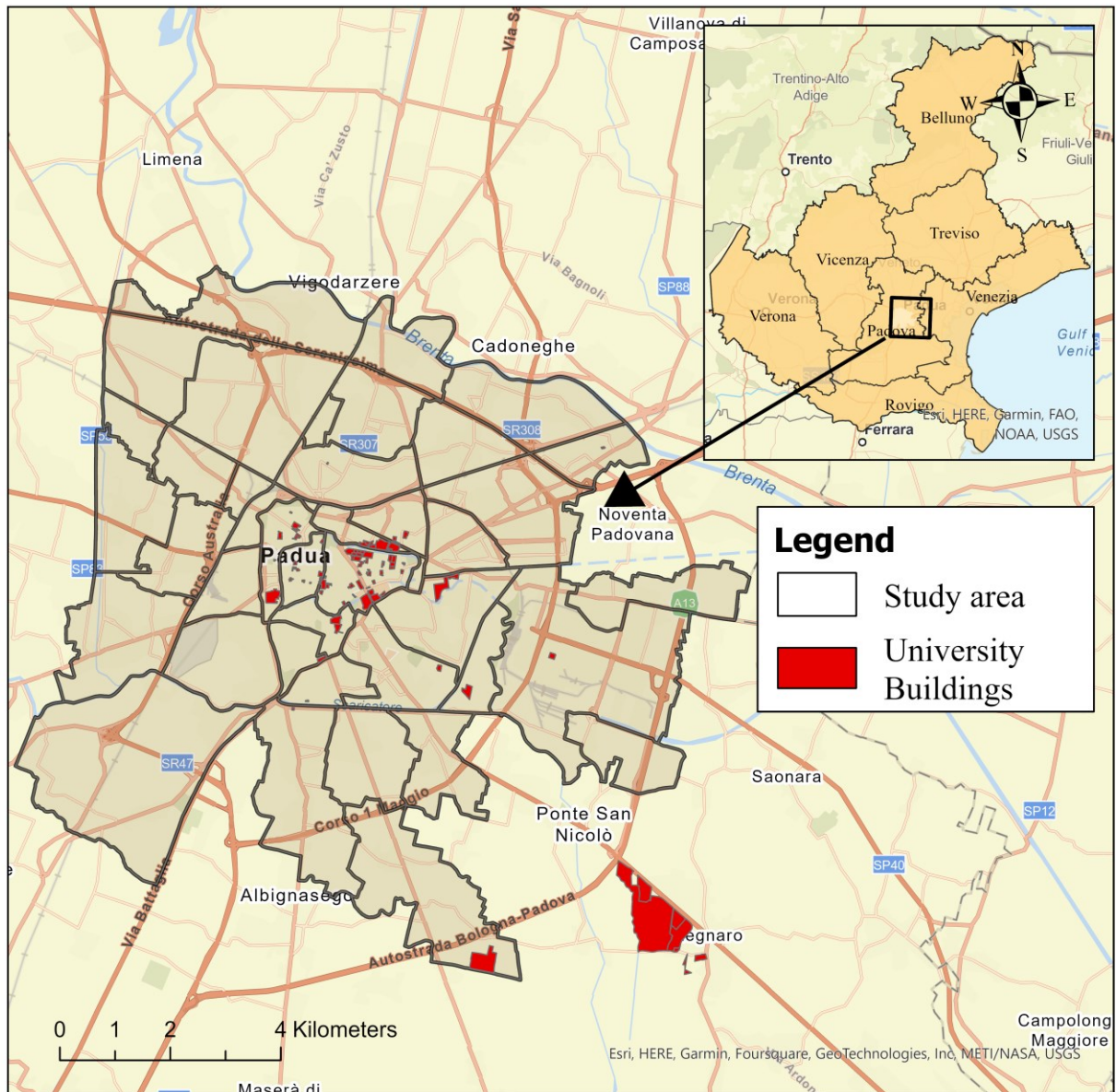


Figure 6. Study area map of Padova.
Source: Author's own construct

3.2 Target and Study Population

The larger population to which my research's results are applicable is referred to as the target population. Hence, my target population was students studying at the University of Padova. Additionally, this research targeted key stakeholders in the University of Padova housing management from the “Comune Di Padova” (Padova Municipality) and “Studenti Per Udu Padova” (The University of Padova Student Union).

The study population refers to the people studied in this research project. The University of Padova students were selected for the research study based on the following criteria.

- i. Italian or International students currently studying at the University of Padova.
- ii. Enrolled in their study for at least six months.
- iii. Aged 18 and above
- iv. Predominately residing in private rental student housing, either described as on-campus or off-campus, specified by a 2km buffer zone.

3.3 Research design

This study used an exploratory approach to research. According to a Padova Students' Union report, the university's housing challenges first surfaced in 2021. Furthermore, there has been a lack of research into the student housing challenges in Padova; this study will fill that gap by conducting a preliminary investigation to comprehend the situation better and learn how student expertise can be integrated into the administration of the private rental housing challenges. As a result, this will help set the groundwork for future studies. An exploratory research approach aims to examine areas that have not been thoroughly examined. The exploratory researcher seeks new information, perceptions, comprehensions, and meanings (Brink, 1998, p. 312).

3.4 Sample size and Sampling techniques

This analysis relied on data from 175 participants. Studying the entire population is next to impossible. This is why a sample is so important for capturing the characteristics of a larger population. Simply put, a sample is a selection made from the whole. The sample needs to be large enough to warrant statistical analysis and to be representative of the population from which it was chosen. As Isaac (2023, p. 2) indicates, a sample is a subset of a population studied to generalise findings from that study to the full population. Samples are chosen because they improve access to the population, cut costs, and save time.

In this study, participants were chosen by combining convenience, snowball, and purposive sampling methods, all non-probabilistic sampling methods. Non-probabilistic sampling methods are sampling techniques in which participants are picked by the researcher, referred to the researcher, or self-selected to participate in a study (Stratton, 2021).

Convenience sampling, also known as accidental sampling or haphazard sampling, is a type of nonprobability or nonrandom selection in which study participants from the target population are chosen based on their ability to fulfil certain practical requirements. These criteria might be related to the study's accessibility, proximity, availability, or willingness to participate. When conducting research, convenience sampling is used to acquire data from

people who can be reached quickly and conveniently (Etikan, 2016, p. 2). Hence, for this study, the students were selected based on their availability and easy accessibility to participate in the research study. While it is possible to use convenience sampling in qualitative research, it is more commonly employed in quantitative research. It was suggested that although convenience sampling allows researchers to choose easily accessible participants, it limits their capacity to generalise from their findings (Etikan, 2016, p. 4).

Furthermore, snowball sampling was used in this study, in which the research participants were requested to tell their fellow students and friends in other programmes about the study. Emerson (2015, p. 166) argued that all of the participants in the final sample, whether chosen by convenience sampling or snowball sampling, will often come from the same region. They could also come from comparable ethnic or social origins. Any of these variables might affect the subject of the study. The findings of a study may be skewed if all the participants share one or more characteristics. Using the non-probability sampling technique known as "snowball sampling," current study participants recruit new participants from their networks of coworkers, friends, and acquaintances. It is a method by which the researcher identifies and chooses available respondents who fit the requirements for inclusion in his study. After the respondents have provided the data, the researcher requests recommendations from those previously chosen as respondents for more people who would likewise fit the criteria and reflect the demographic of interest (Isaac, 2023, p. 3). Some questionnaires administered to students face-to-face and online were asked by the researcher to subsequently share them with their WhatsApp groups and individuals in their social networks.

Lastly, the purposive sampling method was used to determine the relevant housing stakeholders to be interviewed. Using the non-probability sampling technique known as "purposeful sampling," the researcher only selects individuals who, in their judgment, meet the study's objectives. It is a method of sampling where the researcher uses his judgment to select subjects from the study population. Therefore, the researcher's judgement and understanding of the context are crucial to the sampling procedure. Subjective or judgment sampling is another name for purposeful sampling. It is usually utilised in qualitative research when the researcher would rather discover in-depth details about a specific occurrence than draw broad conclusions from statistics or when the population is very small and focused (Isaac, 2023, p. 4). The researcher's expertise, discretion, and intelligence are heavily reliant on the purposeful sampling procedure, which offers the researcher more power to extract the best information from the samples (Rai & Thapa, n.d., p. 11)

3.5 Data Collection Techniques and Research Instrument

The study adopted a mixed survey approach, including quantitative and qualitative. Hence, qualitative and quantitative data on diverse issues associated with student housing was collected through surveys (online and face-to-face questionnaires) and face-to-face interviews using a structured interview. The data was collected within 38 days, from April 3, 2023, to May 10, 2023. The questions from students and stakeholders were derived from an in-depth literature review on student housing challenges, management, satisfaction and the rental housing markets. Jenn (2006, p. 32) argued that the researcher uses a questionnaire to gather information from respondents and ascertain their responses to the research topics. It was further also stated that a good questionnaire should be reliable, valid, straightforward, engaging, and short.

A kobotool was used in designing the questionnaire. Questionnaires were administered both in presence and online. The questionnaires were designed in six sections. These are background information of research participants, factors influencing the private rental housing challenges, students' awareness and satisfaction, the private rental housing markets for students, and student perception of management strategies. In total, there were 36 questions with the possibility to forgo some questions if not applicable to the respondent's background information. Areas in the University of Padova where the data was collected included some university canteens such as Piovego and Pio X Mensa, public spaces and squares such as Portello, Prato Della Valle, Piazza Dei Signori, and its environs.

Additionally, areas around some university libraries, departmental buildings and lecture halls were targeted for self-administration of the questionnaires. The researcher prioritized students in these areas because they were mostly gathering areas comprised of diverse nationalities and degree programmness of different levels and provided an atmosphere that encouraged social interactions with students. University of Padova students were approached in these areas and the purpose of the study described to them. Informed consent was obtained from the students afterwards to ascertain their willingness to participate in the study without coercion. Once they agreed to participate, a QR code generated from the questionnaire was displayed on the researcher's mobile phone device to be scanned by the research participant(s). Alternatively, research participants who found it technically challenging to scan the QR code or preferred other methods were requested by willingly giving their email to the researcher to deliver the questionnaire to them.

Furthermore, research participants were allowed to ask questions if there were any or seek clarification on the research study if they had a doubt. They were given the privacy to either consent or decline to participate in the research study. Lastly, social media platforms such as Facebook, Whatsapp and Telegram groups for the University of Padova students were leveraged in distributing the questionnaires. A humble request was made to students to share the questionnaire with their contacts list and other platforms of students from the University of Padova. Besides that, professional network platform such as LinkedIn was leveraged to share the questionnaire with the academic programmes groups and connections made with the University of Padova students.

On the other side, nine (9) programmes coordinators were randomly selected from a list of University of Padova programmes that the study's author prepared. The courses were all English-taught-master programmes offered to both Italian and International Students. These programmes coordinators were emailed to seek their consent in broadcasting the questionnaires through their mailing lists to their students. Four of the nine programmes' coordinators responded and forwarded the questionnaires to their students through their mailing lists. The administration of the Master of Local Development programmes also broadcasted the questionnaires through their mailing list to MSc Local Development students and the other affiliate programmes under the Department of Historical and Geographical Sciences and the Ancient World (DiSSGeA). Out of the 170 questionnaires that were answered, 97 were valid for data analysis aligned with the purpose of this study.

The students who participated in answering the questionnaires were required to provide their Global Positioning System (GPS) location of their private rental housing based on an agreed informed consent. This only applied to research participants who resided in private rental housing. The rationale behind this action was to spatially identify and delineate students who live on-campus and off-campus students. On-campus students were identified as students whose private rental housing was within a 2km buffer from the city centre. Conversely, students who lived in private rental housing outside the 2km buffer were described as off-campus students.

In a study to understand better the travel behaviour of near-campus students and those who live farther away from campus, Wang et al. (2012, p. 132) used a geographic information system analysis. His strategy involved making a standard circle out of all campus structures to define a synthetic campus boundary. Near-campus students were identified as those who lived

2 kilometres from the standard ellipse of campus buildings, and the rest of the students who lived outside the 2 km buffer area were identified as farther away from campus. Hence, this approach was tailored to suit my study context with a buffer of 2km from the University of Padova city centre building known as “Palazzo del Bo” to distinguish between on-campus and off-campus private rental housing students.

After seeking approval from the Programme Coordinator of MSc Local Development and a data collection authorization letter from the Supervisors, Councilor Francesca Benciolini (Delegate for housing policies and residential construction) at the Padova Municipality and Samuele Dalla Libera (President of the Student Union of Padova) were contacted via email regarding their interest to partake in this research study. These interviews were all conducted onsite using a semi-structured interview guide containing questions geared towards understanding the increasing demand for student housing, its associated challenges and how it can be managed from the perspective of these stakeholders.

An interview is a one-on-one meeting between a researcher and a potential informant during which the latter answers questions or discusses topics of interest to the researcher in advance. Recordings of interviews are frequently transcribed later (Paradis et al., 2016, p. 263). The interview guide was designed in MsWord and printed on an A4 sheet by the Researcher. Each stakeholder had similar interview questions based on their functionalities and mandates regarding student housing in Padova. Eight (8) questions were directed to stakeholders from the Comune di Padova, whereas nine (9) questions were directed to stakeholders from the Student Union of Padova in an orderly manner.

Additionally, two students involved in the Padova housing protest spearheaded by UDU Padova were briefly interviewed face-to-face during the protest by the author in an unstructured interview session of about 9 and 6 minutes, respectively. According to (Harrell & Bradley, 2009, p. 28), the questions asked in a structured interview were predetermined, and the session followed a predetermined format. The interviewees' answers to one question usually shed light on and provide context for subsequent questions. Hence, the researcher had to skip those questions to proceed to the next interview questions. Some questions were a precursor to others and relatable. The total duration of the interview sessions exceeded the planned duration of 15 minutes. The face-to-face Interview was recorded after seeking consent from the interviewer and transcribed into a reported response to buttress the quantitative data. The length of both interviews was about 39 minutes.

3.6 Pilot Test of the Research Instrument

Before beginning to collect data, it was essential to do a pilot test of the questionnaire to solicit responses from the student. Flaws in the questionnaire's content, grammar, and format can be uncovered with its aid (Jenn, 2006, p. 34). No matter how strictly a questionnaire adheres to best practices standards, a formal examination before the main survey (pretesting) will likely improve it (Marsden & Wright, 2010, p. 294). The questionnaire was piloted for seven days with about 50 students (both Italian and International) from first-year MSc Local Development and other students from different programmes to ensure its reliability and validity.

3.7 Data Sources and Analysis

Both primary data and secondary data were employed in the survey. Primary data are those that have been gathered specifically to address a study issue using methods that are most appropriate for that issue. Secondary data is data collected originally for a different purpose and reused for another research question. Hence, this study's primary data was obtained from self-administered and online surveys and interviews with various housing stakeholders. The responses gathered from the survey were analyzed using R statistical programming software, Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) software, and ArcGIS Pro software. The interview responses were analyzed thematically using Microsoft 365 to transcribe the audio into a transcript. Moreover, secondary data employed in the study were existing literature on student housing and statistical data on student enrolment from the MIUR.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1 Introduction

The findings in Table 1 provide a general understanding or overview of the participants' backgrounds who participated in this study. However, based on the research objective, the study was narrowed to only University of Padova students living in private rental housing across the Seven (7) provinces of the Veneto region. Therefore, Table 2 explains the demographic characteristics of the 97 out of 170 students who participated in the study. This is because these categories of students were in the right position to provide responses aligned with the research goals. The underlying difference between Table 1 and Table 2 is that the former comprises all the research participants in various housing types, such as living with their families, university housing, private college housing, temporary accommodation, etc. The latter comprises only research participants living in private rented student housing while studying at the University of Padova.

Table 1. General Overview of Participants' Demographic Characteristics

Variable	Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	69	40.6%
	Female	97	57.1%
	Prefer not to say	2	1.2%
	Other	2	1.2%
Total		170	100%
Age Category	18-24 years	71	41.8%
	25-31 years	82	48.2%
	32-36 years	13	7.6%
	36 years and above	4	2.4%
Total		170	100%
Citizenship	Italian	53	31.2%
	Non-Italian	117	68.8%
Total		170	100%
Level of Academic Programme	Bachelors	38	22.4%
	Masters	126	74.1%
	PhD	3	1.8%
	Post-Doc	1	0.6%
	Other	2	1.2%
Total		170	100%
School affiliated to the academic programme	Agricultural and Veterinary Medicine	13	7.6%
	Economics and Political Sciences	53	31.2%
	Engineering	23	13.5%
	Human and Social Sciences and Cultural Heritage	60	35.3%
	Law	1	0.6%
	Medicine	2	1.2%
	Psychology	6	3.5%
	Science	12	7.1%
Total		170	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2023

The study focused on students who resided in private rental housing whilst pursuing their current studies at the University of Padova. Figure 6 provides a visual understanding of the

spatial locations of students living in private rented housing. Along with this, the map further shows where students were concentrated most and where they were less concentrated by using a 2km buffer around “Palazzo Del Bo”, popularly known as the centre of Padova. It can be inferred from the map that the highest percentage of students living in private-rented student housing mainly resided in areas described as on-campus. In contrast, the lowest percentages mainly resided in off-campus areas (outside the 2km buffer). This result implies that most students were mostly concentrated in on-campus private rented housing and less concentrated in off-campus private rented housing per this study.

Table 2. Demographic analysis of respondents considered in the study

Variable	Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	41	42.3%
	Female	54	55.7%
	Prefer not to say	1	1%
	Other	1	1.2%
Total		97	100%
Age Category	18-24 years	36	41.8%
	25-31 years	51	48.2%
	32-36 years	13	7.6%
Total		97	100%
Citizenship	Italian	20	20.6%
	Non-Italian	77	79.4%
Total		97	100%
Level of Academic Programme	Bachelors	9	9.3%
	Masters	86	88.7%
	PhD	2	2.1%
Total		97	100%
School affiliated to the academic programme	Agricultural and Veterinary Medicine	6	6.2%
	Economics and Political Sciences	31	32%
	Engineering	14	14.4%
	Human and Social Sciences and Cultural Heritage	36	37.1%
	Law School	0	0%
	Medicine	1	1%
	Psychology	2	2.1%
	Science	7	7.2%
Total		97	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2023

Based on the gender distribution of the research participants, Table 2 revealed that out of 97, 55.7 percent were females, and 42.3 percent were males. An insignificant portion of the respondents both equally identified as “Other”, whilst a few of the respondents preferred not to mention the gender they identify with. Also, more than half of the research study respondents fall between ages 25 and 31, corresponding to 52.6 percent. This was followed by the age between 18-24 years. 9.7 percent of students fell between the ages 32-36 years, only representing 10.3 percent. Again, it can be observed from the results in Table 2 that the highest number and percentage of students who participated in the study were master’s students living in private rental housing in Padova. However, this is not surprising considering the highest age of most recorded students. This was followed by Bachelor and PhD students, who had 9.3 percent and 2.1 percent, respectively. The topmost percentage of students in this study have their current academic programmes affiliated with the School of Human and Social Sciences and Cultural Heritage. This represented the majority of students, corresponding to 37.1 percent. Students with percentages 32 and 14.4 have their programmes affiliated with the School of Economics, Political Sciences, and Engineering, respectively. The study found that students from the school of medicine have the lowest participation percentage in this research study. Lastly, it can be deduced that 79.4 percent of the students were non-Italians, whereas 20.6 percent were Italians. In other words, the study found that most respondents constituted international students. Additionally, a follow-up question required (optional) non-Italian students to specify their nationalities. The study found the assorted nationalities that constituted the category of students described as “non-Italian” and their frequencies. These include; American (4), Armenian (1), Azerbaijani (3), Belarusian (1), Brazilian (6), British (1), Cameroonian (1), Canadian (1), Colombian (1), Cypriot (1), Filipino (3), French (2), Gambian (4), Ghanaians (4), Greek (1), Hondurans (1), Indian (1), Indonesians (2), Iranians (6), Kenyans (2), Kyrgyz (1), Mexican (1), Montenegrins (2), Nigerians (3), Pakistani (2), Peruvians (1), Russians (3), South African (1), Swedish (1), Turkish (7), Ugandan (1) and Ukrainian (1).

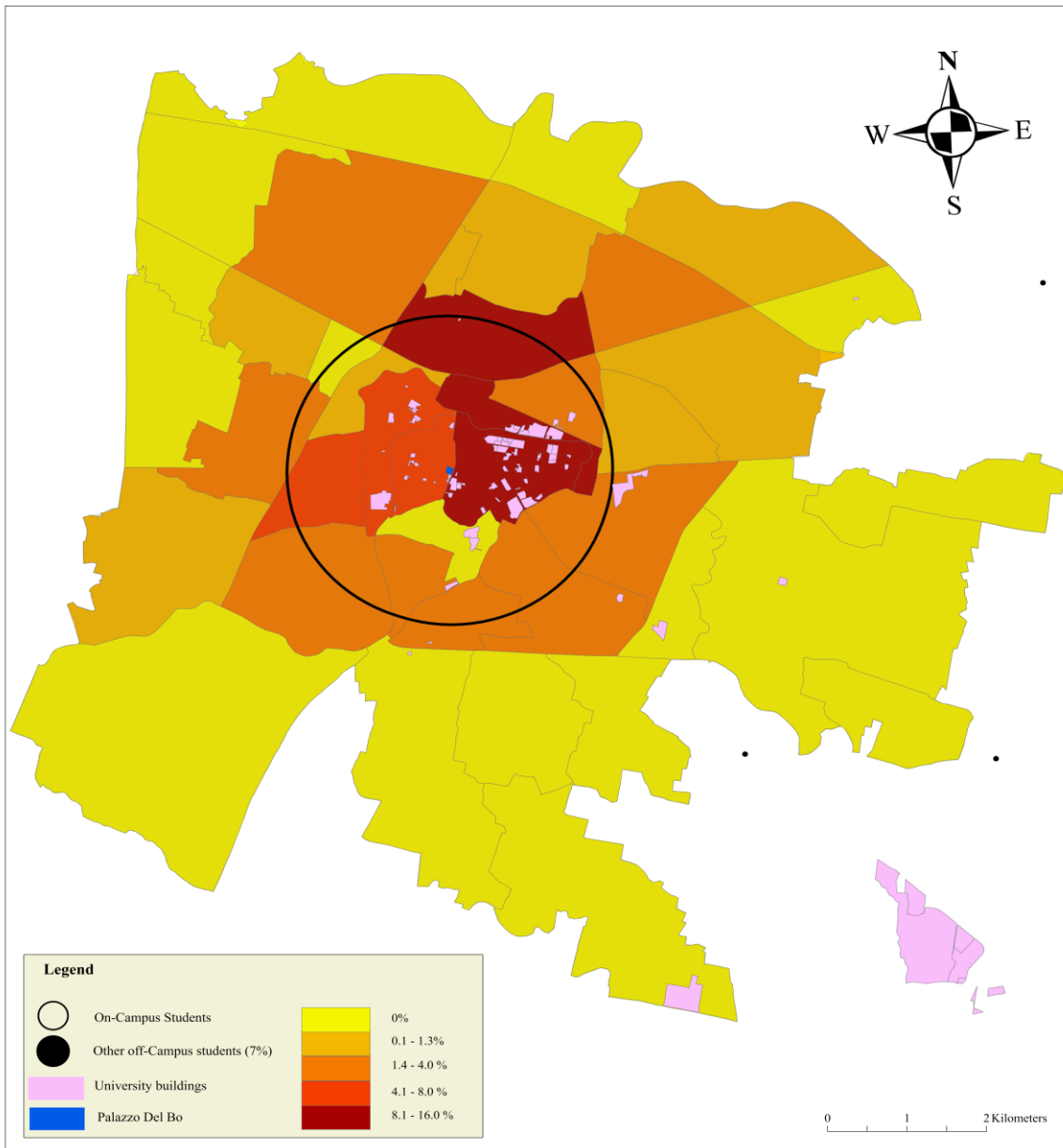


Figure 7. Map showing the spatial location of on-campus and off-campus private rental housing for students at the University of Padova.

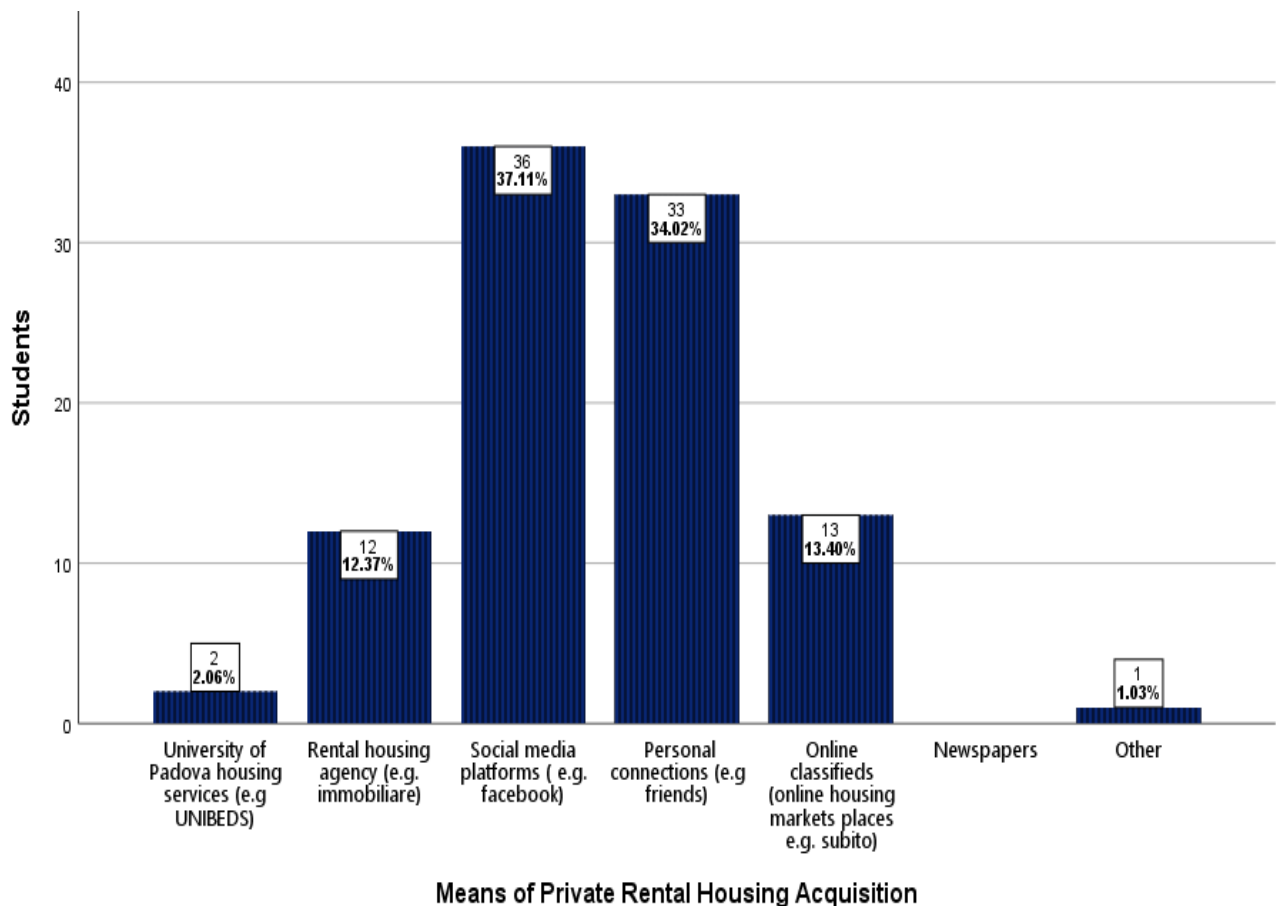


Figure 8. Ways by which students acquired their private rental housing.

Based on the results in Figure 8 above, 37.11 percent of students studying at the University of Padova acquired private-rented housing through social media platforms such as Facebook, Telegram, WhatsApp, and Instagram. This was followed by 34.02 percent of the students who acquired their private-rented housing through personal connections such as friends or family relatives. Moreover, 13.40 percent of the students indicated that they acquired their private rental housing through online classifieds, i.e., online housing markets places such as Subito, Idealista etc. However, the results showed that 2.06 percent of the students acquired private housing using the University of Padova housing services e.g., UNIBEDS. It is worth noting in this study that none of the students indicated that they acquired their private housing through the newspapers. Furthermore, 1.03 percent of the students used other means to their private-rented housing outside the options provided by the study's author but couldn't specify.

Lastly, the study found 12.37 percent patronized the services of rental agencies in acquiring their private rental housing. Even though this group represented less than half of the students who participated in the study, additional findings on the fees charged by these rental

agencies were investigated. It can be observed from Figure 9 that more than half of this category of students paid a fee of €400 and more to rental agencies for their private-rented housing. Also, 23.08 percent of these students paid fees between €300 and €400. The remaining students, representing 7.69 percent each, paid a fee between €200 - €300 and less than €100, respectively. Along with this, another group of students preferred not to say the fees they were required to pay by the rental agencies in patronizing their services.

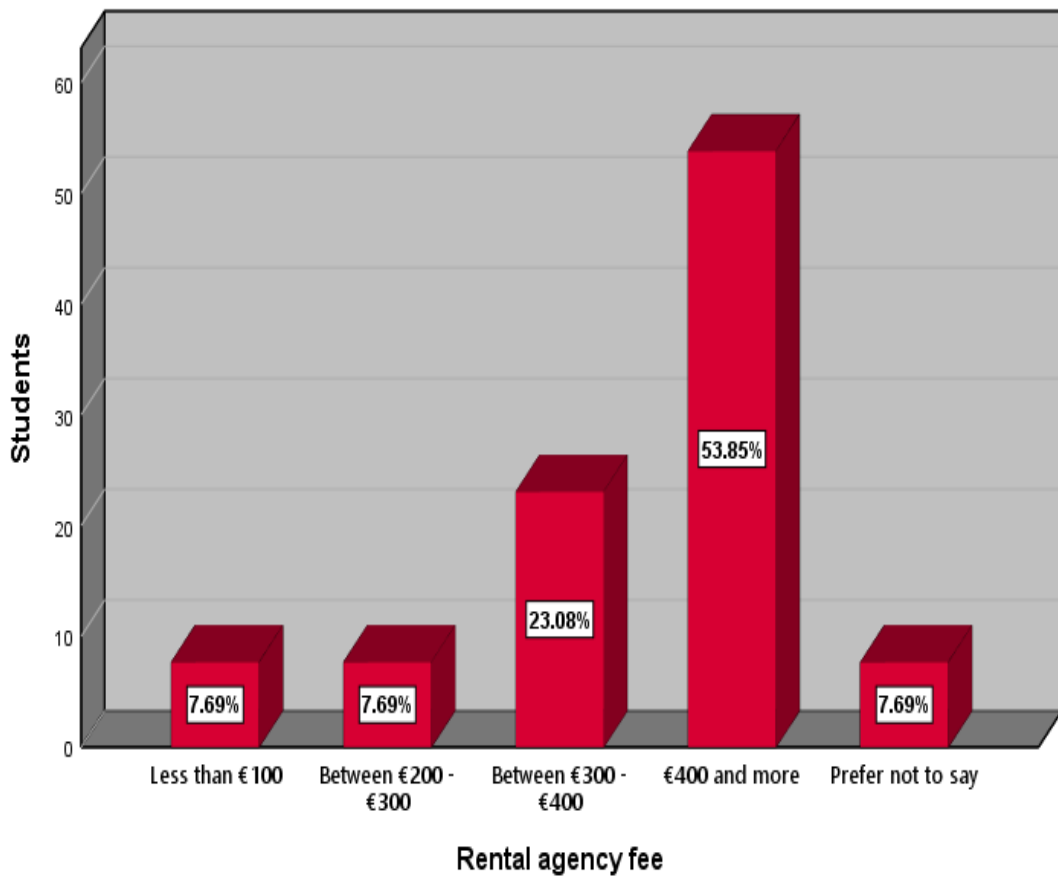


Figure 9. Distribution showing fees charged by rental agencies from students living in private rental housing.

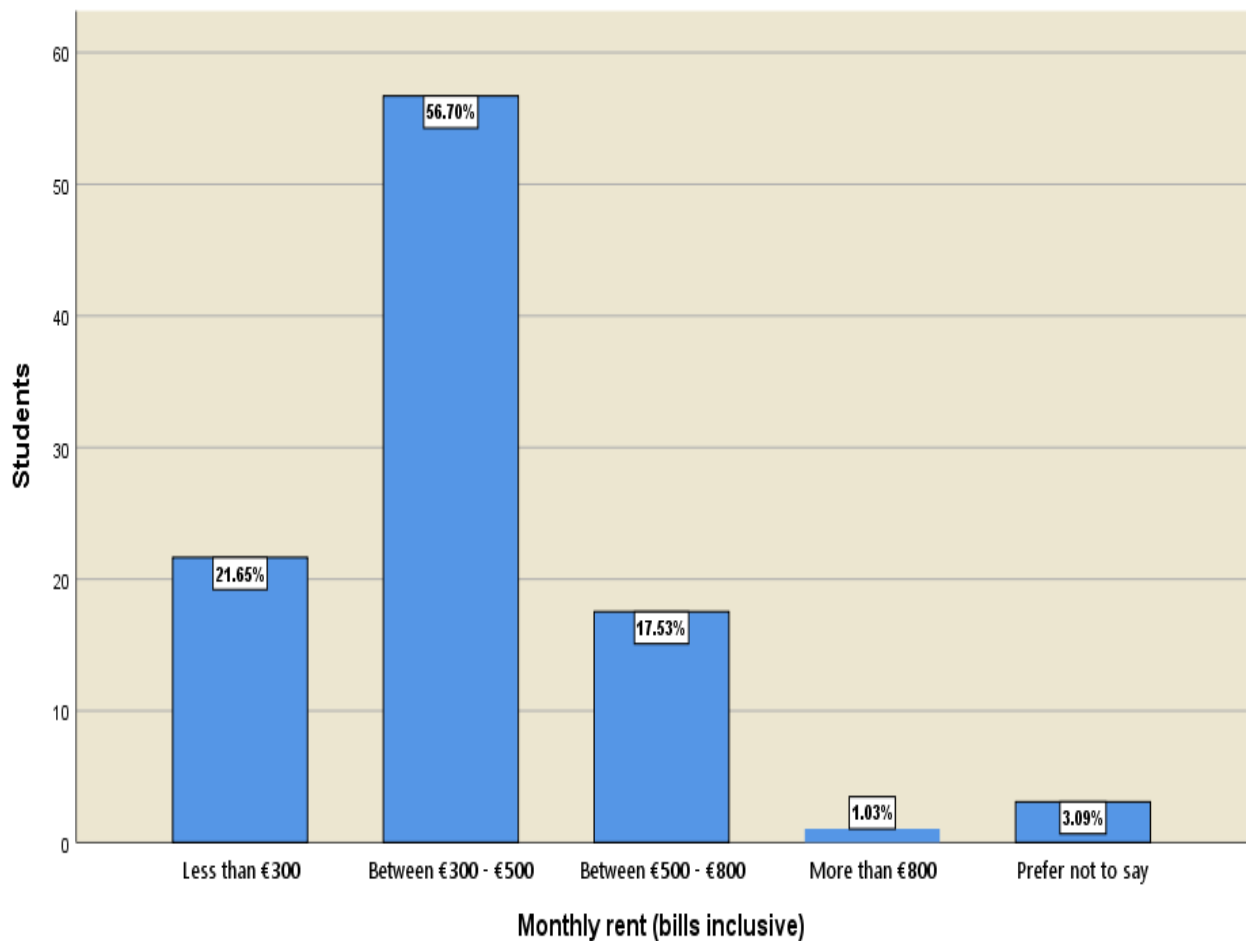


Figure 10. Distribution of monthly rent (bills inclusive) among students living in private-rented housing

From the result shown in Figure 10, students living in private-rented housing were asked to choose how much rent (bills inclusive) they paid monthly. Therefore, the study found that the highest percentage of the students pay between €300 - €500 monthly for their private-rented housing in Padova. This corresponded to 56.70 percent, a little more than half of the research participants. Students who paid for their monthly rent less than €300 were 21.65 percent, whereas students who paid between €500 - €800 were 17.53 percent. Notwithstanding, only 1.03 percent of the students pay more than €800. Notably, 3.09 percent of the students preferred not to mention the monthly rental cost of their private rental housing.

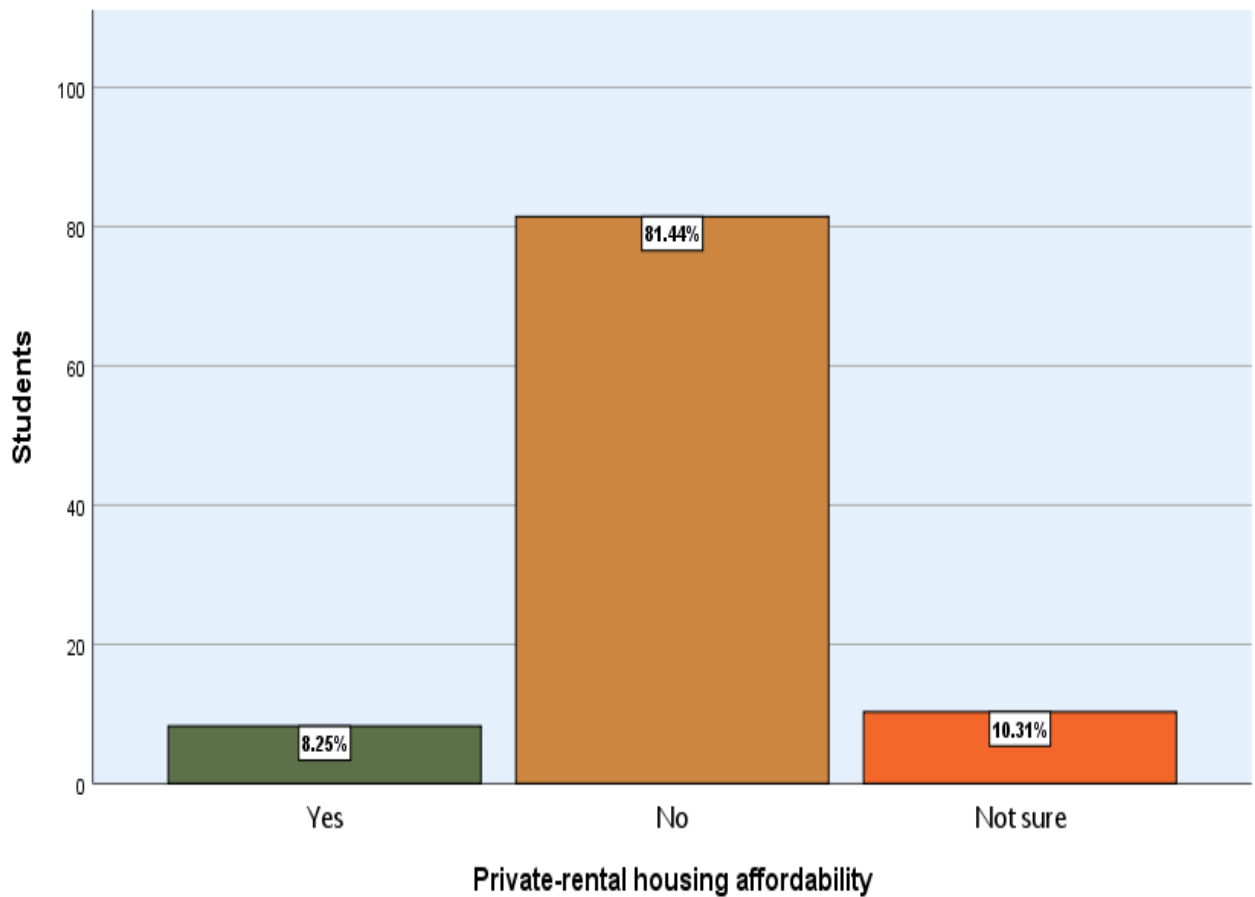


Figure 11. Private rental housing affordability for students in Padova.

From the figure above, the study found that 81.44 percent of students indicated that the cost of private rental housing at the University was not affordable. This result represented more than half of the respondents in this research study. In the other vein, 10.31 percent of students also indicated that they were unsure if the cost of private rental housing for students in Padova is affordable. Again, it was observed that 8.25 percent of the cost of private-rental housing is not affordable to students.

The result revealed in Figure 11 compares favourably with the response of some stakeholders on how it plans to address affordability issues in the private rental housing markets. Their shared thoughts have been transcribed as follows;

“Yeah. So, we have a couple of ideas regarding the direction that has to be taken, and it involves mainly working with the municipality and the region, and in particular the ESU. I think less than a month ago a new agreement was signed between the municipality, the associations of homeowners, the unions of people who live in a rented apartment. They didn't remember the work and student unions to have a lower rent for the students A and

the homeowner gets a tax deduction, so he gets his money back. Like in another way and these have had been signed little less than a month ago and had we managed to, there was there already was one, but we managed to lower the rent payments suggested so it's cheaper. And also, if the homeowner decides to go even lower or from the suggested rent, they get another tax deduction. And then we, that we are trying to work on our Co housing project. So, there are a lot of old people living alone with spare rooms in the city and we have just begun working with the with the municipality to have dedicated office that will try to get together, students searching for home and the old people that want to have somebody in the house, not to do any work. But no, they are afraid that if only if they, you know, maybe fall on the ground and can't reach the phone, nobody's there. And also, being lonely, it's not, it's not good for anyone. Especially old people and and then our role in this will be to try and spread these opportunities to prevent cases of illegality or jacking up the prices because with this agreement, everybody gains both students and people who rent the other. Issue is with the ESU there is that is more difficult because it's underfunded by by the regional government and its board of Administration is made not to function because it's one member of the regional government majority, one of the minorities, one people from university, one people. And students. So, it doesn't have itself a lot of power to change things, especially if the regional government doesn't provide enough funds. We're trying to put pressure on them and they acknowledge the problem, but our goal is to get all the ESU representatives from the university, not only from Padova but those also from the Verona and Venezia, to work together and demand from the region more fundings. But that will be a difficult task since the majority of the regional government has been elected without Bulgarian result and so they tend to overlook any request that doesn't come from their electoral basis, which is unfortunately not university students. And so that is the way to intervene on the side of a public residences for students” (Interview with President of the Student Union of University of Padova, UDU, 19-04-2023).

“So there is just one thing it's in in our power with within this. This issue, which is taxes. So what we can OK you know that if you if you own a house, and it's not the house that you are living in, you have to pay some taxes for it. These taxes are partially due to the municipality, just a small part of it. So what municipality can do is decide how high. In this, taxes can be so we in Italy we have two different kind of location contract one is an

open market contract so you go to a property and you sign a contract which is whatever it must be of four years at least, and then it can be renewed for another four years and the price is the one that is decided by the market. OK. Free then. In Italy, we have another contract which is possible, which is a contract. That we call “contrato concordato.

...It means that what you have to pay is decided by an agreement that put together different subjects. OK, so private properties for example the the associations that represent the people living in the houses and also students and ESU for example. Because within this this contract you have three different possibilities. And one of them is the one for students. OK, so you have a general contract account concordato for people just living in that place. Another possibility for students, and a third one about temporary location. As for example, people are coming for just a few months for working in another place, OK in this contract. It will in the in the agreement that decides about this kind of contracts. The people that are under signing the the agreement, they have to split the town in different zones and within these zones they decide what is the minimum and the maximum level of the renting. OK. So, if you want to stay, if you have a property and you want to sign a contract within this kind of contract, so not the free market contract, but the contrato concordato and you have a house in zone A for example, you know that either that you sign a contract with a person living here or with a student, or a person living here for just a short time. 18 months. OK, you have to stay within this level of money to be paid. OK, so what we need is to take the percentage of our taxes and say we put this, we made it in autonomous and and we say, the ones the properties that rent at the in the free market or that let their apartments empty. They have to pay the maximum percentage possible of the taxes due to the municipality while. The people that decide to rent their house, they're their private houses in these other contrato concordato to these three possibilities, let's say it's targets. Yes, they will be their taxes. Will be low and low; it depends if they stay in an inner level which is not the highest one within this level. So, if it is, let's say you have to ask at least 100 maximum 200. If you stay, if I remember well 15% lower than the maximum. Then you will have less taxes to be paid. So, this is the only tool we have to to make it possible that people decide to go to contract concordato, which is the most I mean comfortable for students. So, this we did as soon as the the situation was so clear that it was such a problem” (Interview with delegate for housing at the Municipality of Padova, 21-04-2023)

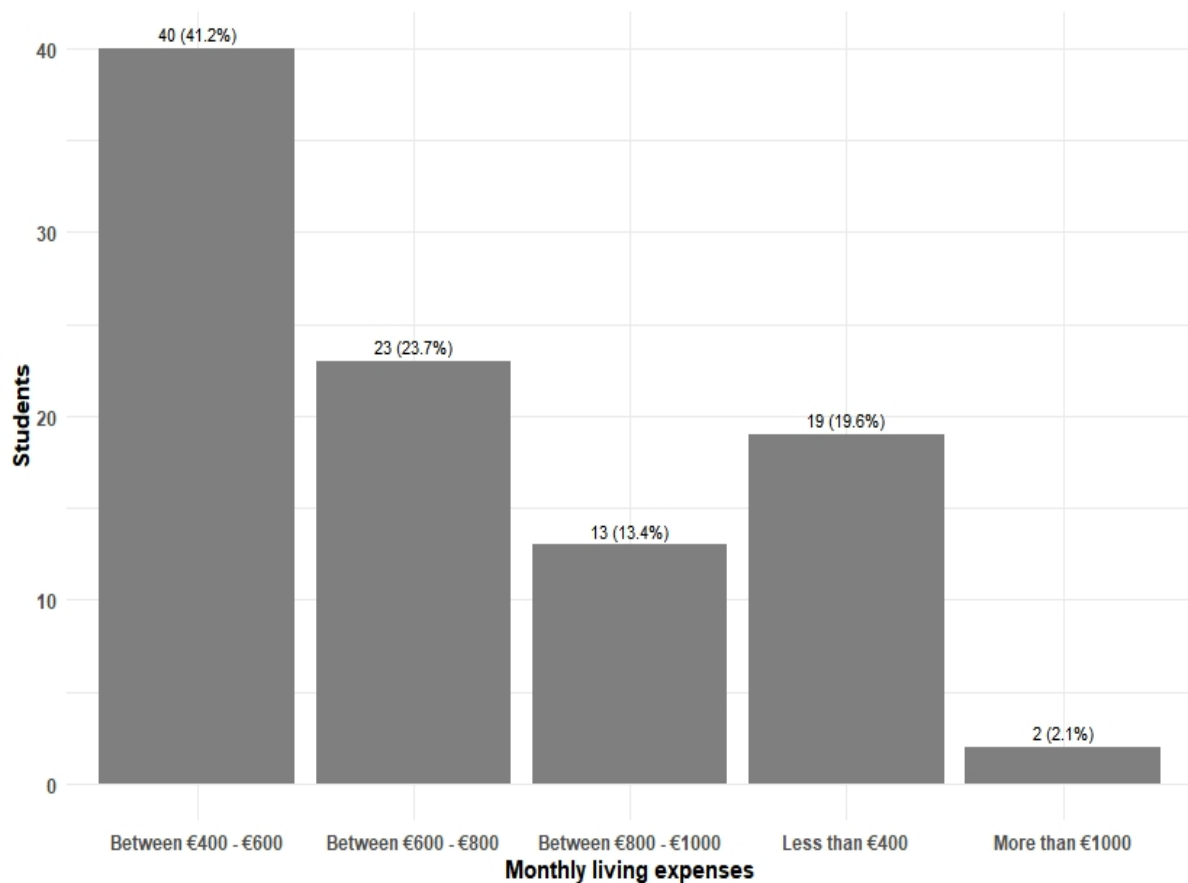


Figure 12. Distribution of estimated monthly expenses

Based on the result in Figure 12, the estimated monthly expenses of students living in private-rented housing in Padova. Of 97 students who participated in the study, 40 indicated that their estimated monthly expenses were between €400 and €600. This was followed by 23 students whose estimated monthly expenses lay between €600 - €800. The study found that 19 out of 97 students had estimated monthly expenses of less than €400. It was evident in the results that the estimated monthly expenses of the remaining students lay between €800 - €1000 and more than €1000 respectively.

4.3. Main causes of the private-rental housing challenges in Padova

In identifying the main causes of the private rental housing challenges, students were asked to indicate at least two or more choices in the options provided by the study's author. Some causes provided in the options to solicit student responses were identified in the literature review, whereas others were identified as pre-conceived ideas from the students. Possible option allocation was provided to enable students to specify their open-ended causes that were not captured in the options provided by the author. Figure 13 showed that out of 97 students

who participated in the study, 84, with a percentage equivalence of 35.15, selected increased demand and high rental as the main cause of the private housing challenges at the University of Padova. The study found that this represented the majority of responses of the students. This was followed by 63 students with a percentage of 26.36, which indicated that discrimination based on nationality and gender from landlords/rental agencies was another main cause of the private rental housing for students studying at the University of Padova. The third main cause highlighted by 50 out of 97 students was the lack of affordable private rental properties in Padova.

Furthermore, the study revealed two main causes that cannot be underestimated. These are increased English-taught programmes at the University of Padova and the Covid-19 pandemic. These two latter causes revealed by the students represented the minority main causes with students 25 and 17 respectively. Students who specified responses other than the options provided were quoted as follows; “The university has many programmes with unlimited spaces and inadequate infrastructures”, “lack of proper management because the university accepted more students than it should have without planning for housing”, “the eco-bonus for housing innovations”, “less number of university residences”, “lack of public housing”, “lack of new or renovated buildings”, “Owners make more money with AirB&B or booking”, “lack of communication between the municipality of Padova and the University and poor planning management”, and lastly, “not building more houses”.

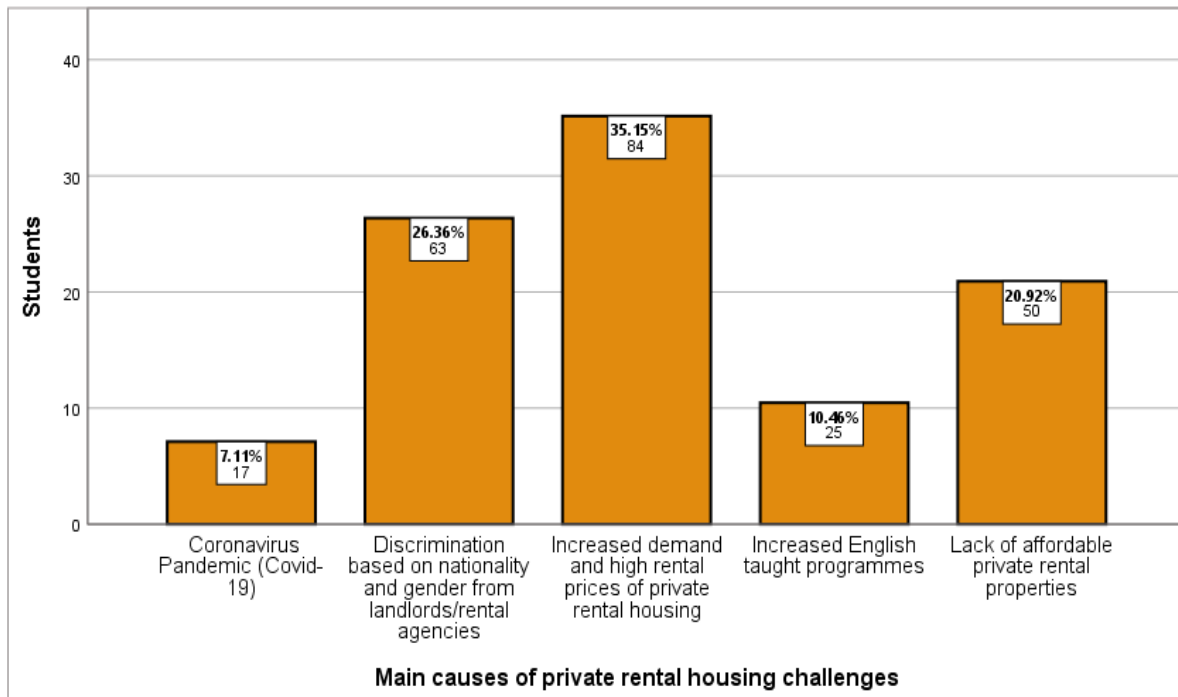


Figure 13. Main Causes of the private rental housing challenges

Therefore, there was a considerable link between the response generated from the quantitative data in Figure 13, responses of students involved in the housing protest and stakeholders interviewed on what they think the causes of the private rental housing challenges in Padova were. They said,

“... The region hasn't built in 30 years new student houses... the university stepped up in the numbers, you know two years ago there, we were 60,000 students. Now we're 71,000, yeah..., It's a lot 11,000 more in two years. It's a huge number and you know Padova is a city with 200,000 citizens. Plus, the university students there are alot. If you want to be a big city with a big university, you have to provide for all of them” **(Interview with student A, 13-05-2023)**

“The issues for me are because it's a very popular city. During the pandemic there is a lot of courses in the university that start, and with the Internet lessons by Zoom, a lot of people started university here in Padova, University of Padova, but only on Zoom. So now there is not all the there's not the houses for these people who want to live here” **(Interview with student B, 13-05-2023)**

“What I see is that there has been a big change before or after the pandemic because during the pandemic students were not in town anymore, they were having the location, to Internet and on one side on another side. When just during the pandemia, we had the recognition by UNESCO as a town, as a heritage for the world, tourism started to come back very early. And in a very important way, and so many people that used to rent their apartments to students, which is something that is very usual in Padova as a university town. They decided that to to switch because there were no students in town, but there was this opportunity to give for tourism...

...For two years,...many property owners discovered that giving their apartments for rent to tourists was much easier and much more interesting. Also, under an economic point of view, more comfortable. Yes, of course. Because you you have in one week what you usually have in one month. And so there was a bigger change in the market in the private market, and this is one of the reasons..., So we see that there are less and less houses, so private houses, houses for our students.

...in the last years, we had a big problem with the agency that used to be the public one in charge for housing for students. So ESU, which should be the regional agency for housing for right to to right, for to to study for, for the university. And they used to be the ones that had many houses for students of different kind. And in the last years, they stopped their activity. There was a problem within this agency. And nowadays many of their places are not available. So, they are closed and empty. Because they didn't have the chance. The money to restore, to renew these buildings, these apartments. So, we know they are there. But for many years they were not available.

...On the other side, we had the university started a politic, an internationalization, so we had more and more students. So we went from 60,000 Students to 70,000 to students in a very short time. And many of them, as you can tell us, are coming from abroad, which means that they need a housing which is not just a room or a room for some days, it's a permanent house for many months and not just something very shortly...

...In the same time, we had, under the point of view of people living in Padova, also a big change because we had during the pandemia we had two years in which it was not possible for a private private property to to ask people living in their house. To go away in because during the pandemia the government made this law. Because of course it was very uncomfortable in that period to find out new solutions and having people just thrown

away out of house, so they blocked this. They said, OK, for two years it's not possible to. I don't remember the word, but anyway to evict people” (Interview with delegate for housing at the Municipality of Padova, 21-04-2023)

“... So, I think there are three key factors to consider as causes of the housing prices. One is deeper and more structural, which is the lack of public housing for students, but in general public housing in the city of Padova and in the whole region of Veneto since the regional entities that oversee this topic, which is out there for houses for social social housing and hasn't had any kind of investments in the past, I guess 40 years and has been selling out his assets and the entity for the right to study ESU has also been commissioned for almost 20 years up until 2020, and so there hasn't been no investments in terms of building new residences for students. And neither renovating or expanding existent ones up to the point that there are several facilities that are closed for have been closed for at least 10 years..., So this is the structural problem to this we have to add the increasing numbers of students in the University of Padova which have, I wouldn't say skyrocket, but have been steadily increasing for the past four or five years...

... because of COVID, because from 2020 to 2021, a lot of people began following lessons online, and then all of a sudden had to find home in Padova because of the end of online lessons. So we had thousands of people like. The amount of people that normally we would have seen spread out in two or three years searching for a new home together in the same year, so COVID also was a factor...

...and then there are some minor causes we think we don't have, obviously. Official numbers, but the so-called bonus 110, which was the bonus issued from the government to renovate homes and then giving out. How do you say when you don't have to pay taxes because you spend something you can write off taxes to pay and so that? Meant that many homeowners decided to renovate their apartments, and so they were not available. And the this combined with general difficulty to, and these renovation works on time had a bad impact on this because if in the project of the homeowners maybe. It was a three-month job or six-month job. There are cases of works being going on for more than a year because of the amount of people asking all at once and the, the enterprises that had to do the job, but they couldn't do it on time so and so these are the the main factors of...

...Three main causes, so the lack of investments in public housing, the increase of number of students, especially international students, that comes even from outside the region of

Veneto because historically, the vast majority we talk about, I think around 80% up until. Eight years ago, of the students of the University of Padova came from nearby not more than 80 kilometers further from Padova, but the number of students that has been increasing has been more. Fully said and more international students which have we need, who needs home because they cannot go by training every day, so this and then COVID that exacerbated the situation and then also other minor things” (Interview with President of the Student Union of University of Padova, UDU, 19-04-2023).

4.4: Main coping strategies adopted for students unable to find private rented housing

Table 3. Coping strategies of students

Coping strategies	Frequency	Percentage
Living with family/friends	24	16.9%
Commuting from nearby towns/cities	28	19.7%
Staying in temporary accommodations (e.g., hostels, hotels)	30	21.1%
Paying higher rent than desired	60	42.3%
Total	142	100%

Table 3 represents the various coping strategies adopted by students living in private-rented housing who once encountered or presently encountered housing challenges whilst pursuing their academics at the University of Padova. In identifying the coping strategies, students were asked to select more than one response from the study's author, if applicable. An “Other” option was provided to openly specify coping strategies that weren’t indicated in the options. The study found that the main coping strategy adopted by most students was paying higher rent than desired. This implies that the majority of students, 42.3 percent, paid rental costs that exceeded the actual rental cost. The next main strategy adopted by 21.1 percent of students who struggled to find private-rented housing at the University of Padova was to stay in temporary accommodations such as hostels, hotels, B&B etc.

Moreover, 19.7 percent of students who could not find private rental housing in Padova commute from nearby towns or cities to fulfil their academic commitments. Some of these

nearby towns or cities may include but are not limited to Venezia, Vicenza and Belluno. The coping strategy that had the least share of the students, which constituted 16.9 percent indicated that, in the face of the housing challenges at the University of Padova, they coped by living with family/friends. Students who gave an open-ended response indicated their main coping strategies through the following; “commuting by train 20hr per week for $\frac{3}{4}$ weeks of October 2021 and living in Caravan until the end of March 2022”, “I moved to a very far apartment that I hated”, “Attend classes remotely or take the course as non-attending”, “sharing apartment with strangers”, and lastly “living in precarious areas of Padova other than in more well-off neighbourhoods”.

4.5: Students’ level of awareness and perception of the private rental housing challenges

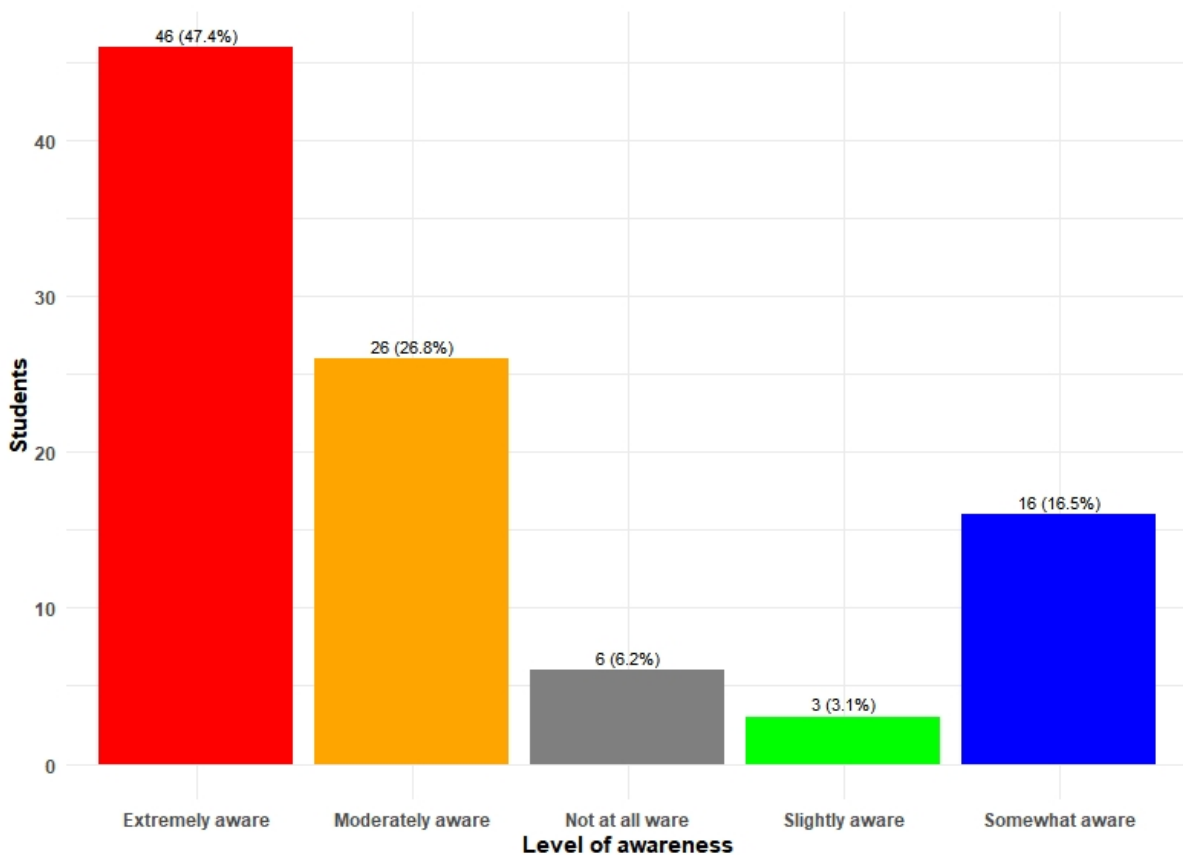


Figure 14. Students’ level of awareness of the private rental housing challenges

Based on the result in Figure 14 in assessing students’ level of awareness of the private-rented housing challenges at the University, various levels of awareness were classified for students to choose from by the author of the study. Therefore, the study found that 47.4 percent of the students were extremely aware of the private housing challenges at the University of Padova. It is worth mentioning that this group of students who were extremely aware of the

housing challenges characterised most of the research participants. Also, 26.8 percent of the students indicated they were moderately aware of the private-rented housing challenges. This was followed by 16.5 percent of the students who indicated they were somewhat aware of the privately rented housing challenges. Even though the study revealed that 6.2 percent of students were not at all aware of the housing challenges, half of this percentage, corresponding to 3.1 percent, showed that they were slightly aware of the housing challenges at the University of Padova.

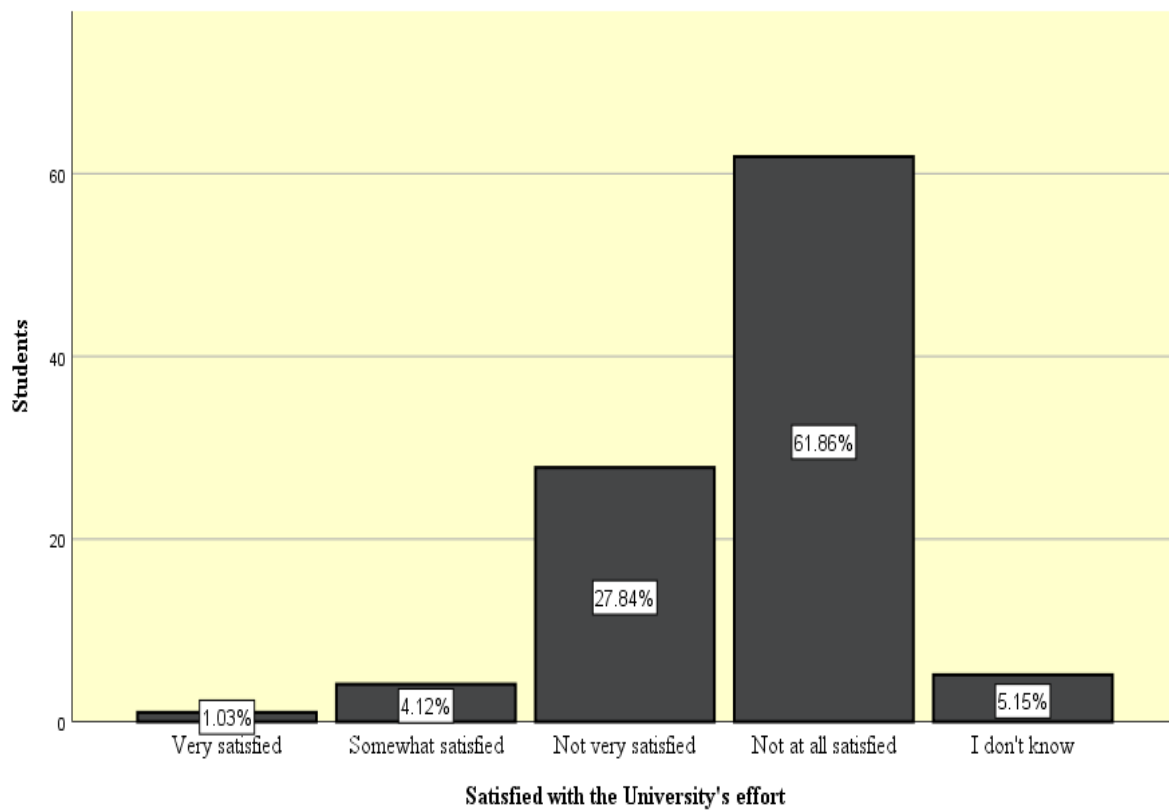


Figure 15. Students' level of satisfaction with the University's effort in addressing private housing challenges

A simple bar chart was used to understand students' satisfaction level based on the University of Padova's effort in addressing the private housing challenges. Based on the result shown in Figure 15, the majority of students who represented 61.86 percent indicated that they were not satisfied. 27.84 percent also indicated they were not very satisfied with the University of Padova's effort to tackle the housing issues. Similarly, 4.12 percent showed that they were somewhat satisfied. The study revealed that 1.03 percent which equals the minority of students, indicated they were very satisfied. Some 5.15 percent of students showed they didn't know whether they were satisfied with the university's effort.

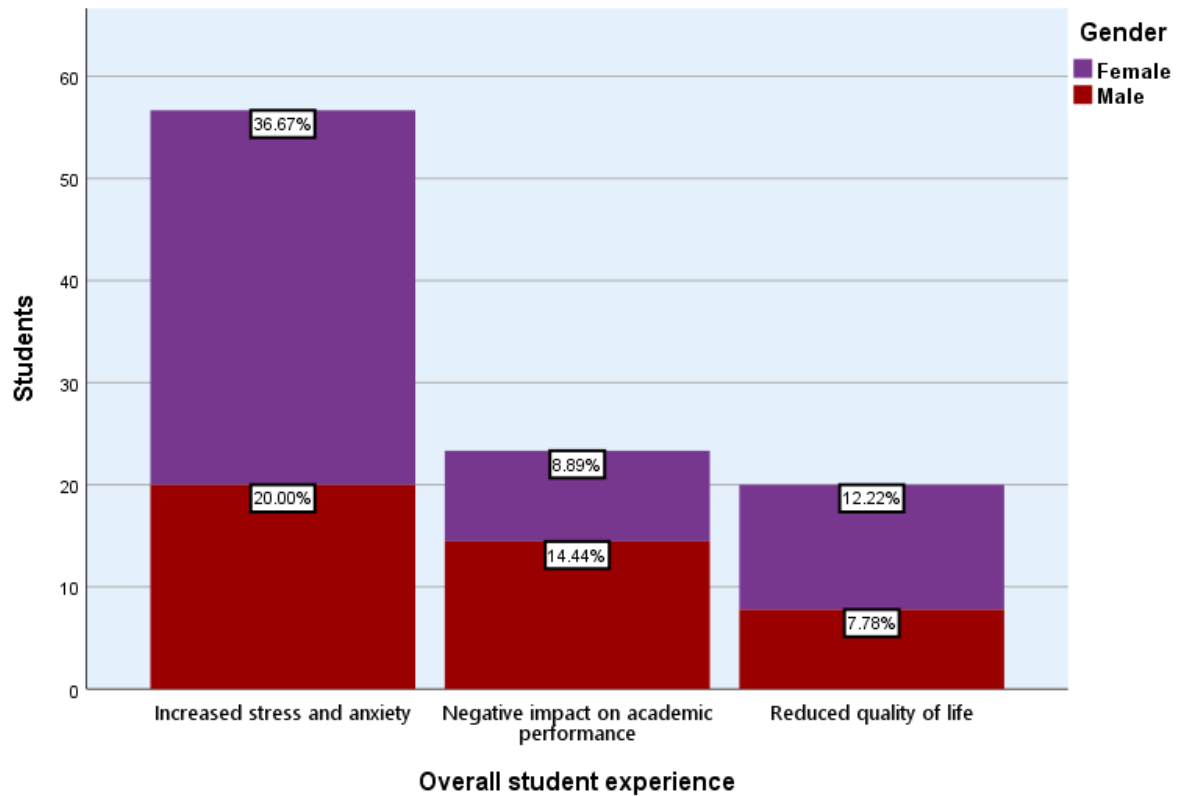


Figure 16. Overall students' experience based on gender

To understand students' perception of the private rented housing challenges, the study asked students living in private rented housing how this challenge has affected their overall experience. Their overall students' experience was analyzed based on their gender using a stack bar chart focusing on only males and females due to the purpose of the study. Therefore, based on the outcome in Figure 16, the study found that 34.02 percent of students' overall experience has been affected by increased stress and anxiety. Males, with 18.56 percent followed this. More so, for students who showed that their overall experience was affected by the negative impact on their academic performance, the percentage score of males was the highest, with 13.40 percent, whereas 8.25 percent were females. Again, the study found that the privately rented housing challenges have reduced students' quality, significantly affecting more females than males. In a broader view, it is worth noting that from the result of the study, the private rental housing challenges have increased stress and anxiety most among students. In contrast, the student's quality of life has been affected the least.

A student involved in the housing protest who briefly explained how the private rental housing challenges affected students' academic performance somewhat aligns with the

response gathered from the result of the quantitative data of research participants. She indicated that,

“.... Because students have to work to pay the taxes. So, you cannot follow all the lessons. It's very difficult because some professors need all the hours in the class so for us students who wanna live here in Padova, you need to work for pay the taxes. So, it's very difficult missing lessons...”

4.6: Students' victims of fraudulent activities in their search for private rental housing

In comprehending how students fell victim to fraudulent activities in their quest to secure private-rented housing in Padova, it is worth first understanding where these fraudulent activities were prevalent. Therefore, Figure 16 found that victims of fraudulent activities during the private rental housing challenges were more prevalent among on-campus students than off-campus students. Elaborating further, the highest percentage of students who fell victim to fraudulent activities, corresponding to 10.1-20.0 percent were found within on-campus, distinguished by the 2km buffer. Nevertheless, 5.1-10.0 percent of students who fell victim to fraudulent activities were found among students who lived on campus about 1km from the city centre, Pallazzo del Bo. Lastly, 0.1-5.0 percent of students were dominantly observed outside the on-campus areas. It can be concluded that the fraudulent activities were more prevalent among students who lived in on-campus private rented housing than those who lived in off-campus private rented housing.

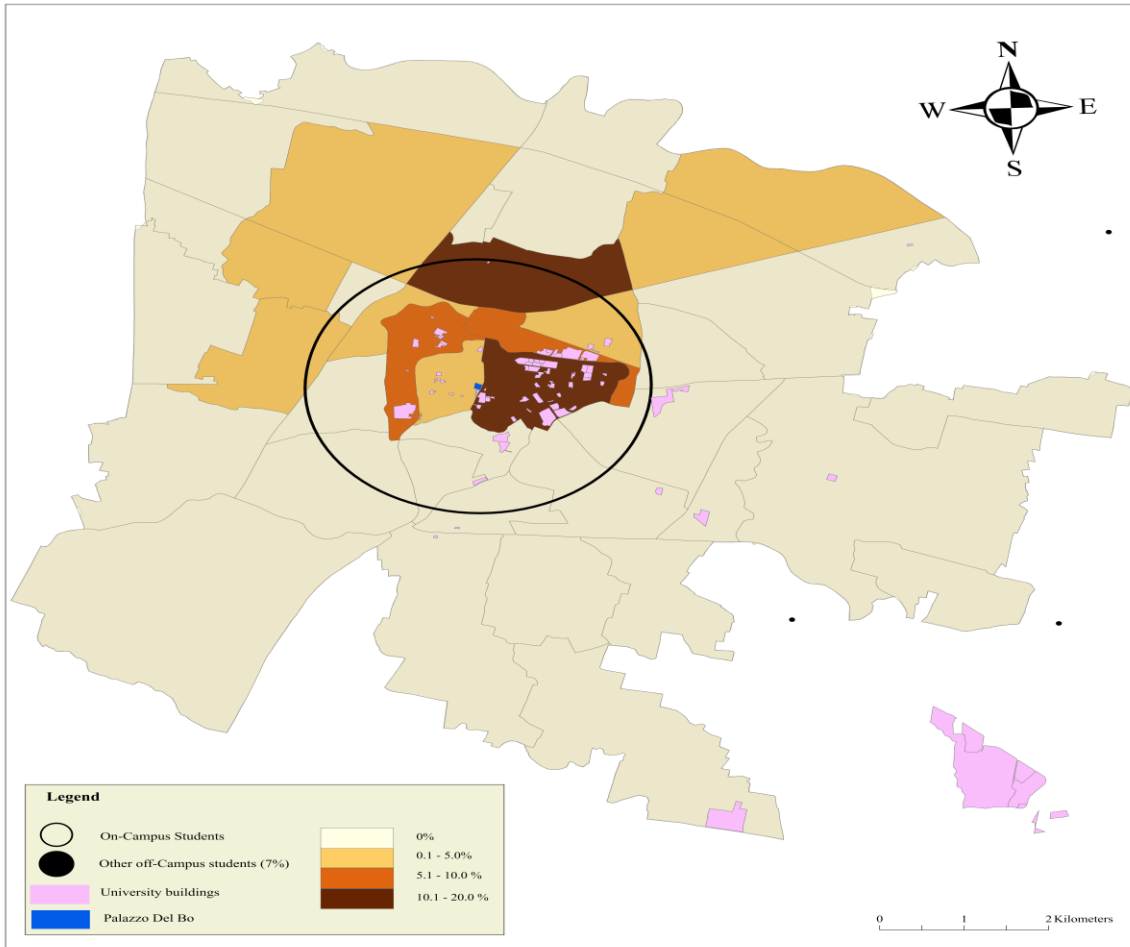


Figure 17. Map showing prevalence of victims of fraudulent activities among on-campus and off-campus students.

The following are some excerpts from interviews with stakeholders on fraudulent activities in the housing market that shed light on the results captured in Figure 17. Their shared thoughts were as follows.

“These fraudulent activities, as soon as we saw that there was this issue with fraudulent activity. We spoke to the university because the most targeted people were international students...,

...We opened office of the Questura inside the university with which that has personnel that speak English at a good level and can provide translation for the documents for free, and so if anyone had the, even if they didn't get defrauded because they recognized it, but wanted to denounce it, they could go there. And if they were victims of a fraud, they could report it and go through the legal process to get their money back and have a little bit of

justice, and also since, especially for international students or in general people who needed to have a fixed residency for any kind of legal issue...

...We had a deal made from from the university with the Questura to leave the possibility to have on the documents are temporary residents. Even if you were staying at the hotel in a hostel, friend's house or anywhere you could use that as your legal address for the time being while you were searching for home. So, these were legal issues and how we try to solve them, because there's not much that we could do directly..." (Interview with President of the Student Union of University of Padova, UDU, 19-04-2023).

"...we are now implementing a kind of pilot project that is two or so in parallel, we have many elderly people because in Italy we have very people living so long, OK, and nowadays they are living in houses where they used to live with a big family and the house is almost empty. Maybe there are one or two people within that house. So, what we started to do is to share a project with students. University, ESU and Associations of properties to see if it is possible to match. People having a bigger house with people looking for apartments and trying to not just connect them, but also to to give them a help to live together in a proper way. OK, because of course there is on the part of, and many people, it's like, OK, am I safe to have somebody that I don't know in my house? Will he or she be living in a way I'm able to handle or not? What are the rules of our living together? And I mean in Padova that we used in the past that we used to have this kind of sharing houses Co housing, but now we lost it. And now that the universities are such a large university with so many people, there is a feeling of OK, but these are people from another world and not just people coming from abroad, but students in general. I mean, so what we are trying to do is to connect these two worlds and see if this is a chance. So, this is a way to find a solution..."

...In respect to finding housing to agencies, for example. But then there is this programmes of agencies, in fact as I think that once more that only if we are working together with all the stakeholder of this problem, we are able to organize us also in respect to the problem and to give answers to the students. With that, they have to go to the private age. And one of the topics for us as a town in general about housing is to reach, to build an agency for housing that gives all the information so that when you come to Padova, you know whatever you are, I mean students, workers or whatever family or you can go there and be aware of what is the market then. Of course, you can

go to the private agency to ask for the the single apartment, but a place where informations are given so that” (Interview with delegate for housing at the Municipality of Padova, 21-04-2023)

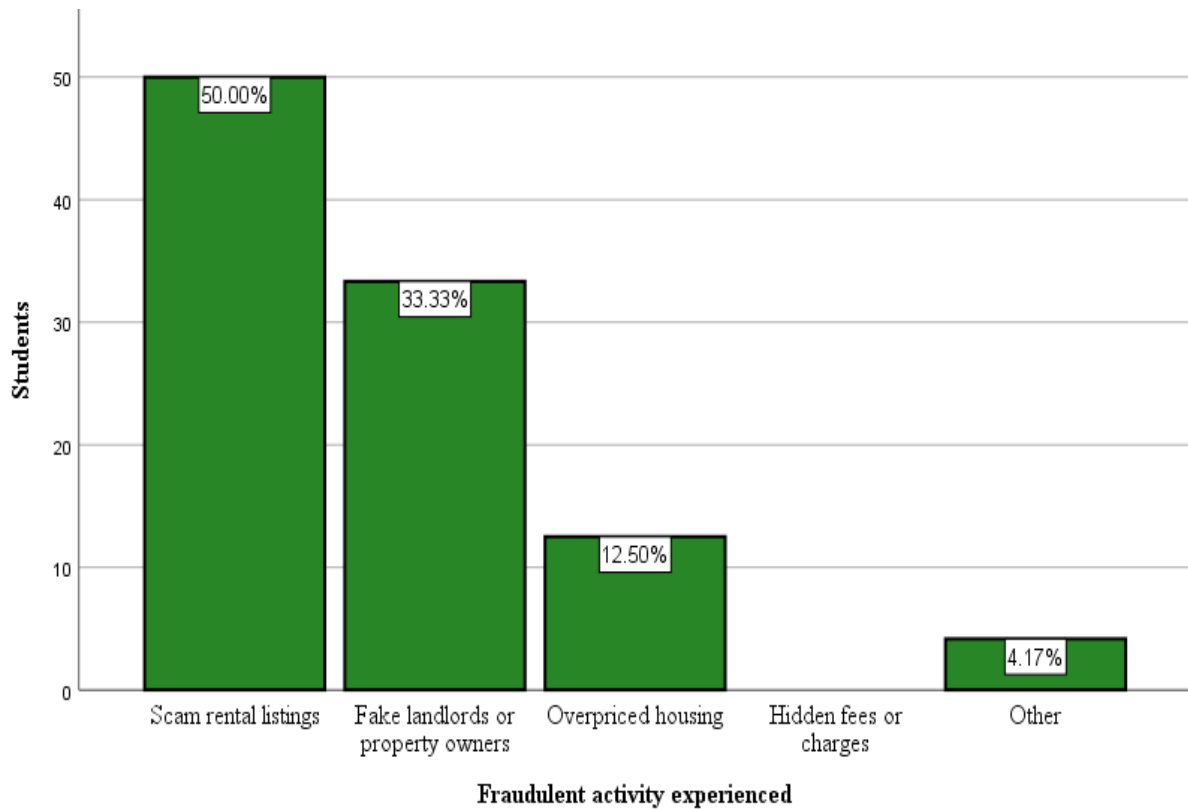


Figure 18. Nature of fraudulent activities experienced by students

Using a simple bar chart shown in Figure 18, 50 percent of students experienced scam rental listings, which was exactly half of the students. This was followed by 33.33 percent of students who experienced fraudulent activities through fake landlords or property owners. Overpriced housing was the third most experienced fraudulent activity, comprising 12.50 percent of students. None of the students experienced fraudulent activity, such as hidden fees or charges. Other specified responses stated that “Landlord pretended to be a family friend for tax purposes,” which was faced through social media platforms.

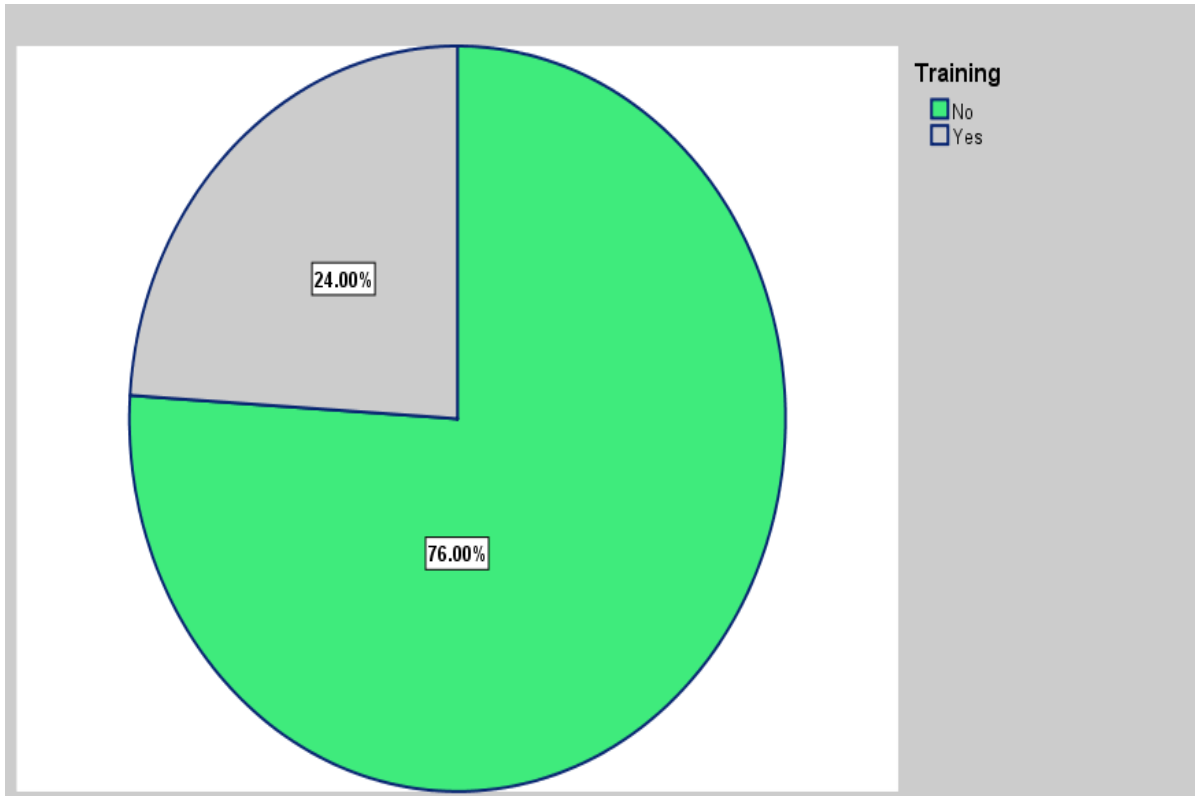


Figure 19. Percentage of students with no training

The observed result from the pie chart in Figure 19 revealed that 76 percent of students who fell victim to fraudulent activities hadn't received training or guidance on avoiding fraudulent activities on social media platforms. Again, the study found that 24 percent of students have been trained or received guidance yet still fell victim to fraudulent activities.

4.7: Potential solutions for managing students' private rental housing challenges

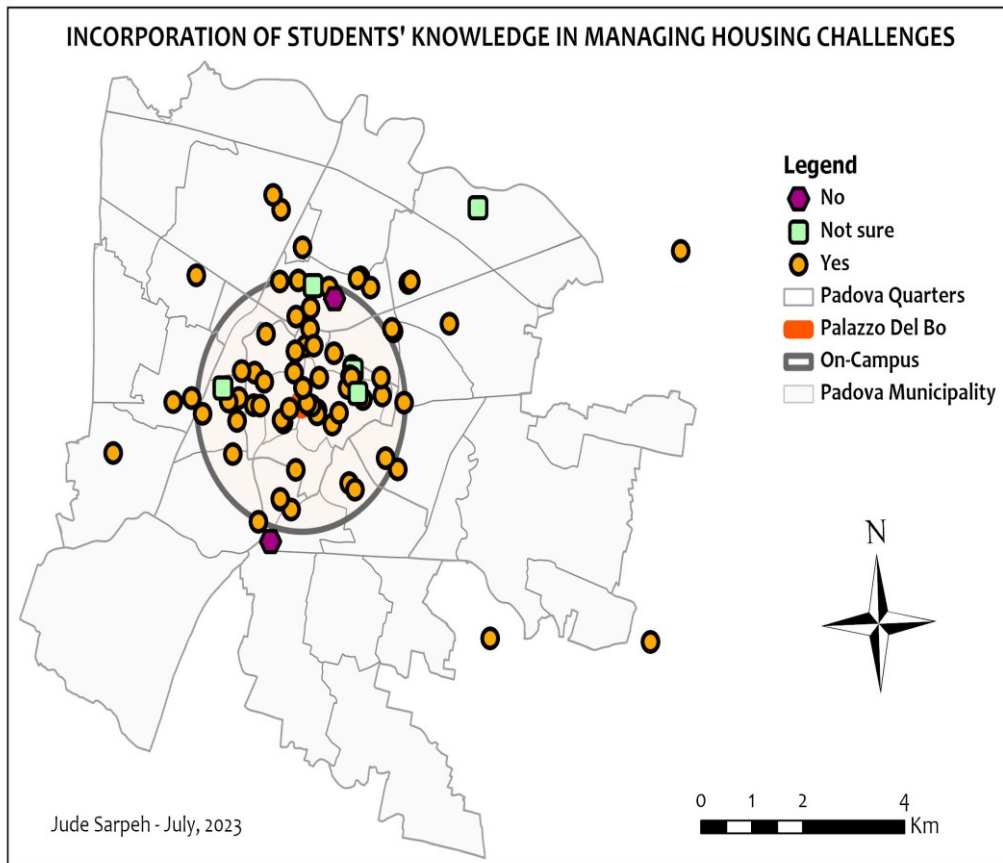


Figure 20. Map showing student knowledge incorporation

From the results on the map shown above, it can be deduced that most students answered “Yes” on whether students' knowledge should be considered when developing solutions to the private rental housing challenges. In contrast, the minority comprised of students who answered “No” and “Not sure” concerning incorporating students’ knowledge in managing the housing challenges. Notably, the highest number of students who indicated that students’ knowledge should be incorporated in managing the private rented housing were living in on-campus private-rented housing rather than off-campus private rented student housing.

Additionally, in exploring the potential solutions for managing the private rental housing challenges, students who selected “Yes” were asked how they think their knowledge and opinions could be incorporated to help the relevant stakeholders address this novel challenge. Based on the result in Figure 21, the study found that 29.9 percent of students indicated that the management of the University of Padova should conduct regular surveys to gather students’ feedback regarding their welfare on housing. The next highest option, with 27.8 percent, the

study revealed, was ensuring collaborative projects between students and the University of Padova. Again, 26.8 percent of respondents highlighted that encouraging student participation in policy-making processes was vital in incorporating students' knowledge in managing the private housing challenge. Last but not least, the study result in Figure 21 showed that the lowest percentage of students preferred that the University of Padova educate students on housing issues by providing resources and information.

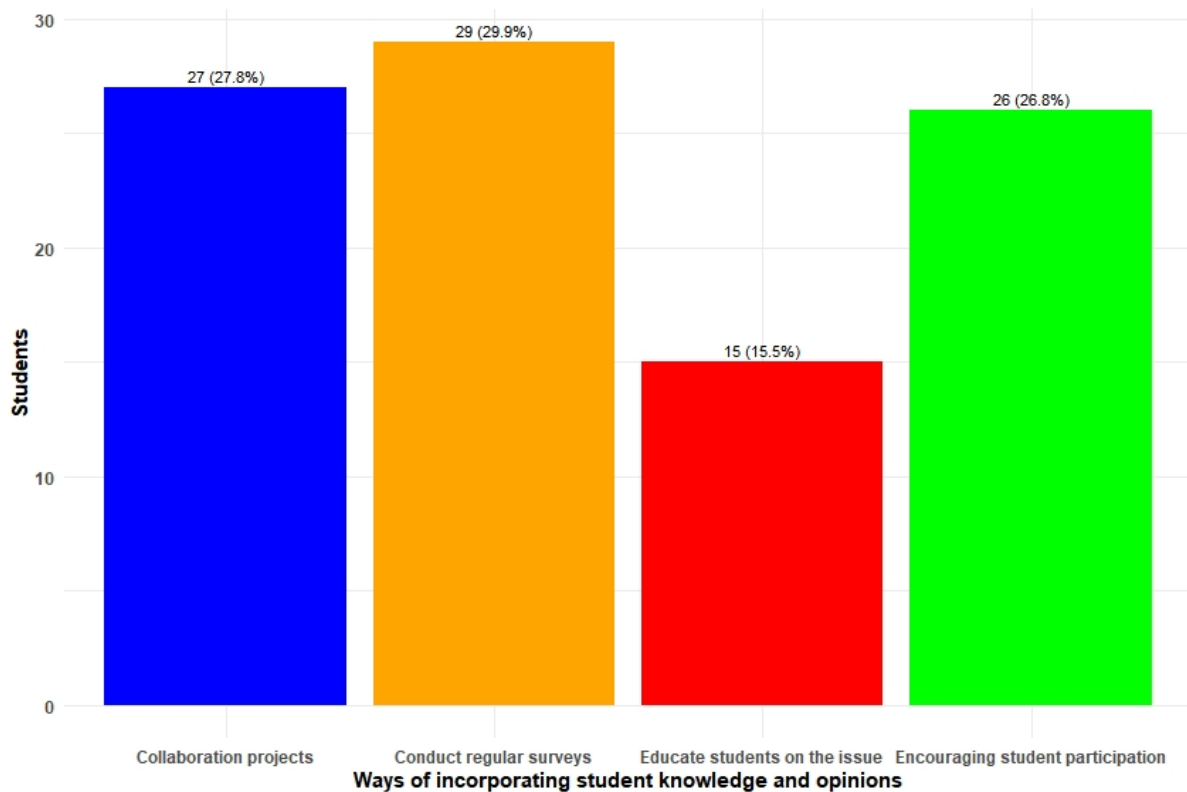


Figure 21. Ways of student knowledge incorporation in managing the private rental housing challenges.

Results from Table 4 give an overall understanding of potential solutions the research participants selected based on their importance in addressing the private housing challenges in Padova. For each potential solution, the highest percentage has been highlighted, corresponding to students' ranked choice of importance. However, it can be observed in Table 5 that a concise understanding has been generated in explaining the order of importance of potential solutions selected by students and their percentages. Therefore, based on the result in Table 5, an increase in the availability of affordable housing ranked as a first choice with 40.3 percent. This was followed by students indicating the reusing or converting of abandoned

structures into student housing or dormitories with 32.0 percent. Furthermore, the third-choice student identified as a potential solution for improving or managing housing challenges for students was to address discrimination against international students and collaborate with local landlords/property owners to increase housing options by 30.9 percent each. Lastly, the study found that the fifth-choice students were regulating rental prices.

Table 4. Overview of ranked choices of students on ways to improve the private rental housing

Increase availability of affordable housing	Regulate rental prices	Address discrimination against international students	Collaborating with local landlords/property owners to increase housing options	Reusing or converting abandoned structures into student housing/dormitories
40.2%	14.4%	6.2%	30.9%	9.3%
20.6%	17.5%	20.6%	20.6%	19.6%
15.5%	19.6%	25.8%	21.6%	17.5%
11.3%	19.6%	30.9%	16.5%	21.6%
12.4%	28.9%	16.5%	10.3%	32.0%

Table 5. Order of importance and ranked choices of students on the ways to improve the private rental housing challenges

Order of Importance based on choice	Percentages	Rank
Increase availability of affordable housing	40.2%	1st Choice
Reusing or converting abandoned structures into student housing/dormitories	32.0%	2nd Choice
Address discrimination against international students	30.9%	3rd Choice
Collaborating with local landlords/property owners to increase housing options	30.9%	3rd Choice
Regulate rental prices	28.9%	5th Choice

In an interview on what role the university administration should play in addressing the housing challenges and how students can work collaboratively with the administration

towards this end, the various stakeholders indicated the following. These shared perspectives by the stakeholders closely align and even expatiate further the result in Table 7. They said,

“The university has done already a few things, which is good, but not the real solution per se, but necessary. Next step towards this would be publicly saying that the ESU underfunding and that the regional government is directly harming its students and the institution of the university itself. Because it's not a matter of this, the thing that university keeps saying is that sometimes they ask directly to us. Please explain to the students, it's not our fault if the ESU is underfunded. We cannot even if you want it, we couldn't do anything. Is partially true, but the fact is that they didn't ever condemn publicly, the ESU. And the University of Padova is, I think, the biggest and most respected institution in the whole region, so its voice matters more than anyone else's and up until today, the university has always tried to defend itself by blaming the ESU and by doing all the other little things that were in its power to try and alleviate the situation. But this isn't enough, and on the short term” ...

... The other thing, but that's something that's already doing. It's working with the municipality to work out alternative programmess...,

“From the student side, that's a big question. That's why what we are asking ourselves every day. What can we do to? To resolve this issue, I'd say that making our voices be heard is the the first step. We do not have bargaining power if we do not have a collective voice altogether, which is difficult because there are 70,000 people that have to be united in in this and it's obviously not something. And we can do just like that and I think that talking about it, some of the steps that we have been able to take and that helped us gain support came from professors that I wouldn't say changed their minds, but were made more conscious of the problem, because a lot of their students talk to them or e-mail them and said I cannot be these lessons because I have to live so far away because I couldn't find a home. Any other any other things? So, I think it's something that anyone could do without being necessarily involved in direct action is taught with Professors' administration those who they see every day and try to make them aware because what I've noticed is that many or professors or administrative personnel, they have a vague idea of what the situation is. But once they get a real grip of what's going on? They become worried too, and then they can help support any initiative that would be more

difficult without external support” (Interview with President of the Student Union of University of Padova, UDU, 19-04-2023).

“Uh building and building some new houses. For example, during the last 10-20 years, university didn't spend money for building new houses. So, the students try to avoid the problem going around to the private houses. But the the costs are either expensive, so maybe the only solution is tried to invest some money for building new houses and student houses. Maybe with a very low price like, know how we paid them now” (Interview with student B, 13-05-2023)

4.8. Discussions

After analyzing both quantitative (questionnaire) and qualitative data (face-to-face interview) collected from students and some stakeholders in private housing management in Padova, it is imperative to make a discussion that allows for the interpretation and explanation of the findings, as well as to discuss how the findings align or deviate from prior studies in the student housing research studies.

First, the research participants' demographic characteristics were categorized into two. The first category gave an overview of the students who participated who lived in all the housing types, including living in a family accommodation, university residence or halls, students private rented housing, college hostel and temporary accommodations such as AirB&B. The second category formed the basis of the research study, which solely considered students living in Private rented housing. It was evident from the findings that the second category of students considered in the study was mostly composed of international students, whereas less than half were Italian students. The imbalanced majority of international can be attributed to this study's non-probabilistic sampling techniques, such as snowballing and convenience sampling. Nevertheless, many Italian students may have been residing with their families or relatives besides privately rented student housing whilst enrolled at the University of Padova. Another factor can be the English programmesmes the study focused on in broadcasting questionnaires to students through their respective programme's coordinators. These English programmesmes may have comprised more international students than Italian students, creating an unequal weight among the students.

The research study revealed that students acquire private-rented housing in Padova dominantly through social media platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Telegram, and

Instagram. Aside from students' leverage of social media in their search for housing, another preferred option students adopted was through personal connections, including family and friends. However, most students experienced fraudulent activities through scam listings. On-campus students living in private-rented housing experienced fraudulent activities more than students living in off-campus private-rented housing. The reasons why on-campus students experience higher activities in their housing search may be attributed to the assertion by Ghani & Suleiman (2016, p. 169) that on-campus accommodation has many benefits for students, including high-speed internet access/Wi-Fi, leadership roles, social integration, and personal growth; low cost; a sense of security; access to academic support facilities and use of school resources; proximity to instructors. Additionally, fraudulent activities on campus by students living in private rented housing can also be attributed to Adama et al. (2018) assertion that students who live on campus seldom miss classes because of travel time. Still, those living off-campus are likely to miss classes more frequently because of the greater distance between their university and residence.

In tackling the fraudulent activities borne out of the private rental housing challenges, findings of the study revealed that the Student Union of Padova opened an office of Questura in Padova. The rationale was to provide the necessary help to students who experience fraudulent activities to enable them to go through the legal process of taking legal action against perpetrators of these fraudulent activities. Additionally, students could use the legal addresses of hotels, hostels, friends' houses, or anywhere while searching for housing in Padova. The Padova municipality is implementing a pilot co-housing project in partnership with the older adults in the city of Padova, the University of Padova, ESU and Associations of properties to see if it is possible to match people having a bigger house with people looking for apartments and trying not just to connect them, but also to give them help to live together properly. Again, the Padova municipality seeks to establish a programmes agency for housing that gives all the information about housing agencies and landlords.

The study's findings also revealed that the highest number of students living in privately rented housing in Padova pay monthly rent with bill inclusive between €300 - €500 for their monthly rent with bill inclusive. It was interesting to know that most students further indicated that the cost of privately rented housing in Padova was not affordable.

The study also revealed that increased demand and high rental prices of privately rented housing is the main cause of the housing challenges in Padova. This finding closely agrees with

Ong et al. (2013, pp. 144-148), who suggested that high rent costs are the leading cause of student homelessness. Undeniably, the effect of the housing challenges for students may lead to homelessness. Students who cannot find housing due to the high cost of rental housing are forced to sleep at unauthorized sleeping places on university campuses, which can threaten their emotional, academic and psychological well-being. Other causes highlighted by students include discrimination based on nationality and gender from landlords/rental agencies, lack of affordable private rental properties, increased English-taught programmes, increased intake of students, especially international students, lack of investment in public housing, renting of housing to tourist instead of students due to high profits, the “bonus 110” and the coronavirus pandemic. Along with this result, most students paid higher rent than desired as their main coping strategy in the face of the private rented housing challenges in Padova.

Findings from this research showed that most students were extremely aware of Padova's private rental housing challenge. Similarly, most students expressed dissatisfaction with the University of Padova's efforts to address the private rented housing challenges. Regarding gender distribution, male students' academic performances were negatively affected more than female students. This was due to several reasons, including the fact that they were living in off-campus accommodation before they found their present private rented housing. Adama et al. (2018) argued that students who live off campus will likely miss classes more frequently because of the greater distance between their university and residence. Moreover, research findings at the University of California, Santa Cruz closely aligned with the assertion mentioned above that students who lived further away from campus were more likely to miss courses, spend more time travelling, and have less access to support and auxiliary services that could have a favourable impact on retention rates and students' achievement. Although Gbadegesin et al., (2022, p. 18) argued that living on campus has a positive effect on students' academic achievement and their participation in extracurricular activities, it can be deduced from the result of this study that the housing challenges can be said to have had a negative influence on the performance of both male and female students living on campus at the University of Padova.

Again, this study revealed that the overall experience of female students enrolled at the University of Padova was more affected by increased stress and anxiety than male students during the private rental housing challenges. Some students may be forced to live far from campus due to housing costs, leading to long commutes. A lengthy commute can be tiring and add stress to study time. In some cases, female students struggling to find affordable housing

options that fit within their budget may result in financial stress. Therefore, the fear of not being able to afford rent or facing unexpected housing-related expenses can be anxiety-inducing

Nevertheless, the study's findings revealed that fraudulent activities during the private rented housing challenges were more prevalent among on-campus students living in private housing than off-campus students living in private rented housing. Additionally, the highest percentage of the students who fell victim to various fraudulent activities were found to be currently staying on-campus whilst pursuing their studies at the University of Padova. Scam rental listings on social media platforms such as WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram and Telegram were the topmost nature of fraudulent activities these students' fell victim to. Similarly, fraudulent activities such as overpriced housing listings and fake landlords or housing owners' students were also dominated by this same channel. These results were confirmed by Ince's (2019, p. 16) assertion that students renting from private landlords, however, run the danger of being victimised by scammers, living in substandard or unhygienic conditions, or being drawn into local disputes. The study again revealed that the vast percentage of students who fell victim had not received training or guidance on avoiding falling victim to fraudulent activities. This implies that these categories of students who haven't received any training or guidance were more likely to be vulnerable to fraudulent activities, especially scam rental listings and fake landlords on social media platforms.

Lastly, students expressed a firm desire that their knowledge should be incorporated into management strategies towards tackling the private housing challenges in Padova, as shown in the findings of this study. Concerning how their knowledge should be incorporated, the study found that the management of the University of Padova should conduct regular surveys to gather feedback regarding their welfare on housing. In addition, the findings of this study revealed the ranked choices of ways to improve private rented housing challenges in Padova. Therefore, the availability of affordable housing ranked as the most preferred choice to improve the housing challenges in Padova. In order of importance, reusing or converting abandoned structures into student housing/dormitories, addressing discrimination against international students, collaborating with local landlords/property owners to increase housing options, and regulating rental prices were among other ranked choices by students in this study.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1. Conclusion of the study

This research delved into the private rental housing challenges faced by students of the University of Padova. It sought to explore the potential of incorporating students' knowledge in addressing these challenges using spatial techniques, quantitative and qualitative research methods. The findings shed light on various facets of the issue, including main causes, awareness and satisfaction levels, fraudulent activities, coping strategies, and potential solutions. These insights offered a comprehensive understanding of the complex dynamics surrounding the private rental housing challenges and underscored the importance of involving students in formulating effective strategies. The study highlighted that the predominant means of acquiring private-rented housing was through social media platforms and personal connections. However, this avenue has exposed many students to fraudulent activities such as scam listings, overpriced housing, and fake landlords or property owners. On-campus students seemed particularly vulnerable to these fraudulent activities, possibly due to the benefits associated with on-campus living.

Moreover, the high demand for housing, disinvestment in public and student housing, discriminatory practices and external factors like the pandemic contributed to the challenges faced by students. Despite the hurdles, the research revealed some positive initiatives to alleviate these issues to provide a lasting solution to Padova's private rental housing challenges. The presence of a "Questura" office within the university, co-housing projects, and establishing a housing agency programmes demonstrate proactive steps taken to address fraudulent activities and create awareness within the student community. However, the study emphasized the need for continuous improvement and incorporation of students' perspectives in these initiatives. As argued by Kowalski (2022), the residential setting has an impact on a student's ability to succeed in school, and this underscores the immense contribution of student housing to the overall well-being of students academically and their ability to integrate successfully in city-based universities such as the University of Padova. It is worth noting that student housing challenges on various university campuses globally are not a novel issue as universities will keep expanding in various capacities annually. However, when these housing challenges are prioritised on the university development agenda coupled with a strategic and sustainable

approach to tackling them through a collaborative effort between the management of the University of Padova, the student body, stakeholders from the community and the Padova municipality, students overall experience whilst studying at the University of Padova will drastically improve. This, according to Tinto's theory, will create a supportive and inclusive learning environment for students that fosters their engagement and promotes their academic success. Therefore, students will be motivated to persist in achieving their academic goals, leading to increased retention rates since students will feel a strong sense of belonging to the university community. Contrarily, students are not likely to persist in the face of housing challenges in Padova if there are no effective management strategies to tackle an increasing housing demand associated with high rental costs. This will lead to students' inability to possibly complete their university education.

6.1. Recommendations

Based on the study's findings, some recommendations have been put out to address the difficulties students face locating private rental accommodation and related issues.

6.1.1. Student Involvement in Decision-Making:

One of the key recommendations for addressing the private rental housing challenges for students at the University of Padova is to actively involve students in decision-making processes related to housing policies. This proactive approach recognizes the importance of directly engaging those most affected by the housing challenges and harnessing their knowledge and perspectives to shape effective solutions. To implement this recommendation, the management of the University of Padova, in collaboration with the Padova municipality, should create a community-student-led housing advisory committee comprising representatives from diverse student groups, academic disciplines, and international backgrounds. This committee can serve as a direct communication channel between students, the Padova community and university administrators responsible for housing policies. Furthermore, the office in charge of housing at the University of Padova should conduct regular surveys to gather student feedback regarding their housing experiences, challenges, and suggestions for improvement. They can utilize digital platforms and campus resources to ensure wide participation and gather comprehensive insights. In partnership with the office in charge of housing at the University of Padova, the Padova municipality can organize town hall meetings and focus group discussions where students can openly share their concerns, ideas, and recommendations related to housing. These sessions can foster a sense of community engagement and provide a platform for direct interaction between students and university

officials. Last but not least, the management of the University of Padova can establish clear and transparent communication channels to keep students informed about ongoing housing developments, policy changes, and initiatives. Regular updates through university websites, newsletters, and social media can enhance transparency and accountability.

6.1.2. Fraud Prevention and Awareness

To effectively address the issue of fraudulent activities in the private rental housing market for students studying at the University of Padova, it is recommended that the management of the University of Padova and “Questura di Padova” organize regular workshops and seminars on campus that focus on educating students about common types of housing scams, red flags to watch out for, and best practices for verifying the legitimacy of rental listings. It would be imperative for experts from law enforcement, housing agencies, and legal services to share insights and real-life examples. Also, the University of Padova didactic section should collaborate with housing agencies to develop interactive online training modules or webinars that cover various aspects of fraud prevention in the housing market. These modules can be easily accessible to all students and provide practical tips and guidance on safely navigating the rental search process. Lastly, in collaboration with the Padova municipality and the Student Union of Padova, the University of Padova housing office can launch campus-wide awareness campaigns highlighting the importance of fraud prevention in the housing search. These entities can utilize posters, flyers, digital displays, and social media platforms to disseminate information and tips on recognising and avoiding scams. Also, an established clear reporting mechanism for students who encounter suspicious or fraudulent housing listings will seek to guide how students can report scams to relevant authorities and university officials.

6.1.3 Affordable Housing Initiatives

The management of the University of Padova can work with the Padova Municipality to explore incentives and policies that encourage property owners and developers to prioritize affordable housing projects. This could involve tax incentives, streamlined permit processes, and grants for projects that align with affordable housing goals. Again, collaborative efforts between the Padova municipality, local property owners and real estate professionals to identify properties that can be repurposed or renovated to offer affordable housing options for students will enhance housing options for students whilst not compromising on considering properties near the university campus or with convenient access to public transportation.

Along with this, the management of the University of Padova can organize workshops and information sessions for landlords and property owners to educate them about the benefits of offering affordable housing options to students.

6.1.4. Address Discrimination:

The management of the University of Padova and the Padova municipality can work with rental agencies, property owners, and landlords to establish and promote explicit anti-discrimination policies and agreements. These documents should outline a commitment to providing equal housing opportunities to all students, regardless of their nationality, gender, or other protected characteristics. They can organize workshops, seminars, and training sessions for rental agencies, property owners, and landlords on the importance of diversity, inclusion, and fair housing practices. These sessions can raise awareness about discriminatory behaviours, the legal implications, and strategies to ensure unbiased treatment.

6.1.5. Support Services

The University of Padova can expand and promote counselling services that address housing-related stress and challenges. Hire additional counsellors if needed to accommodate increased demand to offer individual and group counselling sessions where students can discuss their housing concerns, share experiences, and receive guidance on coping strategies. More so, provide workshops and seminars on stress management, resilience, and emotional well-being, focusing on students' unique challenges due to housing issues. In addition, there is an establishment of peer support networks or mentorship programmes by the University of Padova where experienced students can offer guidance, advice, and emotional support to students facing housing challenges. Conversely, the Student Union of Padova can collaborate with academic departments to provide flexible academic support options for students affected by housing challenges. This may include tutoring services or flexible attendance policies. In a similar vein, communication with faculty to ensure they are aware of students' housing situations and can provide necessary accommodations. Last but not least, the Student Union of Padova and other related student networks can promote the availability of support services through orientation sessions, student handbooks, and collaboration with academic advisors. More importantly, raises awareness about seeking help for housing-related stress and mental well-being within the university community.

7.1. Study Limitations

This research project focused on Padova's private rental housing market, particularly emphasising the housing challenges facing students. However, there are some limitations to this research project. Firstly, the research was limited to students living in privately rented housing in Padova and may not be generalizable to other universities or cities. Moreover, the study used a small sample of research participants. It employed a non-probabilistic sampling, thereby undermining the ability to generalize the study's findings to the entire University of Padova student population. Secondly, the research had a limited time frame, affecting the data collection period. Nevertheless, with the changing dynamics of the private rented housing challenges at the University of Padova, placing the housing issues faced with students as a “challenge” or a “crisis” was very difficult. Last but not least, implementing recommendations based on the research findings might encounter resistance because student housing in Padova is, to some extent, highly influenced by political actors such as the regional government budgetary funding.

8.1 Future research suggestions

Based on the limitations of this study, the following areas are suggested for future research, which will advance knowledge and the body of literature on issues regarding student housing at the challenges at the University of Padova.

1. Understanding the experiences of students living in non-private rental housing such as university residences/halls and how the private rental housing challenges at the University of Padova affected them.
2. The assessment of housing initiatives such as co-housing and housing agencies programmes on University of Padova students' community integration and their academic success.
3. The local community perceptions of co-housing projects as a strategy to address student housing challenges at the University of Padova.

9.1. Concluding thought

The private rental housing challenges for students at the University of Padova present complex challenges requiring a multifaceted approach. Incorporating students' knowledge, experiences, and perspectives into developing strategies and initiatives is essential for creating a more inclusive, secure, and supportive housing environment. By taking proactive steps guided by the recommendations above, the University of Padova and other stakeholders can

pave the way for meaningful improvements in students' lives and contribute to a more vibrant and thriving academic community.

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Useful link for figure 3

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Appendix A - Questionnaire

MASTER'S THESIS RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE

Dear Fellow Students,

I am Negro Jude Sarpeh, a final year Master's student in Local Development. I am researching the topic "INCORPORATING STUDENTS' KNOWLEDGE AND PERCEPTION TOWARDS THE MANAGEMENT OF THE PRIVATE RENTAL HOUSING CHALLENGES IN THE UNIVERSITY OF PADOVA, ITALY". This questionnaire aims to gather information to explore the potential of incorporating students' knowledge and perception in managing the private rental housing challenges for students and its associated problems at the University of Padova.

Your responses will be kept strictly confidential and anonymous. Please answer the questions to the best of your ability and be assured that there are no right or wrong answers. Your honest opinions and thoughts are greatly appreciated. This survey will take approximately 7 minutes to be completed.

Thank you for your participation.

SECTION I - BACKGROUND INFORMATION OF PARTICIPANTS

1. What is your gender?

- a) Male
- b) Female
- c) Prefer not to say
- d) Other

2. What is your age category?

- a) 18-24 years
- b) 25-31 years
- c) 32-36 years
- d) 36 years and above

3. What is your citizenship?

- a) Italian
- b) Non-Italian

3a. If selected b) please specify.....

4. What is your current academic degree programmes at the University of Padova?

- a) Bachelor's
- b) Master's
- c) PhD
- d) Post Doc
- e) Other (please specify)

5. Which school in the University of Padova is your current academic programme affiliated with?

- a) School of Agricultural Sciences and Veterinary Medicine
- c) School of Economics and Political Science
- d) School of Engineering
- e) School of Human and Social Sciences and Cultural Heritage
- f) Law School
- g) School of Medicine
- h) School of Psychology
- i) School of Science

6. In which province are you currently living whilst studying at the University of Padova?

- a) Verona
- b) Padova
- c) Rovigo
- d) Belluno
- e) Vicenza
- f) Treviso
- g) Other (please specify)

7. How will you describe or term where you are currently living whilst studying at the University of Padova?

- a) Living with your family
- b) Student rented-private housing (Living in a private apartment/housing rented by the student from landlords or housing agencies)
- c) Living in a University housing
- d) Living in a private college hostel
- e) Temporary accommodation (E.g BnB, Hostels, Hotels etc)
- f) Other (please specify)

8. How did you find your current private rental student housing?

- a) Through the University of Padova housing services (e.g., UNIBEDS)
- b) Through a rental agency (e.g., Immobiliare etc)
- c) Through social media platforms (Facebook, Telegram, WhatsApp, Instagram etc.)
- d) Through personal connections (friends, family, etc.)
- e) Online classifieds (Online housing markets places eg. Subito, Idealista etc and apps)
- f) Newspapers

8a. If selected b) in Q8, how much fee did you pay for the service of the rental agency?

- a) Less than €100
- b) Between €100 - €200
- c) Between €200 - €300
- d) Between €300 - €400
- e) €400 and more
- f) Prefer not to say

9. What is your private rental housing (accommodation) residential address as a student of the University of Padova? (e.g., via Montello 22, 35138, Padova)

.....
Justification of the private rental housing location (solely for research purposes)

The residential address collected will enable the researcher to compare on-campus students and off-campus students' (students farther away from campus). This will be subsequently visualized or represented spatially on a digital map. NB: It will only be used for research purpose.

10. What monthly rent (bills inclusive) do you pay for your private rental student housing?

- a) Less than €300
- b) Between €300 - €500
- c) Between €500 - €800
- d) More than €800
- e) Prefer not to say

11. Do you think the cost of private rental housing is affordable for students?

- a) Yes
- b) No
- c) Not sure

11a. Which of the following categories best agrees with your estimated monthly living expenses as a student of the University of Padova?

- a) Less than €400
- b) Between €400 - €600
- c) Between €600 - €800
- d) Between €800 - €1000
- e) More than €1000
- f) Prefer not to say

12. Did you receive a contract for your current accommodation showing the lease agreement with your rental agency or landlord? a) Yes b) No

SECTION II- FACTORS INFLUENCING THE PRIVATE RENTAL STUDENT HOUSING CHALLENGES

13. How many time(s) have you moved in the beginning of the academic year of your studies due to housing-related issues?

- a) 1 time
- b) 2 times
- c) 3 times
- d) 4 times and more
- e) I have not moved

14. What do you think are the main causes of the private rental housing challenges for students of the University of Padova? (*Please indicate at least two main causes*)

- a) Increased demand and high rental prices of private rental housing
- b) Lack of affordable private rental properties

- c) Discrimination based on nationality and gender from landlords/rental agencies
- d) Increased English taught programmes at the University of Padova
- e) The Coronavirus Pandemic (Covid-19)
- f) Other (please specify)

SECTION III- STUDENT AWARENESS AND SATISFACTION

15. What is your level of awareness of the private rental housing challenges in the city of Padova?

- a) Not at all aware
- b) Slightly aware
- c) Somewhat aware
- d) Moderately aware
- e) Extremely aware

16. Has the private rental housing crisis affected your commuting habit to lectures?

- a) Yes b) No

17. If you answered Yes in Q16, how do you mainly commute to lectures whilst living in a private rental housing?

- a) Walking
- b) Biking
- c) Public transportation (train, bus, tram, taxi)
- d) Driving your own car
- e) Other (please specify)

18. Are you aware of any initiatives or resources at the University of Padova to assist students with private rental housing issues?

- a) Yes b) No

19. How familiar are you with the current private rental housing laws and regulations in your province?

- a) Very familiar
- b) Somewhat familiar
- c) Not familiar

20. How satisfied are you with the University of Padova's efforts to address the private rental housing challenges?

- a) Very satisfied
- b) Somewhat satisfied
- c) Not very satisfied
- d) Not at all satisfied
- e) I don't know

21. How do you think the private rental housing crisis at the University of Padova has affected your academic performance?

- a) Positively
- b) Negatively
- c) No effect

SECTION IV – STUDENTS’ COPING STRATEGIES

22. What are the main coping strategy(s) you have used to deal with the private rental housing challenges at the University of Padova? *(Please select more than one response if applicable)*

- a) Living with family/friends
- b) Commuting from nearby towns/cities
- c) Staying in temporary accommodations (e.g., hostels, hotels)
- d) Paying higher rent than desired
- e) Others (Please specify)

23. How do you think the private rental housing challenges affects the overall student experience at the University of Padova?

- a) Negative impact on academic performance
- b) Reduced quality of life
- c) Increased stress and anxiety
- d) Other (please specify)

SECTION V- THE PRIVATE RENTAL HOUSING MARKET FOR STUDENTS

24. What challenges have you faced in staying informed about Padova's private rental housing market? *(Please select all that apply)*

- a) Limited access to information
- b) Language barriers
- c) Overwhelming amount of information
- d) None
- e) Other (please specify)

25. How do you stay informed about Padova's private rental housing market? *(Please select all that apply)*

- a) Social media (Facebook, WhatsApp, Telegram, Instagram etc.)
- b) Online classifieds (Online housing markets places e.g., Subito, Idealista etc and apps)
- c) The University of Padova international housing website (e.g UNIBEDS)
- d) Through a rental agency (e.g., Immobiliare etc)
- e) Friends or family
- f) Newspapers
- g) Other (please specify)

26. Have you ever fallen victim to any fraudulent activity while searching for private housing rental housing as a student of the University of Padova?

- a) Yes
- b) No

If you answered No to Q25, then skip to Q32

27. Please indicate what fraudulent activity you experienced.

- a) Scam rental listings
- b) Fake landlords or property owners
- c) Overpriced housing
- d) Hidden fees or charges
- e) Other (please specify)

28. How did you initially find the rental property with which you fell victim to fraud?

- a) Social media (Facebook, WhatsApp, Telegram, Instagram etc.)
- b) Online classifieds (Online housing markets places eg. Subito, Idealista etc and apps)
- c) Through a rental agency (e.g., Immobiliare etc)
- d) University of Padova International housing website (e.g UNIBEDS)
- e) Friends or family
- f) Newspapers
- g) Other (please specify)

29. Did you report the fraudulent activity to the relevant authorities or agencies at the University of Padova, and how satisfied were you?

- a) Yes, I reported, and their response was satisfactory.
- b) Yes, I reported, but their response was not satisfactory.
- c) No, I decided not to report

30. Have you ever received any training or guidance on how to avoid falling victim to fraudulent acts when searching for private rental student housing?

- a) Yes b) No

31. What specific actions or initiatives do you think the University of Padova should take to prevent fraudulent acts in the private rental housing market?

.....
.....
.....

SECTION VI- STUDENT PERCEPTION ON MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

32. What is the main potential consequence of not addressing the private rental housing challenges at the University of Padova?

- a) Negative impact on retention rate of students
- b) Higher housing costs for students
- c) Negative impact on academic performance
- d) Increased fraudulent related-housing victims
- e) Negative impact on student integration into the community
- d) Other (please specify)

33. Should students' knowledge and opinions be considered when developing solutions to the private rental housing challenges in the University of Padova area?

- a) Yes b) No c) Not sure

34. If you answered “Yes” to question 33, how do you think the University of Padova can incorporate students' knowledge and opinions in managing the private rental housing challenges and its associated problems?

- a) Conduct regular surveys to gather students' feedback
- b) Encouraging student participation in policy-making processes
- c) Collaboration projects between students and the University
- d) Providing resources and information to educate students on the issue
- e) Other (please specify)

35. (*In order of importance*), what should the University of Padova do to improve the private rental housing situation for students in Padova? 1,2,3,4,5

- Increase the availability of affordable housing
- Regulate rental prices.....
- Address discrimination against international students
- Collaborating with local landlords/property managers to increase available housing options....
- Reusing or converting abandoned structures into student housing/dormitories.....

Thank you for your participation in the survey!

Grazie per aver partecipato a questo sondaggio!

Appendix B: Interview Guide I

INTERVIEW GUIDE WITH COUNCILOR FRANCESCA BENOCIOLINI (DELEGATE FOR HOUSING POLICIES and RESIDENTIAL CONSTRUCTION AT THE PADOVA MUNICIPALITY

English

1. What do you think are the main causes of the housing issue in the city of Padova?
 2. Are there any initiatives or programmes to support students who face challenges finding suitable accommodation in Padua?
 3. What are the main challenges the Padova municipality has encountered in addressing this issue?
 4. Has the Padova municipality considered implementing rent control or other measures to make housing more affordable for students in the University of Padua?
 5. Has the Padova municipality engaged with local landlords to try and address the housing issue?
 6. Are there any partnerships or collaborations between the Padova municipality and the University of Padua to tackle this issue?
 7. How does the Comune Di Padova support students who fall victim to fraudulent activities whilst searching for housing?
 8. What advice would you give to students struggling to find private housing options in Padova?
-

Italian

1. Quali pensi siano le principali cause della crisi degli studenti in affitto privato nell'Università di Padova?
2. Ci sono iniziative o programmi per sostenere gli studenti che affrontano difficoltà nel trovare un alloggio adeguato a Padova?
3. Quali sono le principali sfide che l'assemblea comunale di Padova ha incontrato nell'affrontare questo tema?
4. L'assemblea comunale di Padova ha preso in considerazione l'attuazione del controllo degli affitti o altre misure per rendere più accessibili gli alloggi per gli studenti dell'Università di Padova?
5. L'assemblea comunale di Padova si è impegnata con i proprietari locali per cercare di affrontare la crisi degli studenti in affitto privato nell'Università di Padova?
6. Esistono partnership o collaborazioni tra il Comune di Padova e l'Università di Padova per affrontare questo tema?
7. In che modo l'assemblea comunale di Padova intende garantire che gli studenti non vengano sfruttati dai proprietari o dalle agenzie di locazione? Top of Form
8. In che modo il Comune di Padova sostiene gli studenti vittime di attività fraudolente durante la ricerca di un alloggio privato in affitto presso l'Università di Padova?
9. Che consiglio daresti agli studenti che faticano a trovare alloggi privati a Padova?

Appendix C: Interview Guide II

INTERVIEW WITH SAMUELE DALLA LIBERA (PRESIDENT OF STUDENT UNION OF THE UNIVERSITY OF PADOVA)

English

1. What do you think are the main causes of the housing issue faced by the students of the University of Padova?
 2. How does the student union plan to address the affordability issue in the housing market?
 3. What support services does the student union offer students struggling to find accommodation?
 4. How does/can the student union engage with the Comune Di Padova and landlords to improve the housing situation for students?
 5. Have there been any notable successes in improving the situation for students in recent years?
 6. What steps has the student union taken to ensure student voices are heard in managing the issue?
 7. How does the Student Union of Padova support students who fall victim to fraudulent activities whilst searching for private housing?
 8. In your opinion, what role should the university administration play in addressing the housing issue, and how can students work collaboratively with the administration towards this end?
 9. What advice would you give to students struggling to find housing options in Padova?
-

Italian

1. Quali pensi siano le principali cause della crisi degli studenti in affitto privato nell'Università di Padova?
2. In che modo il sindacato studentesco intende affrontare il problema dell'accessibilità economica nella crisi degli alloggi privati in affitto per gli studenti?
3. Quali servizi di supporto offre il sindacato studentesco agli studenti che faticano a trovare un alloggio?
4. In che modo/può il sindacato studentesco impegnarsi con il Comune di Padova e i proprietari per migliorare la situazione degli alloggi privati per gli studenti?
5. Negli ultimi anni ci sono stati notevoli successi nel migliorare la situazione degli studenti negli affitti privati?
6. Quali pensi siano le maggiori sfide che l'università deve affrontare nella gestione della crisi degli studenti in affitto privato?
7. Quali passi ha intrapreso il sindacato studentesco per garantire che le voci degli studenti siano ascoltate nella gestione della crisi?

8. In che modo l'Unione degli studenti di Padova sostiene gli studenti vittime di attività fraudolente durante la ricerca di un alloggio privato in affitto presso l'Università di Padova?
9. Secondo lei, quale ruolo dovrebbe svolgere l'amministrazione universitaria nell'affrontare la crisi degli studenti in affitto privato e come possono gli studenti collaborare con l'amministrazione a tal fine?