

2022

## **Economic Challenges Faced by African American Teenage Parents While Parenting During the Coronavirus Pandemic**

Peace A. Barrigah  
*Walden University*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.waldenu.edu/dissertations>



Part of the [Quantitative, Qualitative, Comparative, and Historical Methodologies Commons](#)

---

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Walden Dissertations and Doctoral Studies Collection at ScholarWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in Walden Dissertations and Doctoral Studies by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks. For more information, please contact [ScholarWorks@waldenu.edu](mailto:ScholarWorks@waldenu.edu).

# Walden University

College of Psychology and Community Services

This is to certify that the doctoral dissertation by

Peace Ametame Barrigah

has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,  
and that any and all revisions required by  
the review committee have been made.

## Review Committee

Dr. Garth Den Heyer, Committee Chairperson, Human Services Faculty

Dr. Randy Heinrich, Committee Member, Human Services Faculty

Dr. Tina Jaeckle, University Reviewer, Human Services Faculty

Chief Academic Officer and Provost  
Sue Subocz, Ph.D.

Walden University  
2022

Abstract

Economic Challenges Faced by African American Teenage Parents While Parenting

During the Coronavirus Pandemic

by

Peace Ametame Barrigah

MA, Strayer University, 2009

BA, University of Ghana, 2004

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Human Services

Walden University

December 2022

## Abstract

U.S. African American teenage parents are at a disproportionately high risk of experiencing stressors associated with the financial demands of parenting during the COVID-19 pandemic. The purpose of this qualitative descriptive study was to explore the socioeconomic challenges that African American teenage parents living in U.S. northeastern state face during events such the COVID-19 pandemic that limit the provision of human services, which the research question was designed to answer. The framework used in this study was social learning theory. A sample of 10 Black teenage parents residing in the northeastern United States were recruited. Data were collected through interviews and analyzed through a thematic procedure. Participants indicated that they needed social services due to job loss or loss of hours during the COVID-19 pandemic. The analysis also indicated that the application process could be improved by making it increasingly user-friendly to improve their ability to access human services. The findings revealed that referrals from friends and family were a primary pathway for accessing services. This study adds to the current literature establishing that the COVID-19 pandemic brought numerous challenges and difficulties to most Black teenage parents. Given the findings, it is recommended that future studies should be conducted to understand various strategies to protect the vulnerable and minority races against such challenges when facing any pandemic.

Economic Challenges Faced by African American Teenage Parents While Parenting  
During the Coronavirus Pandemic

by

Peace Ametame Barrigah

MA, Strayer University, 2009

BA, University of Ghana, 2004

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy  
Human Services

Walden University

Summer 2022

## Dedication

To my family – you have all supported me and motivated me to be everything I was created to be!

## Acknowledgments

Many thanks to my family for your endless support and patience with me on this journey especially my husband, Anane and my sons Mawulorm and Selikem. To Dr. den Heyer and Dr. Heinrich, your endless feedback and support has helped me along this journey. To my parents, I know you will be proud. I am thankful to the Lord Almighty who has always been in control, for the blessings and grace to persevere. We made it!

## Table of Contents

List of Tables .....	iv
Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study.....	1
Problem Statement .....	3
Purpose Statement.....	4
Research Question .....	5
Conceptual Framework.....	5
Nature of the Study .....	6
Assumptions.....	7
Scope and Delimitations .....	7
Limitations .....	8
Significance.....	9
Summary.....	10
Chapter 2: Literature Review.....	11
Conceptual Framework.....	12
Related Literature.....	13
Impact of COVID-19 on American Families.....	13
Summary.....	41
Chapter 3: Research Method.....	43
Research Design and Rationale .....	44
Methodology.....	45
Instruments.....	47



Procedures.....	49
Trustworthiness.....	55
Credibility.....	55
Transferability.....	56
Dependability.....	56
Confirmability.....	57
Ethical Assurances.....	57
Summary.....	59
Chapter 4: The Results.....	61
Setting.....	61
Demographics.....	61
Data Collection.....	62
Data Analysis.....	63
Evidence of Trustworthiness.....	65
Credibility.....	65
Transferability.....	66
Dependability.....	66
Confirmability.....	67
Results.....	67
Job Loss or Hour Decrease Precipitating Need for Services.....	68
Difficulty Determining Eligibility for Services.....	69
Difficulty Collecting Necessary Documentation.....	71

Lack of Application Support.....	72
Service Delays .....	72
Make Application Process User Friendly .....	73
Referrals from Friends and Family .....	73
Summary .....	74
Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendation .....	77
Interpretation of the Findings.....	78
Job Loss or Hour Decrease Precipitating Need for Services .....	79
Difficulty Determining Eligibility for Services .....	81
Lack of Application Support.....	82
Service Delays .....	84
Make Application Process User Friendly .....	85
Referrals from Friends and Family.....	87
Limitations of the Study.....	88
Recommendations For Further Research.....	89
Implications.....	90
Implications for Positive Social Change.....	90
Theoretical Implications .....	91
Conclusion .....	92
References.....	94

List of Tables

Table 1. Participant Demographics.....	62
Table 2. Participants Contributing to Themes .....	68

## Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

The economic shutdowns implemented during situations such as the COVID-19 pandemic can negatively impact the mental health of the U.S. population, particularly teenage parents and their children (Brown et al., 2020). Increased stress and reduced ability to regulate stress heighten the risk that U.S. teenage parents would develop mental health disorders, which, in turn, increases the risk of domestic violence and other parental maltreatment of children (Fegert et al., 2020). The financial demands of parenting during COVID-19 may be compounded for U.S. teenage parents by pre-existing vulnerabilities such as low socioeconomic status, effects of racial discrimination, lack of financial and childcare resources, or special healthcare needs (Sneed et al., 2020; Yoshikawa et al., 2020). U.S. African American teenage parents struggling with combinations of these challenges are at particularly high risk of stress and its negative outcomes for parents and children (Sneed et al., 2020; Yoshikawa et al., 2020).

Many studies have been conducted on the socioeconomic impacts of COVID-19 in different contexts around the globe since the virus emerged as a worldwide threat in early 2020 (Brown et al., 2020; Yoshikawa et al., 2020). However, previous researchers have not explored the socioeconomic challenges African American teenage parents living in U.S. Northeastern state face during events such as the COVID-19 pandemic that limit the provision of human services. This study is intended to contribute to addressing this gap in the literature. The topic of this study is the socioeconomic challenges African American teenage parents living in a northeastern U.S. state face during events such as the COVID-19 pandemic that limit the provision of human services.

## **Background**

Many African American communities were already economically vulnerable at the outset of the COVID-19 pandemic due to historical and ongoing racial discrimination (Sneed et al., 2020). Approximately 13% of the U.S. population identifies as African American, but African Americans have accounted for 28% of increased COVID-19 cases and 18% of reported COVID-19 deaths (Sneed et al., 2020). The disproportionate health impacts of COVID-19 on African Americans have been associated with equally disproportionate economic impacts. Layoffs and business shutdowns have had the largest negative effects on low-wage frontline service workers, among whom racial and ethnic minorities are overrepresented (Fegert et al., 2020; Sneed et al., 2020). The negative economic impacts of COVID-19 and its mitigation on U.S. African American communities have been particularly harsh for Black teenage parents (Brown et al., 2020; Yoshikawa et al., 2020). African American teenage parents have suffered disproportionately from job loss and the associated impediments to meeting the financial demands of parenting, potentially resulting in strained access to health care, childcare, and nutrition resources (Fegert et al., 2020; Sneed et al., 2020; Yoshikawa et al., 2020).

When African American teenage parents are without the support of a partner, the stress associated with deficits in meeting the financial demands of parenting can be especially acute (Brown et al., 2020). Reduced access to nutrition, health care, childcare, and other resources increase the risk that African American teenage parents will experience stress at a level that endangers their psychological wellbeing and increases the risk of negative, long-term consequences for their children (Fegert et al., 2020;

Yoshikawa et al., 2020). U.S. Black teenage parents' stressors associated with the financial demands of parenting during COVID-19 may therefore have multigenerational impacts and continue exacerbating pre-existing social inequalities after the pandemic ends (Sneed et al., 2020; Yoshikawa et al., 2020).

To mitigate those negative effects as much as possible, it was essential to explore African American teenage parents' lived experiences of stressors associated with meeting the financial demands of parenting during events such as the COVID-19 pandemic to gain further insight into their vulnerabilities and coping strategies. However, partly due to the recency of COVID-19's emergence, previous researchers have not undertaken such an investigation, leaving a gap in the literature regarding this topic. This study attempted to address the research problem of the gap in the literature through an analysis of interview data from African American teenage parents living in the northeastern United States.

### **Problem Statement**

U.S. African American teenage parents are at disproportionately high risk of experiencing stressors associated with the financial demands of parenting during the COVID-19 pandemic (Fegert et al., 2020; Sneed et al., 2020; Yoshikawa et al., 2020). The stressors may include loss of employment, financial strain, lack of access to childcare and other resources, and the disproportionate economic impacts of COVID-19 on U.S. African American communities (Fegert et al., 2020; Sneed et al., 2020; Yoshikawa et al., 2020). This stress could increase the risk of negative mental health and other outcomes for the African American teenage parent and their child, including an

increased risk of domestic violence and other forms of parental maltreatment of the child (Brown et al., 2020; Fegert et al., 2020). Poverty, unmet health care needs, and trauma in early childhood can have lifelong consequences, creating obstacles to children's fulfillment of their potential and reducing socioeconomic disparities between communities (Yoshikawa et al., 2020).

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this qualitative descriptive study was to explore the socioeconomic challenges African American teenage parents living in a U.S. northeastern state face during events such as the COVID-19 pandemic that limit the provision of human services. The outbreak of Coronavirus in the United States has worsened existing economic inequalities, leaving previously vulnerable groups in crisis (Bowleg, 2020). Teenage parents from vulnerable groups, such as economically disadvantaged African Americans, have been disproportionately affected due to their limited economic mobility, the high costs of medical care, and segregation based on race and income (Fegert et al., 2020). The gap in the literature related to the lived experiences of U.S. Black teenage parents during events such as the COVID-19 pandemic has left U.S. policymakers and the parents without information or guidance concerning the support needs and coping strategies of this vulnerable population. By addressing this gap in the literature, this study may yield valuable guidance for policymakers who wish to support U.S. Black teenage parents and the parents themselves, who may benefit from effective, evidence-based coping strategies. To achieve this, the experiences of U.S. Black teenage parents were

explored through semistructured interviews and questionnaire data collected from a purposeful sample of 10 Black teenage parents residing in a northeastern U.S. state.

### **Research Question**

The research question used to guide this qualitative descriptive study was “What socioeconomic challenges did African American teenage parents living in a U.S. northeastern state face during events such as the COVID-19 pandemic that limit the provision of human services?”

### **Conceptual Framework**

The framework used in this study was social learning theory (SLT). Bandura (1969) developed SLT to indicate how individuals learn new behaviors by watching and imitating the behavior of others. Through vicarious reinforcement derived from watching the behaviors of others and the consequences of those behaviors, individuals can learn not only behaviors, but emotions, attitudes, and coping strategies for specific situations (Akers & Jennings, 2016).

Previous researchers have used SLT to understand teenage pregnancy in the African American community (Akers & Jennings, 2016). SLT has previously been applied preventatively in the context of U.S. Black teenage parents to reduce teenage pregnancy through modeling positive sexual attitudes and behaviors (Akers & Jennings, 2016). SLT has also been applied in an explanatory capacity to understand better how poverty, low education, and low access to quality health care have contributed to elevated teenage pregnancy rates among U.S. minorities (Akella & Jordan, 2014). In this generic qualitative descriptive study, SLT was applied as a conceptual framework for



understanding and comparing the previous literature findings about Black teenage parents' experiences with the COVID-19 pandemic. Rather than applying SLT to explain or prevent teenage pregnancy, the theory was applied to understand better and contextualize African American teenage parents' lived experiences associated with the COVID-19 pandemic.

### **Nature of the Study**

A qualitative methodological approach and a generic descriptive design were used in this study. The descriptive design supported the goals of the qualitative support. Qualitative descriptive research typically involves collecting open-ended data from participants familiar with a condition to explore it as they perceive it (Sandelowski, 2000). Through the purposeful selection of a sample of information-rich participants, researchers using a qualitative descriptive design and a semistructured interviewing format can maintain a focus on relevant topics while prompting participants to describe their perceptions and experiences in their own words, in the contexts of their own lives and cultures (Sandelowski, 2000). Descriptive research is distinguished from other qualitative designs by its emphasis on imposing as few predefined theoretical and conceptual lenses as possible during the data analysis to let patterns of meaning in the data itself determine the emphasis and significance of the findings (Sandelowski, 2000). Allowing unanticipated, contextualized findings to emerge to increase fully characterized an under-researched condition that is not easily separated from its context was consistent with the goals indicated by the problem, purpose, and research question in this study. A qualitative descriptive design was therefore selected.

### **Assumptions**

It was assumed that participants would be truthful during the interviews and answer the questions. This assumption was necessary because there was no means of verifying the accuracy of participants' responses. To enhance the credibility of the data, interviews were conducted with multiple participants and analyzed thematically. Hence, the major findings incorporated the perspectives of most participants. The influence of individual participants' biases or errors on the findings was minimized.

It was further assumed that the findings in this study would have some transferability to samples other than those from which they were drawn. It was necessary to make this assumption because transferability cannot be assessed in advance without specific, case-by-case knowledge of the other contexts to which the findings might apply and because this study's significance would be greatly diminished if the findings were only true of the sample (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). To assist the reader in assessing the transferability of the findings to samples and settings in which they might be interested, inclusion criteria for the sample, demographic data about the sample, and thick descriptions of the findings have been provided (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008).

### **Scope and Delimitations**

The sample size in this study was delimited to 10 participants. This delimitation was acceptable because qualitative studies typically have small sample sizes due to the time- and resource-intensive nature of qualitative data collection and analysis (Creswell & Poth, 2016). The study population was delimited to U.S. Black teenage parents because there was a gap in the literature related to this population concerning the study

topic. The geographic delimitation of the study to U.S. northeastern states may limit the transferability of the findings to other geographic settings, and the delimitation of the study population to African American teenage parents may limit the transferability of the findings to parents of other ages or races. This delimitation of the population was consistent with the scope and purpose of the study, which was conducted to explore the socioeconomic challenges African American teenage parents living in the northeastern United States face during events such as the COVID-19 pandemic that limit the provision of human services. Another delimitation of the study was that the population was based on single gender of young African American girls. The male gender, single parents, may also be negatively affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

### **Limitations**

This study had two methodological limitations associated with the qualitative approach used. First, qualitative findings are not generalizable because they are grounded in the perspectives and contexts of the study participants, indicating that the results may not be transferred (Creswell & Poth, 2016). This limitation was unavoidable in using a qualitative study design. To mitigate this limitation, demographic information about the sample and thick descriptions of the findings have been provided to assist in assessing the transferability of the findings to other samples and populations (Creswell & Poth, 2016). Qualitative research also cannot be objective (Creswell & Poth, 2016). The biases of the participants and the researcher may influence the findings. To mitigate this limitation, a thematic procedure was used to analyze the data, so the findings were based on the perceptions of most participants.

The limitation associated with the potential influence of researcher bias was mitigated in two ways. First, direct quotes from the data were presented as evidence for study findings in Chapter 4, so the reader can independently assess the findings' confirmability. Second, a member-checking procedure was used, in which participants were asked to review preliminary researcher interpretations of their data and verify their accuracy or recommend corrections. This procedure enabled participants to verify that my interpretations accurately represented their views rather than those of the researcher (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

### **Significance**

Policymakers, researchers, and U.S. African American teenage parents may benefit from research exploring the lived experiences of U.S. African American teenage parents associated with the COVID-19 pandemic. Policymakers currently appear to lack detailed guidance regarding this population's support needs and acceptable support systems. In addition, U.S. African American teenage parents seem to be lacking crucial information regarding the support services available to them during the COVID-19 pandemic. U.S. African American teenage parents also lack evidence-based recommendations for meeting their significant challenges. This study was intended to be significant as a first step toward meeting the informational needs that impede the efforts of policymakers to assist U.S. Black teenage parents and the efforts of those parents to cope as effectively as possible with COVID-19 and its potential long-term effects.

## Summary

This qualitative study aimed to explore the socioeconomic challenges that African American teenage parents living in a U.S. northeastern state face during events such as the COVID-19 pandemic that limit the provision of human services, with a focus on experiences associated with COVID-19 mitigation measures and the financial demands of parenting. Data were collected through online questionnaires and one-to-one, semistructured interviews with a purposeful sample of 10 Black teenage parents residing in the northeastern United States. Interviews were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim, and data were analyzed inductively and thematically in NVivo 12 software. Chapter 2 reviews the relevant theoretical and empirical literature to further explore the problem's background and identify the literature gap. In Chapter 3, descriptions of and rationales for the planned methodology, design, and procedures for this study are provided in detail.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

As mentioned, the study was focused on socioeconomic challenges African American teenage parents living in a U.S. northeastern state face during events such as the COVID-19 pandemic that limit the provision of human services. This chapter provides an overview of existing studies on African American teenage parents' lived experiences regarding parenting during the Covid-19 pandemic. The chapter also introduces the framework that guided the study.

### **Literature Search Strategy**

Researchers must first get familiar with the existing research on the condition under study through an exhaustive literature review before gathering primary data for the study. The search strategy adopted in this chapter aligns with the current practices in grounded research work. A manual and electronic literature search was conducted to identify available literature on the African American teenage parents' lived experiences regarding parenting in the Covid-19 pandemic, staying safe and healthy, and meeting the economic demands of parenting. The search was done using several electronic databases, including Pubmed, Science Direct, Pedro, and Cinahl. Google Scholar was also used. Keywords used in the literature search include *African American Adolescents*, *Middle School African American Adolescents*, *Impacts of COVID-19*, *African American Families*, and *American Families*. Approximately 24 titles were reviewed and used in this review.

## **Conceptual Framework**

The theoretical framework that was used in guiding this study was SLT. SLT describes how individuals learn new behaviors by watching others and thereby imitating that behavior (Akella & Jordan, 2015). SLT integrates cognitive and behavioral theories to create a comprehensive model that provides learners with a wide range of experiences in the real world (Akers & Jennings, 2016). The theory was first outlined in 1963 by Walters and Bandura and later developed in 1977 (Akers & Jennings, 2016). Learning is a process that is cognitive and occurs in social environments. Bandura emphasized the importance of learning in modeling behaviors, emotions, attitudes, and how individuals cope with particular situations (Akers & Jennings, 2016).

SLT was important in prevention-based health programs, especially sexuality programs. SLT can be applied in different fields such as health education, sexuality education, prevention of substance abuse, and domestic violence. The theory focuses on changing the behaviors of individuals and is therefore appropriate for sexual education to curb early teenage pregnancies. This framework has helped understand teenage pregnancies in the context of the African American community (Akers & Jennings, 2016). The ecosystem of a teenage father (including family, friends, teachers, and neighbors) can help to develop attitudes, values, and views that shape their experience (Akers & Jennings, 2016). SLT can help prevent teenage pregnancies by reducing the involvement of teenagers in sexual activities (Akers & Jennings, 2016). Sexual behavior is influenced by an individual's skills, knowledge, interpersonal relationships, and attitudes. In African American communities and other minority groups across the United

States, teens receive few positive role models for better and positive sexual behaviors. Cultivating and developing positive and healthy sexual behaviors in teens is critical, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic when teenage parenting is extremely challenging.

### **Related Literature**

#### **Impact of COVID-19 on American Families**

##### **General impact of the pandemic**

The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted everyone regardless of race, gender, or religion. For many families, the pandemic is making several changes in everyday activities due to financial hardships. COVID-19 has also raised anxieties among children and tensions in parent–child relationships (Brown et al., 2020). Regaining normalcy is challenging for many families as many schools and daycare centers are closed until the pandemic is controlled. COVID-19 has had an unprecedented and widespread impact on households across the United States (Brown et al., 2020). Despite financial resources being appropriated by the local and national governments to reduce the impacts of COVID-19, a series of surveys that have been carried out across the country indicate that many households have not been adequately protected. Therefore, many families have been exposed to serious impacts of COVID-19 across different areas, such as health and income (Power, 2020). Households in the four largest cities in the United States—Los Angeles, Houston, New York City, and Chicago—experienced severe financial and health problems during the COVID-19 outbreak (Hamadani et al., 2020). Challenges included depleted savings, unaffordable health care services, reduced quality of



healthcare services, and trouble paying bills due to lack or reduced income (Hamadani et al., 2020). The coronavirus pandemic has increased the unemployment rate, leaving many families without stable incomes (Power, 2020).

### **Disproportionate impact on certain populations**

Most of the households that have been affected by the Coronavirus pandemic are Latinos and Blacks (Alon et al., 2020). Research has shown that COVID-19 has negatively impacted Blacks, Latinos, and Native American communities due to many positive cases and deaths (Clark et al., 2020). At least four individuals out of 10 among Native American families had used their savings during the Coronavirus pandemic as they did not have jobs to sustain their incomes (Power, 2020). Other groups largely affected include households with incomes less than \$100,000 and those experiencing loss of jobs, as companies cannot sustain employees' salaries during the pandemic. Many of the hospitalized COVID-19 patients come from these communities, causing strain for low-income families (Clark et al., 2020). Rural families have also experienced serious problems during this pandemic due to the long-standing systematic social and health inequalities (Alon et al., 2020; Clark et al., 2020). The outbreak of COVID-19 has largely affected health care delivery through system disruptions, deferrals, and delays (Brown et al., 2020). Increased households across the United States could not access medical care for critical conditions (Son et al., 2020).

### **Impact on education**

Further, more than 36% of families with children in schools have problems maintaining their children's education (Clark et al., 2020). Families do not have the

financial resources to take their children to school, after the government's relaxation of COVID-19 restrictions (Clark et al., 2020). Many schools shifted to online programs during the Coronavirus pandemic to keep their students engaged (Clark et al., 2020). However, due to reduced or low incomes, over 60% of families across the United States do not have stable internet connections at home, making it difficult for students to complete their homework (Clark et al., 2020). Furthermore, over 43% of rural families have members who have lost their jobs or had their wages or working hours reduced since the start of the Coronavirus pandemic (Clark et al., 2020). Rural households reported serious financial problems making it difficult to sustain family members (Clark et al., 2020).

### **Overall impact of pandemic**

Many vulnerable families in the United States, especially those with low incomes and undocumented refugees and immigrants, face challenges beyond health concerns. The pandemic has resulted in a significant loss of lives, health, income, and economic stability for most Americans. Social routines that families depend on to structure their lives, such as going to school, working, attending religious services, and visiting friends, are no longer feasible due to government restrictions to curb the effects of COVID-19 (Alon et al., 2020). Families are finding it difficult to adjust to the new normal to deal with anxieties among children and stressors for parents, which increase with the uncertainties caused by the pandemic (Alon et al., 2020). Furthermore, there is apprehension about contracting the virus and increased trepidation regarding the future financial stability of families (Alon et al., 2020).

### **Impact on women with children**

Women with children could be the most vulnerable population in the United States during the COVID-19 pandemic as most are in the low-income group (Tai et al., 2020). In 2019, over 70% of women with children across the United States were in the labor force (Son et al., 2020). During the Coronavirus pandemic, minority women with low incomes struggled to care for their children due to stay-at-home orders (Fortuna et al., 2020). Women comprise a large percentage of the workforce in industries deemed essential during the COVID-19 pandemic, such as restaurants, groceries, and health care (Fortuna et al., 2020). This posed a conflict with their children's responsibilities. During the COVID-19 pandemic, children spent a large proportion of their time at home (Fitzpatrick et al., 2020). Hence, mothers have had difficulties balancing their children's distance learning requirements and job responsibilities. But the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA) is a Coronavirus relief package that the government passed to help families mitigate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic (Lindstrom & Elliot, 2020). The FFCRA considered low-income women with children, especially those from families with low social status. FFCRA's division C broadens the Family and Medical Leave Act to include a 12-week leave for absent employees to take care of their children. Division E of FFCRA also requires that the Emergency Paid Sick Leave Act to be established to grant workers two weeks and two-thirds of their pay during the COVID-19 Pandemic.

### **Loss of jobs and income**

Regulations that required individuals to stay at home in order to curb the spread of COVID-19 have resulted in the closure of small-scale businesses, which is a large source of financial support for many American families (Russell et al., 2020). Some families have maintained the same income during the pandemic; however, their household expenses have also increased. Family members continue to experience prolonged loss of income (Fitzpatrick et al., 2020). People will experience difficulties finding new employment opportunities in the reduced labor market. Small-scale businesses such as brick-and-mortar retail in Harris County remained closed during the COVID-19 pandemic and might find it difficult to reopen once the pandemic restrictions are lifted.

### ***Impact of COVID-19 on African American Families***

The coronavirus pandemic had brought devastating impacts on the minority groups (Alon et al., 2020). African Americans are carrying a large social burden due to COVID-19. In areas where the population of Blacks is high such as New York, the number of COVID-19 positive cases and death cases is high. In Chicago, where the population of Blacks is not big, they have increased reported COVID-19 cases and about 70% of COVID-19 deaths (Jones et al., 2020). The economic consequences of COVID-19 have also had a detrimental impact on the mental health of Blacks (Jones et al., 2020). Many Blacks have experienced stress, depression, and anxiety due to the COVID-19 pandemic (Power, 2020). In addition, systematic racism increases the severity of COVID-19 impacts, resulting in racial health disparities. Black Americans are likely to contract COVID-19 due to systematic racism caused by historical segregation policies, which also

affects their living conditions (Carroll et al., 2020). Systematic racism was the primary operator of health care disparities, increasing mental health issues in African American families (Lindstrom & Elliot, 2020).

As the first COVID-19 case was reported in the United States, several testing kits were distributed without consideration of the density and the actual needs of the population. Data shows that most African Americans had no access to testing kits. For example, only 4,854 blacks received tests out of 94,780 in Kansas (Fortuna et al., 2020). However, due to poor access to treatment and medication, African Americans make up a third of the total death cases reported in Kansas. In Illinois, 78,650 Blacks were tested compared to 220,968 Whites (Fortuna et al., 2020). Patients from minority groups who do not have insurance or are underinsured are less likely to get tested for COVID-19, regardless of clear symptoms (Power, 2020). Over 12% of African Americans do not have health insurance, which is a higher rate when compared to 7% of Whites (Brown, 2018). Before the implementation of the ACA in 2010, over 20% of Blacks were uninsured. However, even after the implementation of ACA, the Black population still has a higher uninsured rate (8%) than the Asian Americans (6%; Fortuna et al., 2020). Similarly, although the COVID-19 mortality rate is high among races and ethnicities, minority groups, including Blacks, have been hit harder (Prime et al., 2020). Out of every 100, 000 Blacks, at least 98 have died from COVID-19, double that of Whites (Leddy et al., 2020).

### ***Racism and Discrimination***

The majority of previous researchers and policy makers have been reluctant to associate racism with reduced quality of health outcomes among minority communities. Many studies have focused on interpersonal ethnic and racial discrimination with less emphasis on the impacts of structural racism. According to Yoshikawa et al. (2020), structural institutions involve affiliated institutions with cultural and historical links. During the Coronavirus pandemic, discrimination occurs in different historical, social, and political contexts. Yoshikawa et al. (2020) also found that the COVID-19 pandemic has exposed discrimination and racism within the US healthcare system.

**Poverty.** Son et al. (2020) investigated the characteristics of low-income families in the US based on ethnicity and race and found that African Americans constituted 20% of the 8 million low-income families with children. The researchers shared that minority groups with low incomes tend to live in densely populated areas. Poor living conditions make it difficult for families to take necessary precautions for their safety and those of their children and loved ones (Tai et al., 2020). This is one of the reasons behind the high numbers of positive COVID-19 cases among blacks. Fortier (2020) asserted that African Americans have low incomes due to being employed in low-wage jobs. In the US, African Americans are overrepresented within the low-wage jobs category and thus risk contracting COVID-19. According to Fortier (2020), over 40% of African Americans are low-wage workers, the type of jobs that do not allow workers even to have sick leave. This has increased blacks' exposure to COVID-19 regardless of the systematic racism within the healthcare system.

As noted by the Centers for Disease Control, employees from African Americans working in low-wage jobs such as food industry, health care, and transportation have been forced to work during the pandemic hence continuing to interact with the public increasing the chances of contracting the disease. This increases the risks of COVID-19 infection. Additionally, based on the Centers for Disease Control data, most of the service industry workers are African Americans and Hispanic. African Americans make up to 30% of the licensed nurses who frequently interact with COVID-19 patients. As low-wage workers, the black population depends on their employers to acquire health insurance (Fitzpatrick et al., 2020). This forces the individuals to continue reporting to their jobs even when under medication. During the Coronavirus pandemic, Fitzpatrick et al. (2020) established that some employers require their employees to continue reporting to their duties and only release them when they test COVID-19 positive. Given the mode by which the Coronavirus spreads, by the time a person tests positive, they have already interacted with and infected other people, thus forcing contact tracing (Fitzpatrick et al., 2020). With minorities staying in densely populated areas, the spread of COVID-19 is easier and quicker, which explains the high number of confirmed COVID-19 cases among African American communities (Fitzpatrick et al., 2020).

**Homelessness.** Wilke et al. (2020) noted that staying-at-home directives are not an option for the homeless. African Americans make up only 13% of the total US population. However, despite the low number, the blacks account for over 40% of the homeless population, as reported by the Annual Homeless Assessment Report to Congress (Wilke et al., 2020). Therefore, a significant African American population has a

compromised immune system, lives in close quarters, and is aging, making them vulnerable to diseases such as COVID-19 that are easily spread with increased contact between people (Wilke et al., 2020). Previous and present discriminatory policies around property rights, housing, land use, health care, and justice have made it difficult for people of color to accumulate wealth and own a home (Yoshikawa et al., 2020). As a result of racist housing policies and the economy, African Americans have experienced housing insecurity and homelessness. Due to preexisting health conditions, poor sanitization, lack of access to nutritious food, and stigma, homelessness has increased the risk of people of color contracting the COVID-19 virus (Yoshikawa et al., 2020). Homeless people have problems accessing important resources compared to those with their homes (Yoshikawa et al., 2020). African Americans face inequalities within healthcare which put them at of communicable diseases (Yoshikawa et al., 2020). The coronavirus crisis has amplified healthcare inequities (Yoshikawa et al., 2020). The government must understand the inequalities to design the most appropriate strategies to protect the health and well-being of people, especially those from the minority community (Yoshikawa et al., 2020). The Coronavirus pandemic has been detrimental to homeless individuals. Lee et al. (2020) estimated that over 10% of the homeless population had been affected by COVID-19. Homeless people affected by COVID-19 are increasingly likely to be hospitalized and require critical care. About two-thirds are likely to die due to preexisting conditions (Lee et al., 2020).

Nuru-Jeter et al. (2018) reported that due to present and previous racist policies, African Americans have experienced economic and housing insecurities. During the



Coronavirus pandemic, wealth inequality and lost wages have made it challenging for African American families to settle their bills (Nuru-Jeter et al., 2018). The rates of rent and food are high among communities of color. Additionally, the families have experienced the loss of wages due to the loss of jobs during the crisis, thus further increasing income inequalities (Nuru-Jeter et al., 2018). Therefore, there was a disproportionate economic impact on African Americans during the coronavirus crisis. Jones and Grigsby-Toussaint (2020) argued that African Americans are charged higher rents than whites, thus increasing the chances of being evicted during the pandemic. The researchers shared that African Americans spend over 30% of their incomes on housing expenses (Nuru-Jeter et al., 2018). Asians, Blacks, and Latinos are over-presented in the low-wage jobs in industries and sectors most affected by COVID-19, such as restaurants and hotels. Further, Jones and Grigsby-Toussaint (2020) shared that African Americans are not given paid sick leave, thus exposing them to COVID-19. Because their families depend on their incomes, African Americans are left with tough choices between going to work while sick and exposing themselves to COVID-19 while at work (Jones & Grigsby-Toussaint, 2020).

Howell and Emerson (2017) investigated the racial wealth gap in New York using a qualitative approach and a sample size of 600 individuals. The researchers found that white families had wealth ten times more than other races. African Americans experience high poverty rates as compared to other races. Asian groups also disproportionately experience poverty (Fortuna et al., 2020). Due to high poverty rates, African American families have challenges paying their bills and other emergency expenses. Even before

the COVID-19 crisis, African Americans faced healthcare inequalities, risking increased health issues (Fortuna et al., 2020). The current pandemic has highlighted and amplified these issues (Fortuna et al., 2020). Howell and Emerson (2017) asserted that communities of color have many preexisting conditions that endanger their lives during the coronavirus pandemic, such as asthma, hypertension, heart disease, and diabetes. Health disparities have been associated with political, social, and economic injustices (Fortuna et al., 2020). According to Fortuna et al. (2020), social injustices have resulted in poor housing, food insecurity, and poor living conditions among people of color.

Furthermore, due to fear, discouragement, and discrimination, African Americans have shied away from rightfully seeking health assistance (Fortuna et al., 2020). The undocumented population does not seek medication help for fear of forceful immigration. The historical oppression that is still ongoing has created distrust among minority groups.

#### ***Addressing the Impact of COVID-19 on African Americans***

The COVID-19 pandemic will help the government focus on the vulnerable community and their rights and safety. The disparities in the COVID-19 positive cases and mortality rates reflect existing inequalities caused by systematic racism and discrimination. As noted by Baekgaard et al. (2020):

The purpose of a human right is to frame public policies and private behaviors to protect and promote the human dignity and welfare of members and groups within society, particularly those vulnerable and poor, and to implement them (p. 66) effectively.

According to Brown (2018), states must fulfill several economic and social rights, including accessibility, availability, and quality, regarding the measures to mitigate the risks posed by COVID-19. These elements are interrelated in ensuring the right to health (Brown (2018)). The elements go hand in hand in measuring and evaluating the government's performance in meeting the people's rights (Clark et al., 2020). Treating people with maximum respect and dignity is the first step during a crisis such as a coronavirus pandemic (Clark et al., 2020). According to Clark et al. (2020), it is important to recognize individuals' right to self-determination and equality. While the government commits itself to preventing and to cure COVID-19, there is a need for increased commitment to restore equity and justice in the system. Secondly, Fortier (2020) suggested the need to balance mitigation strategies and civil liberties protection while maintaining the growth and development of the economy. The government's decisions regarding isolation and quarantine should be fair and avoided based on stigma and discrimination. Fortier (2020) added that vulnerable communities such as people of color require consideration during important decision-making to respect their rights.

Bayham and Fenichel (2020) stated that individuals need to identify and address the barriers to healthcare access to achieve long-term solutions. Furthermore, substance abuse treatment and mental health among the African American communities should be strengthened since the COVID-19 pandemic is affecting people's mental well-being. The violation of human rights in the US, as noted by Carroll et al. (2020), has been present in the US for many years. The pandemic has resulted in: "an unprecedented combination of adversities which presents a serious threat to the mental health of entire populations, and

especially to groups in vulnerable situations.” (p.21). Fenichel (2020) suggested that the best way to promote mental health among African Americans is to invest in protective environments and practices. The government should take action as it engages in constructive conversations with the affected minorities.

### ***Impacts of COVID-19 on African American Adolescents***

COVID-19 – an infectious illness brought about by SARS-CoV-2 – has ruled the airwaves since its rise in December 2019 (Farquharson & Thornton, 2020). From that point forward, it has spread around and brought about a pandemic that has affected the worldwide economy and our everyday lives, but also, for a few of us, our psychological wellness. While keeping awake to date and educating about the Coronavirus pandemic and the most recent general well-being measures is significant, taking care of ourselves and everyone around us is also fundamental. Life has taken the new normal, and everyone’s way of life has drastically changed.

Oosterhoff et al. (2020) mentioned the aspects that made most African American adolescents develop fear and emotional distress about the death toll and the disproportionate infections between African Americans and other races in the US. Concerning adolescents who were much into making friends other than online connections, most are currently living in uncertain times, worried, and not knowing what tomorrow might look like (Oosterhoff et al., 2020). Fear and panic are what most African American adolescents experience concerning the kind of social life and connections that they have. As progressively stringent measures to keep individuals separated get set up to

reduce coronavirus spread, psychological health specialists caution that traditional social associations' loss accompanies mental expenses.

According to Oosterhoff et al. (2020), information on COVID-19 transmission rates shows an unquestionable and upsetting example: Black Americans are contracting and dying of COVID-19 at rates far surpassing other racial and ethnic gatherings. Black Americans get constrained into conditions that hoist their danger for COVID-19 through discriminatory approaches and practices, and they place Black kids at the focal point of misfortune in numerous life spaces (Mantovani et al., 2020). These short articles feature the pandemic's effect on African American Adolescents at the school, family, and individual levels by examining how the pandemic influences scholarly execution and commitment, family financial matters and wellbeing, and African American Adolescents' mental prosperity (Oosterhoff et al., 2020). With a comprehension of the impact of foundational prejudice on COVID-19 differences, we distinguish racial equity strategy and practice suggestions that emphasize fair admittance to quality schooling to address the necessities of African American adolescents and families during and after the pandemic, including arrangements that assert admittance to data innovation for far off learning, emotional wellness benefits, and improved scholarly help.

The youth have felt the effect of stress and anxiety since introducing new rules of COVID-19 that affected the behavior's code of conduct on their interactions. The rules seemed to be devastating since there was a need to stay at home, thus leading to idleness and psychological torture on the youth's minds since most of them tended to socialize and learn from their peers before the outbreak of COVID-19. According to Hawke (2020),

being in the same place could cause fatigue and boredom to young youths because they may feel inactive when carrying out their duties at home. Moreover, the youth tend to experience the tension of being worried and frightened about the lives of their loved ones, such as parents and their peers and friends; hence they feel some trauma and anxiety among them (Nathiya, 2020; Oosterhoff et al., 2020). Hawke (2020) asserted that the youths who tested positive for COVID-19 felt discriminated against and isolated since it was a requirement for one who is found with the disease could be put under quarantine for beyond 21 days; social distance and isolation led to depression. Some youth even underwent depression caused by their parents' death, making some even remain orphans and have difficult situations (Hawke, 2020). Most African American youths who received the sad news that most deaths were among African Americans developed emotional trauma, an aspect that lowered their self-esteem.

Because of fundamental prejudice, African American adolescents lopsidedly face conditions that expand their openness to COVID-19, make social separation testing, remember work for entire industries, dependence on available transit, and overrepresentation in remedial facilities, and swarmed, unsatisfactory housing (Mantovani et al., 2020). African American adolescents are bound to be underinsured, get inferior quality medical care, live in food deserts, and be exposed to indoor and open-air ecological poisons, which are connected to basic ailments that elevate the hazard of COVID-19 (Oosterhoff et al., 2020). This brief spotlights how African American adolescents are affected at the school, family, and individual levels.

The harmful social vices arose due to COVID-19, such as theft crimes, drug abuse, increased immoral behaviors, early pregnancies, and suicidal cases. The increased idleness also led to peer influence, which made youths acquire harmful advice from the wrong groups, thereby leading to the youth's evil influence. The increased pressure from the challenging economic conditions attracted other youths to theft crimes, thus causing other youths to be arrested. Some even lose their lives when encountered by the police, which exposes them to danger, thereby losing the young labor which could have been utilized in the future. Even though child labor was a sad reality before the Coronavirus, the pandemic has exacerbated this reality as child labor has become an economic necessity for many families' survival since the young youth was subjected to the formidable task which could be done by the older adults (Hawke, 2020). The stress and anxiety caused by isolation led to drug abuse; hence, the youth's health status was hampered due to low self-esteem. The effect of drug abuse, in turn, could lead to hallucinations; hence the youth could not adhere to COVID-19 rules, thereby leading to the spread of the virus.

Nathiya (2020) asserted that the youths who were at the age of employment experienced demoralization since an increased number of companies that were operating in the physical presence were closed; hence increased youths experienced unemployment, thereby developing deceitful techniques of surviving in the challenging economic conditions, often leading to their arrest and most of them spending the rest of life in prison (Oosterhoff et al., 2020). The youth felt that their talent and energy were side-lined by a lack of opportunity or skills; it would damage our futures and make it increasingly

challenging to rebuild a better, post-COVID economy (Nathiya, 2020). Moreover, the outbreak of COVID-19 led to a new learning system, such as introducing online learning in colleges and higher learning institutions, which made learning quite hectic for students from poor backgrounds. The learning system created a disparity since other students suffered severe anxiety and depression caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Currently, education worldwide has changed, making it difficult to learn remotely through digital schools, making education increasingly apparent since laptops and iPads were once considered a pastime luxury. Still, some students could not afford them since they are considered necessary for learning. Most students cannot access online learning because they do not have access to a computer at home (Nathiya, 2020).

Youth have experienced the fear that has made them change their career choices since most students have vowed not to take courses related to health doctors and nurses because they were exposed to COVID-19. Regarding the study by Power (2020), the medical health officers were expected to take care of the patients, making them vulnerable to contact COVID-19. The terrifying part was where increased deaths were obtained from health medical officers since they could easily attract the disease. Most of the youth's ambition was deterred by COVID-19 since most jobs will be conducted online, making some of the courses in the colleges and institutions of higher learning irrelevant (Nathiya, 2020). Moreover, some youths who have equipped themselves in businesses have experienced great losses on their investments, leading to their frustrations due to the high demands of the economy, causing increased pressure in their lives. Financial frustrations have increased due to increased pressure on survival needs,



making the youths explore some of the evil, deceitful vices such as sexual abuse (Power,2020). The lockdown imposed on the countries that made one stay at home also led to cases of sexual abuse such as rape and defilement by close relatives. Such incidents may cause youths to become violent, withdrawn, enter early marriages to escape, or even fall into depression.

Gabrielli (2020) found out that cessation of sporting activities has hampered social activities since measures to curb the spread of COVID-19, including lockdowns and travel and border restrictions, have impacted the staging of sporting events globally, at continental and even national levels. Some events were postponed indefinitely, others were canceled or played without spectators, and mostly the youth participated in the sporting activities, making them waste their talents (Power, 2020). Since most youths are not participating in sporting activities such as gyms, neighborhood football, and basketball games, their health is slowly being compromised (Power, 2020). Moreover, due to calls for social distance, service sector jobs depending on a congregation have reduced, leading to such businesses' closure.

The wearing of face masks has increased at the highest peak since the thieves get confident by not being identified, leading to violent extremism and terrorism (Courtney, 2020). Some of the youths could steal from the people and go unnoticed. Sanitizers have rendered other youths to use chemicals to make one feel unconscious, making it easy to steal and rob the targeted person. Criminal cases have led to increased death, causing pain and agony to the youth's families (Oosterhoff et al., 2020). The criminal cases have led to a crisis where most youths are viewed as troublemakers and people with bad societal

vices. Most of the cases in the highlights were considered vices of the highest order since the communities are viewed to influence future generations negatively.

The lockdown and curfew hours have caused an increase in robbery cases, making some youths engage in crime by taking advantage of the rules imposed to enrich themselves. Moore (2020) outlined that some of the youths have been deployed by politicians to spread their agendas through violent acts, leading to increased criminal cases. Most terrorist activities have been increasing to sustain their interest through youth deployment. Serious incidences of crime have been associated with political affiliations, which have risen due to the politicians' influence on the youths. The increased hunger and unemployment made the youth get lured into criminal affairs. When it comes to security issues, most of the regulations and procedures of COVID-19 measures have been violated mostly by the youths, thus causing them to be considered part of the population that needs the proper attention to avert the contagious spread of COVID-19 (Moore, 2020). The increased issues of the youth being associated with stubbornness clearly indicate that the youth are the only people being influenced negatively on the measures to undertake to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Regarding the violation of measures, peer influence and ignorance have led to the continuous spread of the pandemic, leading to the highest number of diseases being affected. Unemployment could be the main influence that caused the youth to be the vulnerable part of the people affected by the disease (Moore, 2020).

African American adolescents have faced something newer than what they were used to. An overlooked impact was mental health, which had deteriorated drastically

since the pandemic's beginning. Phelps and Sperry (2020) said, "When we talk about mental health, we are talking about" a person's condition concerning their psychological and emotional wellbeing (Phelps & Sperry, 2020). Psychological well-being significantly determines how we feel, think, or generally behave in life. This mental health also affects how we tackle stress, overcome challenges, and face fears (Mantovani et al., 2020). From the beginning of the coronavirus pandemic, many individuals have gotten involved differently. News outlets and media continue to focus a lot on the disease's impacts on physical well-being.

Previous inconsistencies in admittance to satisfactory web associations and PC innovation are being exacerbated by a move too far off picking up during the pandemic that spots African American adolescents at a further drawback. African American guardians have worries about getting to assets or supplies to keep their kids on target scholastically (Millett et al., 2020). After effects of an overview led in April with guardians in Texas, New York, California, and Washington show that one of every five Black guardians got almost no data from their school about distant learning assets during the pandemic. Responses from a review directed in March show that 25% of African American Adolescents associated with instructors not exactly once every week (Fitzpatrick et al., 2020). Further, Black guardians lopsidedly speak to fundamental specialists who cannot telecommute and are less ready to give parental scholarly management and back essential for far-off learning.

African American Adolescents have also excessively felt the pandemic's instructive impacts as the nation's auxiliary schools progressed to virtual learning

(Wenham et al., 2020). Around 50% of African American Adolescents and 40% of white grown-ups in family units with school-selected youngsters reacted in the Household Pulse Survey that at any rate, one kid had class dropped due to COVID-19. Because of many years of under-interest in the Black community, African American adolescents are bound to go to schools with less financial assets and innovation to help distance instruction. The pandemic has stressed these schools' restricted monetary assets as they work to give far-off instructive experiences (de Miranda et al., 2020). African American adolescents' understudies expected to lose 33% of pre-pandemic understanding increases and half of the math gains during the pandemic; 25 claimed that the pandemic would additionally fuel existing aberrations in accomplishment brought about by fundamental bigotry.

African American Adolescents are especially powerless against the mental impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. Seventy-four percent of African American Adolescents are stressed over the impact COVID-19 may have on their family's finances (Patrick et al., 2020). Seventy-one percent of African American Adolescents are concerned that they or a relative will get presented with the infection. Stressors identified with COVID-19 are compounded by ongoing race-related injuries, including the lopsided effect of police fierceness on Black Americans and networks. Expanded pressure is escalated by social separation, which upsets everyday schedules and lessens contact with family members, friends, and good grown-up examples who can offer indispensable help. Essentially, African American adolescents are excessively presented to family deaths, and COVID-19 exacerbates paces of misfortune. Further, the deficiency of friends and

family to COVID-19 is regularly fast, startling, and social separation disturbs families' capacity to lament (Ellis et al., 2020).

The US's populace of American adolescents is turning out to be progressive racially and ethnically, with offspring of shading soon to increase beyond 50% of children from one side of the country to the other. By around 2040, youngsters and grown-ups of shading will turn into the mathematical larger part. However, in the US, minorities have been avoided from a promising circumstance pathway and upward versatility for quite some time (Stavrinos et al., 2020). Prejudicial approaches and institutional practices have profoundly imbalanced social and monetary areas, including training, work, political portrayal, wellbeing, and the equity framework. These imbalances have been increased by the COVID-19 pandemic, imperiling this group of people yet to come.

To guarantee US social and financial improvement, the cutting edge's prosperity and profitability are necessary, which means zeroing in on the difficulties confronting African American Adolescents (Guessoume et al., 2020). We have distinguished three territories where COVID-19-related impacts are now harming youngsters' fates. Securing this age will rely upon fast and sweeping activity by partners across strategy and not-for-profit areas to limit the racial and ethnic differences exacerbated by this pandemic.

***Impact of COVID-19 on High School and Middle School African American Adolescents***

Coker et al. (2020) suggested that youth risk being left behind in development and education, especially girls. Humanitarian organizations and other non-governmental

organizations warn that the COVID-19 pandemic might undo the child rights progress that has been made for many years. The pandemic puts the girl child at a high risk of domestic abuse, violence, and exploitation. Those experiencing violence might find it difficult to access relevant protection services due to NGOs withdrawing necessary funding and other resources. Countries such as Sudan, Kenya, and Liberia have already experienced an increase in domestic violence and gender-based violence during the Coronavirus pandemic (Alvin et al., 2020). According to Alvin et al. (2020) the local and national governments should develop strategies to protect youths, especially girls, from sexual exploitation and violence.

Furthermore, the researchers suggested that families from low-income communities such as African Americans should be protected with cash assistance to enable them to meet their daily needs. Distance education for children in African American families should be made affordable and accessible by providing the internet. Rural areas have poor internet access and cannot enroll students in online learning.

There are several ways through which COVID-19 has impacted education in African American communities. Putri et al. (2020) carried out seasonal learning research to understand the patterns of students when in school and out of session due to COVID-19. The researchers suggested that one way to think about the impact of COVID-19 on education is the extension of the summer breaks for most learners. The research indicated that student achievement during the break has declined, and the decline is big for mathematics compared with other subjects. There has been a debate across the US on how big the summer loss is and how it affects the socioeconomic achievement gap. An

early study on the impact of COVID-19 on education by Choi et al. (2020) found that at least one month of learning was lost during the summer. The authors also stated that African American students fell behind high and middle-income students, especially in mathematics and reading.

According to Iyer et al. (2020), the closure of schools and learning institutions has affected over 1.5 billion students worldwide, thus changing how children and young adults live during the COVID-19 pandemic. The innovations, technologies, and new learning tools that schools have implemented to maintain online learning even during the pandemic might have long-lasting impacts on schools, teachers, and students. Iyer et al. (2020) shared that closing schools for a week result in losing human capital, which can develop into long-term social and economic challenges. Regardless of the efforts by the schools, teachers, and the government to ensure that schools continue to operate. However, very few students in the US have had the opportunity to access education consistently during the pandemic. Half of the students in the US were able to access education during the pandemic. Iyer et al. (2020) found that students from African American communities had no resources to access online learning. Due to low incomes, African American families could not provide consistent internet access for their children to access online education. The learning loss in these minority groups will reduce growth and productivity. Iyer et al. (2020) estimated that losing one year of school can be equivalent to losing between 7% and 10% of the total income. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the home learning environment quality is very important.

Ferrel and Ryan (2020) stated that home learning environments need to be of high quality to accommodate students during the pandemic. There is a digital divide due to poor access to electronic devices among African American students, thus amplifying the inequalities among Blacks and other races. Hawke et al. (2020) suggested that students from low-income families have fewer chances of accessing digital learning resources and parental support for better home learning. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the majority of African American students do not have quiet places for learning at home. Additionally, due to a lack of employment and reduced incomes, African American families do not have the financial resources to provide stable internet connections. One out of every five students in the US cannot acquire computers or electronic devices for online education. According to Hamadani et al. (2020), the lack of opportunities for physical learning due to COVID-19 has resulted in economic distress, thus increasing the chances of African American students dropping out of school and socially distancing themselves away from their peers. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, already 1 out of 10 youths in the US was not engaged either in education, training, or employment (Oosterhoff et al., 2020). For vulnerable African American adolescents, the closure of schools and other learning institutions has significantly impacted their well-being. The pandemic has affected vulnerable students in schools, the emotional guidance, and support provided by the schools, educational needs, and social services.

Phelps and Sperry (2020) explored the psychological impacts of quarantine measures and social distancing on adolescents. The authors found that social distancing has reduced the physical interactions between individuals, thus causing increased



anxieties, stress, and loneliness among young adults. Prime et al. (2020) found that young adults between the ages of 18 and 29 experience high levels of anxiety and distress.

Exposure to domestic violence increases during lockdown measures, thus leaving women and young female adolescents vulnerable to domestic violence and abuse from intimate partners or family members. In 2014, 55% of the children investigated reported that they faced increased violence during the Ebola outbreak (Coltart et al., 2017). Since the outbreak of the Coronavirus pandemic, the number of calls made to NGOs seeking violence prevention has increased to five times (Prime et al., 2020). Emergency calls that report domestic violence against school-going children and women have risen by 60%, especially in Europe and the US.

Leddy et al. (2020) found that the closure of learning institutions due to COVID-19 affects the mental well-being of students as they usually get support from classmates and teachers. Education professionals are important in identifying and reporting abuse against school-going children. According to Leddy et al. (2020), the cancellation of exams across the US has developed anxiety, stress, and uncertainty among students. Alvin et al. (2020) shared that the impact of COVID-19 depends on the homes in which individuals live. The researchers argued that household challenges such as loss of jobs, reduced or no income, loss of loved ones due to COVID-19, poor house quality, and having patients with preexisting conditions affect individuals' well-being. Alvin et al. (2020) added that African American students experience increased challenges in their households, thus reducing the quality of their home education, which is important during the coronavirus pandemic.

To address the impact of COVID-19 on youths, the US government, like Germany, the UK, and Portugal, has implemented programs to help youths with their mental health. According to Bayham and Fenichel (2020), parents have been provided with disseminated and practical support to cope with children at home during the pandemic. There are suggestions for offline and online activities to keep youths engaged as schools remain closed. The government has launched a sports institute in Ireland to provide information, videos, and youth training (Clark et al., 2020). There is also the mobilization of young volunteers and youth workers. Young people across the US have been at the forefront of mitigating the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. Through dedicated programs, the government has promoted and supported youth volunteers (Ellis et al., 2020). In France, a national program called “Je veux aider” is run by youths to distribute food, medicines, and health products and provide practical help to fragile neighbors. These programs have been used in France to maintain social relationships with the elderly who have been isolated. According to Guessoum et al. (2020), “I Want to Volunteer” has also been initiated in Canada, which is dedicated to COVID-19 volunteering. In New Zealand, COVID-19 response programs have been networked with youth organizations to increase the quality of the programs. Youth workers provide support to vulnerable groups through innovation.

### ***Impacts of COVID-19 on Parents of African American Adolescents***

Chung et al. (2020) reported familiar inequality that African Americans and Hispanics are having challenges finding jobs. Even before the pandemic, blacks had a higher unemployment rate than whites. The employment and income of African

American parents are crucial to the economy and health of black children. The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in stress and depression for families (Chung et al., 2020). Financial difficulties among African American families have been caused by the high unemployment rate and the fear of contracting COVID-19. Paid work time has reduced during quarantine, while unpaid time was higher. Parents have reported spending more time at home than usual, thus finding it difficult to balance work and family. Spending much time at home has reduced income for families (Coker et al., 2020). Black parents have been separated from support systems because of social distancing. Courtney et al. (2020) reported that 24% of black parents had lost childcare support while 35% struggled to manage childcare support. The researchers also argued that reduced social support was the key reason behind increased distress and anxiety among African Americans. Despite parents remaining in contact with each other through social media, they have lost physical support. Additionally, parents experience increased roles at home during quarantine, which further increases stress and anxiety.

Another challenge for African American parents in handling their adolescents is to teach their children as they attend schools virtually. Black parents have been employed in areas considered essential during the COVID-19 pandemic (Coker et al., 2020). Most blacks have continued to work despite the reduced wages, thus exposing themselves to the COVID-19 virus. Some blacks have worked as caregivers to the elderly to reduce exposure to the virus. The disruptions due to the coronavirus pandemic have interfered with family engagements. The stay-at-home orders resulted in shifts in family routines and practices as parents have to take care of their children to ensure they do not engage in

drug abuse and other unwanted behaviors. Furthermore, directives such as social distance reduced the interactions between parents and children, thus exposing children to unwanted behaviors (Coker et al., 2020). Black families have experienced challenges that require family engagement modifications.

Verdery et al. (2020) stated that compared to fathers, African American mothers have had to cut back on their working hours to take care of their children during the Coronavirus pandemic. In the past year, COVID-19 has negatively impacted the labor market, thus generally reducing productivity across the US. There is a wide gender gap in employment across the US, especially in African American communities. Verdery et al. (2020) found that Black parents struggle to care for their children due to reduced leisure time, inadequate income, and increased responsibilities. They must juggle childcare, work, and ensuring their children attend online learning (Verdery et al. (2020). Previously in African American communities' mothers had greater childcare responsibilities than fathers, and the COVID-19 pandemic has increased these responsibilities (Yoshikawa et al., 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic has reduced employment rates among African Americans as companies scale down their workforce.

### **Summary**

This chapter has provided an extensive literature review regarding the impact of COVID-19 on American families, African American families, high school and middle school African American students, and African American, parents. According to Brown et al. (2020), COVID-19 has raised anxieties among children and tension in parent-child relationships. Regaining normalcy is challenging for many families as many schools and

daycares remain closed until the pandemic is brought under control (Jones et al. (2020)). The economic consequences of COVID-19 have a detrimental impact on the mental health of blacks. Jones et al. (2020) found that an increased number of African American population is likely to experience problems with their mental health. In addition, systematic racism increases the severity of COVID-19 impacts, thus resulting in racial health disparities. Oosterhoff et al. (2020) mentioned that African American adolescents had developed fear and emotional distress concerning the death toll and the disproportionate infections between African Americans and other races in the US. The next chapter, chapter three, will discuss the research methodology that the researcher will adopt in addressing the research questions

### Chapter 3: Research Method

This qualitative descriptive study was conducted to explore U.S. Black teenage parents' lived experiences of parenting during the COVID-19 pandemic, focusing on experiences associated with COVID-19 mitigation measures and the financial demands of parenting. The general problem is that U.S. Black teenage parents are suffering disproportionately from stressors associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, including loss of employment, financial strain, lack of access to childcare and other resources, social isolation, and the disproportionate health and economic impacts of COVID-19 on U.S. Black communities (Fegert et al., 2020; Sneed et al., 2020; Yoshikawa et al., 2020). This problem is significant because the stress associated with COVID-19 and its mitigation increases the risk of negative mental health and other outcomes for the Black teenage parent and their child, including an increased risk of domestic violence and other forms of parental maltreatment of the child (Brown et al., 2020; Fegert et al., 2020).

The purpose of this chapter is to describe and provide rationales for the methodology, design, and procedures. Sections include descriptions of and rationales for the qualitative approach and descriptive design. This chapter then discusses the procedures, including sampling and recruitment, data collection, and data analysis. Next, this chapter includes a discussion of the procedures implemented to strengthen the trustworthiness of the study findings, followed by a discussion of the ethical assurances associated with this study.

## **Research Design and Rationale**

The research question used to guide this study was “How do Black teenage parents living in U.S. Northeastern state describe their experiences associated with the COVID-19 pandemic?” A qualitative descriptive design was selected for this study to answer this question. Qualitative descriptive research typically involves collecting open-ended oral or written data from participants familiar with a condition to explore that condition as the participants perceive it (Sandelowski, 2000). Through the purposeful selection of a sample of information-rich participants, researchers using a qualitative descriptive design and semistructured interviewing can focus on relevant topics while prompting participants to describe their perceptions and experiences in their own words, in the contexts of their own lives and cultures (Sandelowski, 2000). Descriptive research is distinguished from other qualitative designs by its emphasis on imposing as few predefined theoretical and conceptual lenses as possible during the data analysis.

Other qualitative designs were considered for this study but were rejected. A phenomenological design was inappropriate because it focuses on the internal, subjective components of a lived experience rather than on the external, real-world components (Moustakas, 1994), which was the focus of this study on U.S. Black teenage parents’ experiences of parenting during COVID-19. An ethnographic design was rejected because it is appropriate for studying the culture of a defined group of people (Creswell & Poth, 2016), and U.S. Black teenage parents residing in U.S. northeastern states do not constitute a cohesive group with a shared culture that distinguishes it from other groups. A case study design involves triangulating multiple data sources to develop a full

description or explanation of a real-world condition as it occurs within a defined context (Yin, 2017), but U.S. Black teenage parents' experiences of parenting during the COVID-19 pandemic may not be accessible through multiple sources of evidence. A grounded theory design is focused on theory generation (Charmaz, 2014), but in this study, social learning theory was adequate for relating the findings to the previous literature. A narrative inquiry design was also considered, but the focus of this study was on identifying common themes among the relevant experiences of participants rather than on developing comprehensive narratives of the experiences of each individual.

In this study, the goals behind selecting a qualitative methodology include allowing unanticipated themes and insights to emerge to address a gap in the literature regarding the study topic and obtaining contextualized descriptions of a condition that is not easily separable from its contexts. The qualitative descriptive design emphasizes letting the data speak for itself (i.e., identifying codes and themes inductively) and developing a description of a condition grounded in participants' contexts and individual perspectives (Sandelowski, 2000). The strengths of the descriptive design are therefore consistent with the goals indicated by the study's problem, purpose, and research question. A qualitative descriptive design was therefore selected.

### **Methodology**

A qualitative approach was selected for this study. Qualitative approaches involved collecting open-ended oral or written data from participants familiar with a condition of interest to describe or explain that condition as the participants perceive and experience it (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The open-ended nature of qualitative data



collection is suitable for research on conditions that have not previously been described (Yin, 2016), such as the lived experiences of U.S. Black teenage parents during the COVID-19 pandemic. Allowing participants to answer open-ended interview and questionnaire questions in their own words creates opportunities for insights to emerge, making qualitative approaches optimal for exploring conditions, the characteristics of that are not yet known (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Qualitative approaches also yield data and findings grounded in the participants' contexts and perspectives, making them suitable for studying conditions that cannot easily be separated from their social, organizational, or other contexts (Yin, 2016).

Quantitative approaches were considered for this study but were judged unsuitable. In quantitative research, statistical relationships such as correlation and causation are measured between variables that can be expressed numerically (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Yin, 2016). Quantitative research is confirmatory, meaning that designing a quantitative study requires a condition to be well described to develop meaningful and comprehensive hypotheses and close-ended data-collection instruments. The strengths of quantitative approaches include obtaining generalizable results when a validated survey instrument is administered to a sufficiently large, random sample. However, the potential generalizability of quantitative results is a weakness in that generalizable data are typically decontextualized. As a result, quantitative approaches are suitable for obtaining objective, generalizable measurements of hypothesized statistical relationships between numerical variables. The disadvantages of quantitative approaches include their unsuitability for generating unanticipated themes or response categories and the inability

of the results to suggest explanations of why the measured statistical relationships might exist.

Qualitative approaches also have weaknesses, including an inability to confidently generalize qualitative findings from a sample to a population and objectively measure statistical relationships like causation (Yin, 2016). These disadvantages of qualitative research are consequences of its methodological strength, which is the ability to gather rich, contextualized data grounded in participants' perspectives (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Though findings may be influenced by participant bias, participants providing open-ended responses can indicate their perceptions of what a condition is like and the relationships between a condition and its social, organizational, and personal contexts (Merriam & Tidwell, 2016; Yin, 2016). However, the lived experiences of U.S. Black teenage parents associated with the COVID-19 pandemic have not yet been described by researchers, and those experiences are likely to be inseparable from their specific social, economic, and personal contexts. Using a qualitative approach to explore participants' lived experiences will facilitate the description of a condition that researchers have not previously studied by allowing unanticipated themes and insights to emerge and allow participants to describe their perceptions of relationships between their relevant experiences and the contexts in which they occur. A qualitative approach was therefore selected for this study.

### **Instruments**

This study used two data collection instruments, including a researcher-developed online questionnaire and a researcher-developed interview protocol. The online

questionnaire was provided to participants in an emailed link upon their enrollment in the study. The email also included the alphanumeric code (P1, P2, etc.) assigned to the participant to designate them throughout the study to maintain confidentiality. By clicking the link, participants were directed to a SurveyMonkey.com questionnaire. The first page of the questionnaire listed the terms of informed consent. The participants were invited to contact me with any questions or concerns. At the end of the list of terms, the participant was invited to enter their participant code to indicate their agreement or to click a link indicating that they do not agree. If they did not agree, they were redirected to a page with a message thanking them for their time and indicating again that they may contact me with any questions or concerns. If the participant agreed to the terms of informed consent, they were directed to a series of close-ended demographic items. Next, participants were asked to provide responses to approximately three open-ended questions relevant to collecting data to answer the research question. Participants were allowed to skip any items they did not wish to answer or to exit the questionnaire at any time as part of the voluntary nature of participation in the study. At the end of the questionnaire, participants were informed that I would contact them to arrange a time for the interview. The questionnaire was expected to take approximately 20 minutes to complete.

The second data collection instrument was a researcher-developed semistructured interview protocol. The protocol consisted of approximately eight open-ended questions to elicit data relevant to addressing the research question. Open-ended questions were included in the interview and the online questionnaire because they are suitable for

focusing on relevant topics while prompting participants to provide rich, detailed responses in their own words (Adams, 2015). Semi-structured interviews are recommended for use in qualitative descriptive studies as an appropriate procedure for gathering open-ended data about participants' perceptions of a condition (Sandelowski, 2000). The semi-structured interviewing format allows the researcher to ask probing follow-up questions when further detail or clarification is needed (Rubin & Rubin, 2011). The interview is expected to take approximately one hour.

The online questionnaire and interview protocol will be field-tested prior to finalization. The field test participants will be two individuals who meet the inclusion criteria for the sample. Data will not be collected from them, and their responses will not be used in the study. The field test will be conducted to get the participants' feedback on the appropriateness of the wording of the questions to elicit the needed data. Participants' recommended modifications will be considered and incorporated into the protocol when appropriate.

## **Procedures**

This section includes descriptions of and rationales for the procedures planned for this proposed study. Subsections address procedures for sampling and recruitment, data collection, and data analysis.

### ***Sampling and Recruitment***

The population of interest is that of Black teenage parents residing in the State of U.S. Northeastern during the COVID-19 pandemic. The target population from which the sample will be recruited will be that of Black teenage parents residing in the State of U.S.

Northeastern and participating in a public social media forum for teenage parents or Black teenage parents. A purposeful sampling strategy will be used to recruit a sample of 10 participants. Purposeful sampling involves focusing recruitment efforts on individuals likely to have the knowledge and experiences needed to provide relevant data (Palinkas et al., 2015). The form of purposeful sampling used in this study will be criteria-based. The inclusion criteria will be African American, aged 18 or 19 years, having and being the primary caregiver for at least one biological child born in 2020 or earlier, residing in the State of U.S. Northeastern, and willing and able to describe their lived experiences through an online questionnaire and a video conference interview. The exclusion criterion will be a pre-existing personal or professional relationship with the researcher.

After IRB approval was received, digital flyers were posted in public social media forums for members of the population of interest (Appendix). The flyer will include a description of the purpose and nature of the study, the terms of informed consent, and an invitation to contact the researcher through the platform's secure, internal messaging service with questions, concerns, or interest in participating. When individuals contact the researcher, they will be asked to verify verbally that they meet each inclusion criteria. The terms of informed consent will then be discussed with them, and they will be invited to ask questions or raise concerns. The potential participant will then be asked if they accept the terms. Suppose the potential participant provides verbal acceptance of the terms. In that case, they will be enrolled in the study, and the link to the online questionnaire will be sent to them. The email will also include the alphanumeric code (P1, P2, etc.) assigned to the participant to designate them throughout the study to

maintain confidentiality. Documentation of their informed consent will be obtained on the first page of the questionnaire before participants can proceed with providing data.

The sample size will be determined by data saturation. Data saturation is reached when additional data collection and analysis ceases to yield new themes and insights (Fusch & Ness, 2015). After data from the a priori sample size of 10 participants has been collected and analyzed, if no new themes or insights emerged during the analysis of the data from the last two participants, recruitment and data collection will be concluded. If data saturation is not reached with 10 participants, additional participants will be recruited. Indicate here how many you sampled, part of the revision from what you will do to what you did...

### ***Data Collection***

The first phase of data collection will consist of an online questionnaire. Participants will be able to respond to the questionnaire items at a time and from a place of their choice. They will be asked to complete the questionnaire within three days of enrolling in the study, but they will be given increased time if they so request. The questionnaire is expected to take approximately 20 minutes to complete. The SurveyMonkey.com application will save and compile participants' responses, including the alphanumeric code each participant entered on the informed consent page.

The researcher will contact participants who have completed the questionnaire by telephone or email to schedule a time for the interview. At the interview, the researcher will initiate a Zoom call. The videoconference application will allow the researcher to hear the participant and observe their facial expressions. The call will begin with a review

of the purpose and nature of the study and the terms of informed consent. Participants will be invited to raise any questions or concerns or to verbally indicate their continued agreement to the terms of informed consent. The videoconference application's audio-recording feature will then be activated with the participant's permission, and the participant will be asked to state the participant code (P1, P2, etc.) assigned to them upon their recruitment.

The interview questions will be asked in the order in which they appear in the protocol. Follow-up questions will be asked as needed. At the end of the interview, the participant will be invited to add any further information to their previous responses. The audio recorder will then be deactivated. The participants will then explain the transcript verification and member checking procedures.

### ***Data Analysis***

Questionnaire data compiled by the SurveyMonkey.com application will be downloaded as a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet after 10 participants have completed a questionnaire and been interviewed. Close-ended demographic data from the questionnaire will be compiled and analyzed in Microsoft Excel using descriptive statistics, including counts, percentages, and averages. Audio-recorded interview data will be transcribed verbatim using Zoom's automated transcription feature and then verified by the researcher's reading and rereading of them while playing the recording and correcting the transcript as necessary. The researcher will also remove any potentially identifying information from the transcripts and questionnaire responses at this stage.

Each participant's de-identified, the researcher-verified transcript will be sent to them by email for verification. Participants will be asked to review the transcript within three days and respond either to verify the transcript's accuracy or recommend modifications. Additional time will be provided for transcript verification if participants request it. Follow-up communications will be sent by telephone and email once per week for three weeks to participants who did not respond to the initial request. Transcripts for which member verification cannot be obtained will still be included in the study, but the lack of verification will be noted in the presentation of the findings as a limitation.

Interview transcripts and questionnaire responses will be imported as source files into NVivo 12 computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS). CAQDAS does not automate the coding process, but it can be used to enhance the trustworthiness of an analysis by maintaining the integrity of the researcher's coding organization and allowing analytics to be run on the researcher's codes and themes (Yin, 2016). The inductive, thematic analysis procedure described by Terry et al. (2017) will be used. An inductive procedure involves basing codes and themes on patterns of meaning in the data rather than sorting the data into predefined codes or themes, and it will be used to ensure that unanticipated themes and insights are allowed to emerge from the data. A thematic procedure involves the identification of common themes or overarching patterns of meaning across the responses of multiple participants. This study will use the thematic procedure to enhance trustworthiness by minimizing the potential for individual participants' biases or errors to influence the findings.



The six steps of the analysis procedure described by Terry et al. (2017) are: (a) reading and rereading the data to gain familiarity with it, (b) coding the data by grouping different excerpts with similar meanings, (c) theming the data by grouping related codes, (d) reviewing and refining the themes through a comparison to the original data, (e) naming and defining the themes, and (f) creating the presentation of results. After the interview and questionnaire data have been analyzed, data saturation will be assessed. Suppose no new codes or themes were identified in the data from the ninth and tenth participants (P9 and P10). In that case, data saturation will be assessed, and no additional participants will be recruited. Suppose any new codes or themes are identified in the data from P9 or P10. In that case, participant recruitment and data collection will continue until data saturation is reached.

A summary of the themes and codes identified in each transcript and questionnaire will be emailed to the participant for member checking. Member checking is a procedure in which participants are asked to verify the researcher's interpretations of their responses, and it will be used in this study to minimize the potential influence of researcher bias on the findings (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). As with transcript verification, participants will be asked to review the summary within three days and respond either to verify its accuracy or recommend modifications. Additional time will be provided for member checking if participants request it. Follow-up communications will be sent by telephone and email once per week for three weeks to participants who did not respond to the initial request. Summaries for which member verification cannot be obtained will still

be included in the study, but the lack of verification will be noted in the presentation of the findings as a limitation.

### **Trustworthiness**

The trustworthiness of qualitative data and findings is assessed according to four criteria. The criteria are credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). The following subsections include descriptions of the procedures used to enhance each of the components of trustworthiness.

#### **Credibility**

Findings are credible when they accurately represent what they are intended to describe (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). Threats to credibility include errors in the recording and documentation of data and inaccuracies in participants' responses. Audio recording, verbatim transcription, researcher verification, and member verification will be used to ensure the interview data are documented accurately. The SurveyMonkey.com application will preserve the questionnaire data exactly as participants entered it. The potential influence of inaccuracies in participants' responses will be mitigated through assurances of confidentiality, which will minimize participants' anxiety about having their identities disclosed, and thematic analysis, which will promote rigor of findings to minimize individual participants' errors and biases on the common themes that will be the major findings in the study. The potential influence of errors in the researcher's interpretations of the data will be minimized through the member-checking procedure.

**Transferability**

Transferability is the extent to which findings are transferable to populations or settings other than those from which they were derived (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). The delimitation of the study to a small sample of Black teenage parents in one U.S. state is likely to limit the transferability of the findings to other populations and settings. To enable readers to assess the transferability of the findings to populations or settings in which they might be interested, participant demographics will be reported to the extent consistent with maintaining confidentiality. Setting clear inclusion criteria for participants will also assist readers in assessing transferability. When the findings are presented in Chapter 4, evidence in the form of thick descriptions will be provided. The thick descriptions will include direct quotes from the data to indicate the perceptions' contexts.

**Dependability**

Dependability refers to the consistency and reliability of research and the degree to which research procedures are documented, allowing someone outside the research to follow, audit, and critique the research process. (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). In this study, dependability will be enhanced through clear documentation of the study plan in the present chapter and a detailed report on the execution of the study procedures in Chapter 4. Dependability will be further enhanced by using the same online questionnaire and interview protocol to collect data from each participant, making the data collection procedure replicable.

**Confirmability**

Confirmability is the extent to which findings reflect participants' opinions and perceptions rather than the researcher's (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). In this study, the member-checking procedure will enhance confirmability by allowing participants to identify misinterpretations of their responses to ensure the accuracy of the documented responses. The presentation of direct quotes from the data as evidence for the findings will allow the reader to assess confirmability independently.

**Ethical Assurances**

This study will comply with the standards for the ethical treatment of human subjects indicated in the Belmont Report (US Department of Health and Human Services [HHS], 1979). The three broad standards for ethical research set in the Belmont Report are respect for persons, beneficence, and justice. The standard of respect for persons indicates that people should be treated as autonomous and that vulnerable persons with diminished autonomy be entitled to additional safeguards. The target population in this study is not vulnerable, so standard assurances of autonomy will be adequate. First, participation in this study will be entirely voluntary. Potential participants may decline to join the study, and participants may leave the study, at any time, for any reason, with or without stating a reason and without any negative consequences. Second, participants will be informed of the study's purpose and nature and their participation in it. Third, an informed consent process will be utilized, in which participants will be invited twice, during the preliminary screening call and at the time of the interview, to raise questions

or concerns, and will also be invited to contact the researcher with questions or concerns before documenting their informed consent at the beginning of the online questionnaire.

The criterion of beneficence indicates that the interests of research participants should be considered and protected (HHS, 1979). This study is expected to involve minimal risk of harm to the participants in that their participation is not expected to put them at any greater risk than their normal day-to-day activities. No incentives are offered for participation. Any risk that might accrue to participants through disclosing their identities will be mitigated through procedures to maintain confidentiality. Each participant will be assigned an alphanumeric identifier (P1, P2, etc.), which will be used to identify them in the study materials. Any potentially identifying information will be removed from the questionnaire data and interview transcripts before other persons can view those materials. Audio recordings of the interviews will be stored through the required retention period on a password-protected flash drive accessible only to the researcher, and then the flash drive will be destroyed.

The justice criterion indicates that the risks and benefits of research should be equitably distributed (HHS, 1979). In this study, risks to participants are expected to be minimal. The benefits of the research are intended to include insights that may facilitate the development of evidence-based recommendations and guidelines that Black teenage parents can use to enhance their coping and that policymakers can use to better support Black teenage parents through hardships associated with COVID-19 and its consequences. Given that the risks will be minimal and the findings in the research are

expected to directly or indirectly benefit the population of Black teenage parents to which participants will belong, the ethical research standard of justice is satisfied.

### **Summary**

This qualitative descriptive study aims to explore U.S. Black teenage parents' lived experiences of parenting during the COVID-19 pandemic, focusing on experiences associated with COVID-19 mitigation measures and the financial demands of parenting. A qualitative approach and a descriptive design will be used to achieve this. The target population from which the sample will be recruited will be that of Black teenage parents residing in the State of U.S. Northeastern and participating in a public social media forum for teenage parents or Black teenage parents. A purposeful sampling strategy will be used to recruit a sample of 10 participants. After IRB approval is received, digital flyers will be posted in public social media forums for members of the population of interest. A preliminary screening call will be conducted to verify the eligibility of potential participants who contact the researcher.

Two data collection instruments will be used in this study: a researcher-developed online questionnaire and a researcher-developed interview protocol. The online questionnaire will be administered online through the SurveyMonkey.com application. One-to-one, semi-structured interviews using the researcher-developed protocol will be conducted through the videoconference application Zoom and audio recorded. The interview recordings will be transcribed verbatim and sent to participants for verification. Interview and questionnaire data will be analyzed thematically in NVivo 12 software, and a summary of the results for each participant will be member checked. Participants will

have multiple opportunities to review and discuss the terms of informed consent with the researcher. Participation in the study will be entirely voluntary, and participants' identities will be kept confidential.

## Chapter 4: The Results

The purpose of this qualitative descriptive study was to explore the socioeconomic challenges that African American teenage parents living in a U.S. northeastern state face during events such the COVID-19 pandemic that limit the provision of human services. To address this purpose, the following research question was asked: What are the socioeconomic challenges that African American teenage parents living in U.S. Northeastern state face during events such the COVID-19 pandemic that limit the provision of human services? The current study findings are discussed in this chapter. This information includes the study setting and the demographics of the participants. The data collection procedures are described, followed by evidence of the study's trustworthiness. The results are organized by theme and presented. The chapter ends with a summary

### **Setting**

The setting for this research was a public social media forum for teenage parents or Black teenage parents. There were no personal or organizational conditions that could have influenced participants or their experience at the time of study, nor by me at the time of interpretation. Prior to beginning data collection, I received site approval from the forum moderators to conduct the study using users of the forum.

### **Demographics**

Ten male participants were included in this study. Each participant was between 18 and 19 years old and identified as African American. They identified as the primary caregivers of at least one biological child. Seven out of the 10 participants had one child



and remaining three had two children. In addition, five had some college education but had not graduated and the other five had high school education. See Table 1 for their demographics.

**Table 1**

*Participant Demographics*

Name	Gender	Number of Children	Level of Education	Profession
P1	Male	1	Some college	Student
P2	Male	1	HS	Warehouse worker
P3	Male	1	Some college	can
P4	Male	2	Some college	Uber
P5	Male	1	HS	Unemployed
P6	Male	1	HS	Unemployed
P7	Male	2	HS	Warehouse worker
P8	Male	1	Some college	Door Dash/Student
P9	Male	2	Some college	Uber/Lyft
P10	Male	1	HS	Unemployed

**Data Collection**

Purposeful sampling was used to select the 10 individuals who participated in this study. The inclusion criteria were African Americans aged 18 or 19 years who were the primary caregiver for at least one biological child born in 2020 or earlier and who resided in the northeastern United States. Participants also had to be willing and able to describe their lived experiences during a semistructured interview. The exclusion criterion were pre-existing personal or professional relationship with the researcher or individuals who did not meet the inclusion criteria described above. To recruit participants, digital flyers were posted in the public social media forum that served as the setting for this study. The flyer included a description of the purpose and nature of the study, the terms of informed consent, and an invitation to contact the researcher through the platform's secure, internal messaging service with questions, concerns, or interest in participating. When individuals

contacted me, they were asked to verify verbally that they met each of the inclusion criteria. I then scheduled an interview with participants that met the criteria and provided informed consent.

Telephone or email was used to schedule a time for the interview. At the time of the interview, I initiated a Zoom call. The videoconference application allowed me to hear the participant and observe their facial expressions. The call began with a review of the purpose and nature of the study and the terms of informed consent. Participants were then invited to raise any questions or concerns or to verbally indicate their continued agreement to the terms of informed consent. The videoconference application's audio-recording feature was then activated with the participant's permission, and the participant was asked to state the participant code (P1, P2, etc.) assigned to them upon their recruitment.

### **Data Analysis**

Data analysis began in this study after 10 interview participants had completed their interviews. Audio-recorded interview was transcribed verbatim using Zoom's automated transcription feature and then verified by reading and rereading of them while playing the recording and correcting the transcript as necessary. I also removed any potentially identifying information from the transcripts at this stage.

Each participant's de-identified, researcher-verified transcript was sent to them by email for verification. Participants were asked to review the transcript within 3 days and respond either to verify the transcript's accuracy or recommend modifications. Additional time would have been provided for transcript verification if participants requested it, but

none did. Follow-up communications were sent by telephone and email once per week for three weeks to participants who did not respond to the initial request. Though the participants responded to the request, none of the participants made any edits to their transcripts.

Interview transcripts were imported as source files into NVivo 12 computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS). CAQDAS does not automate the coding process, but it can be used to enhance the trustworthiness of an analysis by maintaining the integrity of the researcher's coding organization and allowing analytics to be run on the researcher's codes and themes (Yin, 2016). The inductive, thematic analysis procedure described by Terry et al. (2017) was used. An inductive procedure involves basing codes and themes on patterns of meaning in the data, rather than sorting the data into predefined codes or themes; this was used to ensure that unanticipated themes and insights are allowed to emerge from the data. A thematic procedure involves the identification of common themes or overarching patterns of meaning across the responses of multiple participants. The thematic procedure used in this study enhanced trustworthiness by minimizing the potential for individual participants' biases or errors to influence the findings.

The six steps of the analysis procedure described by Terry et al. (2017) were: (a) reading and rereading the data to gain familiarity with it, (b) coding the data by grouping different excerpts with similar meanings, (c) theming the data by grouping related codes, (d) reviewing and refining the themes through a comparison to the original data, (e) naming and defining the themes, and (f) creating the presentation of results. After

interview and questionnaire data had been analyzed, data saturation was assessed. Since no new codes or themes were identified in the data from the ninth and tenth participants (P9 and P10), data saturation was considered reached and no additional participants were recruited.

A summary of the themes and codes identified in each transcript and questionnaire was then emailed to the participants for additional member checking. As with transcript verification, participants were asked to review the summary within 3 days and respond either to verify its accuracy or recommend modifications. Additional time would have been provided for member checking if participants requested it, but none did. Follow-up communications were sent by telephone and email once per week for 3 weeks to participants who did not respond to the initial request. Participants responded to the request but did not provide any edits or additional explanations.

### **Evidence of Trustworthiness**

The trustworthiness of qualitative data and findings is assessed according to four criteria. The criteria are credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). The following subsections include descriptions of the procedures that were used to enhance each of the components of trustworthiness.

#### **Credibility**

Findings are credible when they accurately represent what they are intended to describe (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). Threats to credibility include errors in the recording and documentation of data and inaccuracies in participants' responses. To limit this threat, all interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim. The potential influence of

inaccuracies in participants' responses were mitigated through assurances of confidentiality, minimized participants' and anxiety about having their identities disclosed. Thematic analysis minimized the influence of individual participants' errors and biases on the common themes of the results presented. The member-checking procedure was used to minimize potential influence of errors in the researcher's interpretations of the data.

### **Transferability**

Transferability is the extent to which findings are transferable to populations or settings other than those from which they were derived (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). The delimitation of the study to a small sample of African American teenage parents in Pennsylvania is likely to limit the transferability of the findings to other populations. .To assess the transferability of the findings to populations in which they might be interested, participant demographics were reported to the extent consistent with maintaining confidentiality. The clear inclusion criteria for participants also assisted readers in assessing transferability. Evidence in the form of thick descriptions were also provided. The thick descriptions included direct quotes from the data to indicate the contexts of the perceptions expressed.

### **Dependability**

Dependability refers to the consistency and reliability of research and the degree to which research procedures are documented, allowing someone outside the research to follow, audit, and critique the research process. (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). In this study, dependability was enhanced through clear documentation of the study plan in Chapter 3,

and through a detailed report on the execution of the study procedures in this chapter.

Dependability was further enhanced by using the same interview protocol to collect data from each of the participants, making the data collection procedure replicable.

### **Confirmability**

Confirmability is the extent to which findings reflect participants' opinions and perceptions rather than those of the researcher (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). In this study, the member-checking procedure enhanced confirmability by allowing participants to identify misinterpretations of their responses that may have resulted from researcher bias. Presentation of direct quotes from the data as evidence for findings allowed the reader to assess confirmability independently.

### **Results**

The research question that guided this study was, what are the socioeconomic challenges that African American teenage parents living in U.S. Northeastern state face during events such the COVID-19 pandemic that limit the provision of human services? Themes related to this research question include difficulty determining eligibility for services, difficulty collecting necessary documentation, lack of application support, and service delays. Participants widely indicated that they needed social services due to job loss or loss of hours during the COVID-19 pandemic. To improve their ability to access human services, applicants indicated that the application process could be improved by making it increased user friendly. Participants indicated that referrals from friends and family was a primary pathway to linking participants to social services. Table 2 below

contain the themes pertinent to the research question in this study and the participants contributing to those themes.

**Table 2**

*Participants Contributing to Themes*

Theme	Number of Contributing Participants
Job Loss or Hour Decrease Precipitating Need for Services	9
Difficulty Determining Eligibility for Services	6
Difficulty Collecting Necessary Documentation	8
Lack of Application Support	3
Service Delays	4
Make Application Process User Friendly	5
Referrals from Friends and Family	10

**Job Loss or Hour Decrease Precipitating Need for Services**

Nine of the 10 participants indicated they lost their jobs or had their hours cut during the COVID-19 pandemic. This loss of income meant that participants were unable to pay for rent and sometimes food for their families. This need for income inspired participants to apply for social service programs. The one participant who did not indicate they lost their job or had their hours cut because of COVID-19 indicated that they were not able to get enough hours to make a sufficient income to support their family, and that this problem was an ongoing one.

In regard to job loss, P1 said, “I lost my job in during the pandemic and as teenage parent, I faced some financial hardship taking care of my family.” P2 said, “I faced housing challenges my hours were cut [at work] and I was unable to pay my rent, I needed Social Services support to help my situation.” P3 said, “My employer shut down

due to the pandemic and as teenage father and a single parent, I faced some financial hardship with my newborn daughter.” P5 said, “I faced financial difficulties, both my wife and I lost our jobs and taking care of baby girl was not easy for us, access to food became a challenge. “ P6 said, “I faced housing challenges after I lost my job two months before the pandemic started and with a newborn son, my family and I found it very difficult to pay for rent.” P7 said, “I faced financial challenges, I lost my job because of a chronic health issue and with twin babies in this pandemic era, life became very difficult for me and my family.” P8 said, “During the pandemic I lost my job and being in school as a single parent I couldn’t afford my rent.” P9 said, “I experienced job loss and loss of home due to not being able to pay the rent.” Finally, P10 said, “I lost my job in during the pandemic and as teenage parent, I faced some financial hardship taking care of my family.”

### **Difficulty Determining Eligibility for Services**

Six of the then participants indicated that they initially struggled to access human service programs because they were unsure if they qualified for the program they were applying for. Each of these participants indicated that this initial uncertainty made applying for support an increased burdensome and intimidating process. P1 said,

I tried to access temporary cash assistance for needy families, they grant childcare assistance to families until they can get jobs. The challenge I faced with this social service was how to apply and how to know if I am qualified for the cash assistance

P3 said,



I tried to access childcare assistance to support my family until I am able to find a job. The initial challenge I faced with the Social Services was how to get the necessary information to apply, I was not also sure whether I was qualified for the childcare assistance or not.

P4 said,

I tried to access temporary cash assistance for families going through financial hardships, the initial challenge I faced was that I was not sure whether I qualify for the cash assistance program, and I personally did not have any information about how to apply for this program.

P5 said,

I tried to access Child Care Assistance for needy families. They support families going through financial hardship until they are able to get jobs. The challenge I faced with this social service was how to apply and how to know if I was qualified for child care assistance program.

P6 said,

I tried to access cash assistance from Social Services, this program grants people in need cash assistance until they are back on their feet with a job. The initial challenge I faced was how to put in my application and I was not sure whether I was qualified.

P10 said, "I tried to access assistance however I faced challenges with obtaining the required information to apply and I was not also sure whether I was qualified for assistance."

### **Difficulty Collecting Necessary Documentation**

When participants overcame the initial struggle of determining if they were eligible to participate in a human services program, many then struggled to collect the necessary paperwork to document their eligibility. Eight of the ten participants in this study discussed the challenges they faced collecting the necessary documentation to apply for their program. P5 said, “The challenge I faced include difficulty in getting my documents together to complete the forms as required.” P6 said, “The challenges I faced include the difficulty in getting the documents required ready for the process and there was a section on the form I did not have the right details to fill in.” P7 said, “Completing the forms was a great challenge since I did not have the required document to complete them.” P10 said, “The challenges included getting the required documents together. I faced difficulty in finding supporting documents to be included in the application process.” P1 said, “The challenges I faced include the difficulty in getting my documents together to complete the forms as required. I recall how I could not find an important document to complete the process in time.” P3 said, “The challenges I faced include getting all my documents together and the difficulty I faced in locating some important documents that I must include in the application process.” P4 said, “The challenge I faced was getting my document they required together, scanning them on their electronic platform, there was also a challenge of locating some of my important documents.” P9 said, “Insufficient documentation was the main challenge.”

### **Lack of Application Support**

The challenge participants described related to applying for human service programs was exacerbated by a lack of application support. Three of the ten participants discussed how they struggled to get help apply for the programs. P2, for example, said, “The challenges I faced was not getting enough help during the completion of my form. There were other items on the form I did not understand very well.” P9 indicated that, “There was a longer call wait time. It took approximately an hour to speak to a representative.” P1 said, “My friends told me about this service and provided me with details to reach out to the U.S. Northeastern state Department of Health and Social Services. The first contact was via phone, the initial experience during my first contact was good. However, the process of getting in contact and meeting someone to assist was a challenge.”

### **Service Delays**

Once participants were able to successfully apply for a human service program, four participants indicated that there was a significant service delay between submitting the application and being approved to receive services. Four participants discussed experiencing service delays. This prolonged delay was impactful for participants, as they struggled during that time to support themselves and their families. For example, P7 said, “The challenge I faced from the beginning was the delay of getting a response.” P2 said, “I tried to access U.S. Northeastern state’s A Better Chance (DABC). A program designed to support people with low income and cannot get access to federal funded programs. The challenge I faced was a delay in getting a response.” P4 said, “I think

social services has improved since the pandemic, however, processing an applicant's request should not take too much time to be processed, systems have to be put in place for quick approval of requests." P8 said, "trying to establish the initial contact was a bit of a challenge. There were no formal directives, as COVID was not expected. However, I was able to eventually express the help I needed."

### **Make Application Process User Friendly**

Most participants in this study indicated that they faced barriers to completing the application process to receive social services. Five of the ten participants indicated that the impact of these barriers could be improved if they made the application process increasingly user friendly. P2 said, "Social Services should ensure easy accessibility to their various platforms and user friendly." P3 said, "Social Services should provide procedures that are user friendly to people who want to access their services." P4 said, "Social Services should ensure easy accessibility by requesting for simple and less difficult form of asking for new applicants' information." P5 said, "I think Social Services has to improve their accessibility during this pandemic era, so that people in similar situation as me can have access to social services." P6 said, "Social Service should ensure easy accessibility by making their various portals user friendly."

### **Referrals from Friends and Family**

While participants indicated they faced challenges accessing human services, the 10 participants also indicated that they received support from their friends and family to access the services they needed. These participants indicated that they were referred to services by their friend and family. P1 said, "My friends told me about this service and

provided me with details to reach out to the U.S. Northeastern state Department of Health and Social Services.” P2 said, “A friend gave me information about the Social Service and provided me with details to contact them.” P3 said, “A family friend told me about this social service and also gave me the necessary details to reach out to them.” P4 said, “A friend told me about this Social Service and also gave me information and details on how to contact them.” P5 said, “A friend told me about the Social Service and gave me information on how to contact the Department of Health and Social Services.” P6 said, “My friend informed me about this Social Service program and provided me with information on how to reach them.” P7 said, “A family friend gave me information about this social service, she also provided me with details to contact them.” P8 said, “My friends told me about this service and provided me with details to reach out to the necessary contacts for assistance.” P9 said, “that she heard about the program she applied for through “referrals from friends.” Finally, P10 said, “My grandmother suggested that I should reach out to inquire about social services.”

### **Summary**

The purpose of this qualitative descriptive study was to explore the socioeconomic challenges that African American teenage parents living in U.S. Northeastern state face during events such the COVID-19 pandemic that limit the provision of human services. The setting for this research was a public social media forum for teenage parents or Black teenage parents. Ten participants were included in this study. Each participant was between 18 and 19 years old. Each identified as African American, and were primary caregivers of at least one biological child. Purposeful

sampling was used to select the 10 individuals who participated in semi-structured interviews in this study. Threats to credibility include errors in the recording and documentation of data and inaccuracies in participants' responses. To limit this threat, interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim. The delimitation of the study to a small sample of Black teenage parents in Pennsylvania is likely to limit the transferability of the findings to other populations and settings.

To enable readers to assess the transferability of the findings to populations or settings in which they might be interested, participant demographics were reported to the extent consistent with maintaining confidentiality. In this study, dependability was enhanced through clear documentation of the study plan in Chapter 3, and through a detailed report on the execution of the study procedures in this chapter. In this study, the member-checking procedure enhanced confirmability by allowing participants to identify misinterpretations of their responses that may have resulted from researcher bias. The research question that guided this study was, what are the socioeconomic challenges that African American teenage parents living in U.S. Northeastern state face during events such the COVID-19 pandemic that limit the provision of human services? Themes related to this research question include difficulty determining eligibility for services, difficulty collecting necessary documentation, lack of application support, and service delays. Participants widely indicated that they needed social services due to job loss or loss of hours during the COVID-19 pandemic. To improve their ability to access human services, applicants indicated that the application process could be improved by

increasing its user friendly. Participants indicated that referrals from friends and family were a primary pathway for accessing services.

## Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendation

U.S. African American teenage parents have been at a disproportionately high risk of experiencing stressors associated with the financial demands of parenting during the COVID-19 pandemic (Fegert et al., 2020; Sneed et al., 2020; Yoshikawa et al., 2020). Past research has shown several challenges facing teenage parents living in a U.S. northeastern state during events such as the COVID-19 pandemic that limited the provision of human services such as food and other basic necessities (Nuru-Jeter et al., 2018; Son et al., 2020; Yoshikawa et al., 2020). African American teenage parents usually face challenges such as an increased risk of negative mental health and other outcomes for the African American teenage parent and their child, including an increased risk of domestic violence and other forms of parental maltreatment of the child (Brown et al., 2020; Fegert et al., 2020). Poverty, unmet healthcare needs, and trauma in early childhood can have lifelong consequences, creating obstacles to children's fulfillment of their potential and reducing socioeconomic disparities between different communities (Yoshikawa et al., 2020). Therefore, there was a need to address the gap in literature regarding the lived experiences of U.S. African American teenage parents during events such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

To address this gap in the literature, the purpose of this qualitative descriptive study was to explore the socioeconomic challenges that African American teenage parents living in a U.S. northeastern state face during events such as the COVID-19 pandemic that limit the provision of human services. Policymakers, researchers, and U.S. African American parents can benefit from research exploring these experiences



(Bowleg, 2020). This research significant as a first step toward meeting the informational needs that impede the efforts of policymakers to assist the United States (Fegert et al., 2020).

Purposeful sampling was used to recruit a sample of 10 participants. Data analysis was done through close-ended demographic data from the questionnaire compiled and analyzed in Microsoft Excel using descriptive statistics, including counts, percentages, and averages. Audio-recorded interview data were transcribed verbatim using Zoom's automated transcription feature and then verified by reading and rereading them while playing the recording and correcting the transcript as necessary. After analysis, the findings revealed that participants indicated that they needed social services due to job loss or loss of employment hours during the COVID-19 pandemic. Some participants indicated that the application process could be improved by increasing its user-friendly to improve their ability to access human services. Participants indicated that referrals from friends and family were a primary pathway for accessing services. This chapter presents the interpretation of the study findings, limitations of the study, recommendation, study implications, and conclusion.

### **Interpretation of the Findings**

The research question that guided this study was "What are the socioeconomic challenges that African American teenage parents living in a U.S. northeastern state face during events such as the COVID-19 pandemic that limit the provision of human services?" Themes related to this research question include difficulty determining eligibility for services, difficulty collecting necessary documentation, lack of application

support, and service delays. The interpretation of findings is presented for each theme in the following sections. The results are also compared with previous studies reviewed in Chapter 2.

### **Job Loss or Hour Decrease Precipitating Need for Services**

Loss of their job during COVID-19 caused harm to Black teenage parents. Most participants reported that the loss of income meant that they could not pay for rent and sometimes food for their families. Such a need for income inspired some participants to apply for social service programs. Some participants lost their homes due to being unable to pay for their rent, which resulted in financial hardship among participants because of the COVID-19 pandemic, especially for the single parents living with their children. These findings imply that the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in challenges because of the financial difficulties that made it difficult to meet basic needs, especially for the single parents with children who need to be taken care of. These findings provide insight into the challenges COVID-19 has caused and may be used to help economists, health care service providers, and governments to implement short-term remedy programs to help vulnerable victims of COVID-19 havoc and prepare for future inevitable similar situations.

The findings related to this theme have been previously reported in other studies regarding the loss of jobs and challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. For instance, Hamadani et al. (2020) noted that the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in great challenges, making life hard and meaningless because of financial difficulties faced during the pandemic and loss of jobs. In particular, Hamadani et al. indicated that

households in the four largest cities in the United States (Los Angeles, Houston, New York City, and Chicago) experienced severe financial and health problems during the COVID-19 outbreak. Similarly, Power (2020) argued that at least four out of 10 Native American families had used of their savings during the Coronavirus pandemic as they did not have jobs to sustain their incomes. The most affected families included those who had lost their jobs during the COVID-19 pandemic. These findings are consistent with the current study findings that participants experienced job loss, which resulted in financial difficulties such as being unable to pay rent and other basic needs. job loss due to the COVID-19 pandemic led to life challenges such as financial difficulties resulting in an inability to pay bills and other essential services like medical care for critical conditions (Son et al., 2020).

The current study findings contribute to the literature by establishing that loss of income made people unable to pay for rent and sometimes food for their families and other essential services. Such needs for income inspired some participants to apply for social service programs. These findings add to the knowledge in the current literature regarding the COVID-19 pandemic challenges faced by the global society, and the findings may be used for future references when conducting further research. Therefore, the current study findings have addressed the research problem and the purpose by indicating the socioeconomic challenges that African American teenage parents living in a U.S. northeastern state face during events such as the COVID-19 pandemic that limit the provision of human services.

### **Difficulty Determining Eligibility for Services**

The majority of participants indicated having initially struggled to access human service programs because they were unsure if they qualified for the program they were applying for. Each of these participants indicated that this initial uncertainty made applying for support an increasingly burdensome and intimidating process. Some participants faced challenges when trying to access the needed information to apply for essential services, such as not being sure whether they were qualified to get assistance for a particular service or not. The findings imply uncertainty in the determination of eligible services among the participants. The implication is that lack of information regarding the eligibility for essential services becomes a challenge when people are not aware of which services participants were eligible to access during the COVID-19 pandemic. These findings are significant because they may help the government and health care departments to ensure the availability of information to the victims of COVID-19 to understand their eligibility for various services during such a pandemic.

Current study findings support the previous literature regarding the eligibility for accessing essential services during the COVID-19 pandemic. In particular, Wilke et al. (2020) concurred with the above current findings by stating that as a result of preexisting health conditions, poor sanitization, lack of access to nutritious food and essential services, and stigma, homelessness has increased the risk of people of color contracting the COVID-19 virus. Homeless people have problems accessing important resources compared to those who have access to a home. According to Yoshikawa et al. (2020),

African Americans face inequalities within healthcare, putting them at risk of communicable diseases, and the coronavirus crisis has amplified healthcare inequities.

The current study findings contribute to previous literature by indicating difficulty in determining eligibility for welfare services. Participants faced challenges when trying to access the needed information to apply for essential services, such as not being sure whether they were qualified to get assistance for a particular service or not. These findings add to the knowledge in the current literature regarding the COVID-19 pandemic challenges faced by the global society, and the findings may be used for future references when conducting further research. Therefore, the current study findings have addressed the research problem and the purpose by indicating the socioeconomic challenges that African American teenage parents living in U.S. Northeastern state face during events such as the COVID-19 pandemic that limit the provision of human services.

### **Lack of Application Support**

Participants described a lack of support during the application of essential services programs. The challenge participants described related to applying for human service programs, exacerbated by a lack of application support. Some participants described challenges in the application, such as not understanding the requirements on the form and lack of knowledge on how to fill the application forms. Another challenge faced by some participants was a long waiting time to get assistance from the representative. The findings under this theme imply that most participants faced challenges when applying for human service programs because they did not understand the application process and needed support in their applications. The importance of these

findings is that the results may help human service providers to implement mechanisms of supporting those who have no understanding of how to apply for the service programs.

The above findings have previously been reported in other studies regarding the lack of application support in the application for the human service programs. For instance, Nuru-Jeter et al. (2018) supported the above findings by reporting that because of present and previous racist policies, African Americans have experienced economic and housing insecurities. During the Coronavirus pandemic, wealth inequality and lost wages have made it challenging for African American families to settle their bills. The rates of rent and food are high among communities of color. Additionally, the families have experienced the loss of wages due to the loss of jobs during the crisis, thus further increasing the income inequalities. This led to a lack of support during the pandemic, making it difficult to access essential services. African American teenage parents faced challenges of lack of support when applying for the essential services during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Although the above scholars have concurred with current findings, some studies differ in their conclusions regarding the lack of support in the application of service programs. In particular, Jones and Grigsby-Toussaint (2020) argued that African Americans are charged higher rents than whites, thus increasing the chances of being evicted during the pandemic. The researchers shared that African Americans spend over 30% of their incomes on housing expenses. Asians, African American, and Latinos are over-presented in the low-wage jobs in industries and sectors that have been mostly

affected by COVID-19, such as restaurants and hotels. The findings contribute to the previous literature by establishing that African American teenage parent faced various challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic, such as financial difficulties and lack of support in accessing essential services due to job loss. In this regard, these findings have answered the research and purpose of the study.

### **Service Delays**

Most participants indicated long delays in service provision after a successful application for a human service program. Some participants highlighted a significant service delay between submitting the application and being approved to receive services, which was impactful for participants. The findings imply that although participants successfully applied for human service programs, they faced the challenge of service delays. The implication was that service delays were attributed to late approval of the applications for the service program. These findings are important because they help understand challenges faced during the pandemic and implement strategies to counter this challenge of delayed service provision.

The above findings concur with previous literature findings from other studies. For example, Ellis et al. (2020) expanded pressure was escalated by social separation, which upsets everyday schedules and lessens contact with family members, friends, and good adult examples who can offer indispensable help such as applying services to avoid delay. Essentially, African American adolescents are excessively presented to family deaths, and COVID-19 exacerbates paces of misfortune. Further, the deficiency of friends and family to COVID-19 was regularly fast, startling, and social separation disturbs

families' capacity to lament (Ellis et al., 2020). Patrick et al. (2020) also supported these findings by stating that African American adolescents are especially powerless against the mental impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic (Patrick et al. 2020). Stressors identified with COVID-19 are compounded by ongoing race-related injuries, including the lopsided effect of police fierceness on African Americans and networks.

However, other studies, such as Stavrinou et al. (2020), contradicted these findings by indicating that in the U.S., minorities have been voided from a promising pathway and upward versatility for quite some time (Stavrinou et al., 2020). Prejudicial approaches and institutional practices have profoundly imbalanced social and monetary areas, including training, work, political portrayal, wellbeing, and the equity framework. These imbalances have been increased by the COVID-19 pandemic, implying this group of people yet to come and subjecting them to delayed services. These findings contribute to the current empirical literature by indicating that delayed services to African American teenage parents' needs make it difficult to get help in applying for essential service programs.

### **Make Application Process User Friendly**

The majority of participants in this study indicated that they faced barriers to completing the application process to receive social services. Some participants indicated that the impact of these barriers could be improved if they made the application process increasingly user-friendly. According to the participants, the application could be increasingly user-friendly by ensuring easy accessibility to various platforms and by providing user-friendly procedures to people who want to access services. In addition,



social services should ensure easy accessibility by requesting a simple and less difficult form of asking for new applicants' information. These findings imply that making the service application process user-friendly may reduce challenges faced during the COVID-19 pandemic. The significance of these findings is that the results help understand the solutions to delayed service provision, which begins from determining eligibility for service up to making the application process increasingly user-friendly.

Current study findings support the previous empirical literature indicating that social service providers should make the service application process increasingly user-friendly for easy accessibility. As an illustration from the existing literature, Chung et al. (2020) reported familiar inequality that African Americans and Hispanics have challenges finding jobs. Even before the pandemic, African Americans had a high unemployment rate compared to Whites. The employment and income of African American parents are crucial to the economy and health of Black children. The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in stress and depression for families (Chung et al., 2020). Financial difficulties among African American families have been caused by the high unemployment rate and the fear of contracting COVID-19. Paid work time has reduced during quarantine while unpaid time was higher. This prompted the urgent application of human social services. Chung et al. (2020) also argued that reduced social support was the key reason behind increased distress and anxiety among African Americans. Despite parents remaining in contact with each other through social media, they have lost physical support.

Additionally, parents experience increased roles at home during the quarantine period, increasing stress and anxiety. However, some scholars differ from current findings. For instance, Courtney et al. (2020) demonstrated that parents have reported spending increased amount of time at home than usual, thus finding it difficult to balance work and family. Spending much time at home has reduced income for families (Coker et al., 2020). Black parents have been separated from support systems because of social distancing. Courtney et al. (2020) reported that 24% of Black parents had lost childcare support while 35% struggled to manage childcare support. The findings contribute to the current literature by demonstrating that making the application process user-friendly could reduce difficulties in applying for essential services.

### **Referrals from Friends and Family**

Referrals from family and friends provided support in accessing services. Participants indicated they faced challenges accessing human services. In addition, participants also indicated that they received support from their friends and family to access the services they needed. Consequently, participants also indicated that they were referred to services by their friends and family. Most participants were given information and details on contacting the department of health and social services. These findings imply that family and friends' participants played a significant role in assisting them in applying for the social service programs. The findings are important because they help understand the impact family and friend support contributed to the ease of applying for service programs among the participants.

The study's findings are consistent with the previous empirical literature concerning the impact of family and friends on the social service application process. To support the above findings, Verdery et al. (2020) stated that African American mothers, compared to fathers, have had to cut back on their working hours in order to take care of their children during the Coronavirus pandemic. In the past year, COVID-19 has negatively impacted the labor market, thus generally reducing productivity across the U.S (Verdery et al. (2020). There is a wide gender gap in employment across the U.S., especially in African American communities. Verdery et al. (2020) also found that African American parents struggle to take care of their children due to reduced leisure time, inadequate income, and increased responsibilities. They have to juggle childcare, work, and ensuring their children attend online learning. African American teenage parents, therefore, depend on family and friends to support them to apply for the essential service programs during the COVID-19 pandemic. These findings are inconsistent with current findings by establishing that African American parents struggle to take care of their children because of reduced leisure time and increased responsibilities. //nice, very nice

### **Limitations of the Study**

This study comprised of various study limitations. This study had two methodological limitations related to the qualitative design used. First, the qualitative findings cannot be generalized because they are grounded in the perspectives and contexts of the study participants (Creswell & Poth, 2016). This limitation was unavoidable in using a qualitative study design. To mitigate this limitation, demographic

information about the sample and thick descriptions of the findings were provided to assist in assessing the transferability of the findings to other samples and populations. Qualitative research cannot be objective (Creswell & Poth, 2016), and the findings may be influenced by the participants' bias or the researcher. To mitigate this limitation, a thematic procedure was used to analyze the data, so the findings were based on the perceptions of most participants.

The limitation associated with the potential influence of researcher bias was mitigated in two ways. First, direct quotes from the data were presented as evidence for the study findings in Chapter 4 to assess the confirmability of the findings independently. Second, a member-checking procedure was used, in which participants were asked to review preliminary researcher interpretations of their data and verify their accuracy or recommend corrections. This procedure enabled participants to verify the researcher's interpretations to ensure that they accurately represented their views rather than the researcher's views to avoid researcher bias.

Another limitation addressed in this study was in regard to sample size. The study used a small sample size that may not permit the transfer of findings to other settings and populations. This study was also limited to a geographical setting. The researcher used one location to conduct the study, which may not allow the transferability of findings to other locations or settings.

### **Recommendations For Further Research**

It was recommended that future researchers should use an appropriate sample size to provide valid results that can be transferred to other populations. Very small sample

size tends to undermine the internal and external validity of the study. Such undermining of internal and external validity of the study may limit the generalizability of findings (Creswell and Poth (2016).

Another recommendation was advanced that future researchers should use diverse sample sizes to allow transferability of study findings to other populations. The study participants of African American teenage parents. In this regard, future studies should use diverse sample sizes with unique characteristics such as gender. The study involved only the young African American teenage girls were included as study sample compared to men.

This study was also limited to a geographical setting. The researcher used one location to conduct the study, which may not allow the transferability of findings to other locations or settings. Therefore, future researchers should conduct their research using different geographical settings for transferability of study findings to different locatio

The findings indicated that participants widely indicated that they needed social services due to job loss or loss of employment hours during the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, future should focus on ensuring the government.

## **Implications**

### **Implications for Positive Social Change**

This study has several implications for positive social change. These implications comprised individual, family, organizational, and societal/policy implications. Regarding individual implications, the findings may be used by COVID-19 victims to understand challenges encountered and how to solve those challenges. Family members of those

seeking social services may use these findings to help their relatives apply for the social service programs. These findings can help family members to provide necessary assistance to their relatives seeking social services by creating awareness about the social service and importance of social service. Organizations may find these findings useful in understanding the effects of job loss among those affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. This can prompt these organizations to implement various policies to protect their employees against an outbreak of a pandemic. Societal/policy makers such as the national and local governments could use these findings to create and implement various policies to govern crises like the COVID-19 pandemic.

### **Theoretical Implications**

This study has various theoretical implications. Social learning theory (SLT) was adopted in this study and has previously been applied preventatively in the context of U.S. Black teenage parents to reduce teenage pregnancy through the modeling of positive sexual attitudes and behaviors (Akers & Jennings, 2016). SLT has also been applied in an explanatory capacity to understand better how the conditions of poverty, low education, and low access to quality healthcare have contributed to elevated teenage pregnancy rates among U.S. minorities (Akella & Jordan, 2014). In this generic qualitative descriptive study, SLT was applied as a conceptual framework for understanding and comparing the previous literature findings on Black teenage parents' experiences associated with the COVID-19 pandemic. Rather than applying SLT to explain or prevent teenage pregnancy, the theory was applied in this study to understand better and contextualize Black teenage parents' lived experiences associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, with

a focus on the socio-economic challenges that African American teenage parents living in U.S. Northeastern state face during events such the COVID-19 pandemic that limit the provision of human services. The study findings contribute to social learning theory by establishing that most Black teenage parents faced various challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic. Predominant challenges faced included job loss, financial difficulties, and difficulty accessing social service programs.

### **Conclusion**

The problem addressed in this study was that the U.S. Black teenage parents were at a disproportionately high risk of experiencing stressors associated with the financial demands of parenting during the COVID-19 pandemic (Yoshikawa et al., 2020). Therefore, there was a need to address the gap in the literature related to the lived experiences of U.S. Black teenage parents during events such as the COVID-19 pandemic that has left the U.S. In order to address this gap in the literature, the purpose of this qualitative descriptive study was to explore the socio-economic challenges that African American teenage parents living in U.S. Northeastern state face during events such as the COVID-19 pandemic that limit the provision of human services. Purposeful sampling strategy was used to recruit a sample of 10 participants. After analysis, the study findings revealed that participants widely indicated that they needed social services due to job loss or loss of hours during the COVID-19 pandemic. Some applicants indicated that the application process could be improved by making it increasingly user-friendly to improve their ability to access human services. Participants indicated that referrals from friends and family were a primary pathway for accessing services. This

study added to the current literature establishing that the COVID-19 pandemic brought numerous challenges and difficulties to most Black teenage parents. This made life difficult and unbearable. It is recommended that future studies should be conducted to understand various strategies to protect the vulnerable and minority races against such challenges when facing any pandemic.



## References

- Adams, W. C. (2015). Conducting semi-structured interviews. In K. E. Newcomer, H. P. Hatry, & J. S. Wholey (Eds.), *Handbook of practical program evaluation* (pp. 492–505). Wiley.
- Akella, D., & Jordan, M. (2014). Impact of social and cultural factors on teenage pregnancy. *Journal of Health Disparities Research and Practice*, 8(1), 3.
- Akers, R. L., & Jennings, W. G. (2016). Social learning theory. In *Wiley handbooks in criminology and criminal justice*, 230–240.
- Amod, Z., Halana, V., & Smith, N. (2019). School-going teenage mothers in an under-resourced community: Lived experiences and perceptions of support. *Journal of Youth Studies*, 22(9), 1255–1271.
- Bandura, A. (1969). Social-learning theory of identificatory processes. In D. A. Goslin (Ed.), *Handbook of socialization theory and research* (pp. 213–262). Rand McNally & Company.
- Brown, S. M., Doom, J. R., Lechuga-Peña, S., Watamura, S. E., & Koppels, T. (2020). Stress and parenting during the global COVID-19 pandemic. *Child Abuse & Neglect*. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chiabu.2020.104699>
- Bowleg, L. (2020). We're not all in this together: on COVID-19, intersectionality, and structural inequality. *American Journal of Public Health*, 110(7), 917–917.
- Charmaz, K. (2014). *Constructing grounded theory*. Sage.
- Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2016). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches*. Sage publications.

- Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2008). *Collecting and interpreting qualitative materials* (Vol. 3). Sage.
- Fegert, J. M., Vitiello, B., Plener, P. L., & Clemens, V. (2020). Challenges and burden of the Coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic for child and adolescent mental health: a narrative review to highlight clinical and research needs in the acute phase and the long return to normality. *Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and Mental Health, 14*, 1–11.
- Fusch, P. I., & Ness, L. R. (2015). Are we there yet? Data saturation in qualitative research. *The Qualitative Report, 20*(9), 1408–1416.  
<https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2015.2281>
- Merriam, S. B., & Tisdell, E. J. (2016). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Moustakas, C. (1994). *Phenomenological research methods*. Sage.
- Palinkas, L. A., Horwitz, S. M., Green, C. A., Wisdom, J. P., Duan, N., & Hoagwood, K. (2015). Purposeful sampling for qualitative data collection and analysis in mixed method implementation research. *Administration and Policy in Mental Health and Mental Health Services Research, 42*(5), 533–544.  
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10488-013-0528-y>
- Rubin, H. J., & Rubin, I. S. (2011). *Qualitative interviewing: The art of hearing data*. Sage.
- Sabia, J. J., Price, J. P., Peters, H. E., & Covington, R. (2018). The effect on teenage childbearing on social capital development: new evidence on civic engagement.

*Review of Economics of the Household*, 16(3), 629–659.

<https://doi.org/10.1007/s11150-017-9371-3>

Sandelowski, M. (2000). Whatever happened to qualitative description? *Research in*

*Nursing & Health*, 23(4), 334–340. <https://doi.org/10.1002/1098->

240x(200008)23:4<334::aid-nur9>3.0.co;2-g

Sneed, R. S., Key, K., Bailey, S., & Johnson-Lawrence, V. (2020). Social and

psychological consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic in African American

communities: Lessons from Michigan. *Psychological Trauma: Theory, Research,*

*Practice, and Policy*, 12(5), 446–448. <https://doi.org/10.1037/tra0000881>

Solomon-Fears, C. (2016). Financial and social costs of teen births. *Congressional*

*Research Service: Report*, 4–5.

Terry, G., Hayfield, N., Clarke, V., & Braun, V. (2017). Thematic analysis. In *The Sage*

*handbook of qualitative research in psychology* (pp. 17–37). Sage.

Thompson, G. (2016). Meeting the needs of adolescent parents and their children.

*Paediatrics & Child Health*, 21(5), 1.

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (1979). The Belmont report.

Yin, R. K. (2016). *Qualitative research from start to finish*. The Guilford Press.

Yin, R. K. (2017). *Case study research and applications: Design and methods*. Sage.

Yoshikawa, H., Wuermli, A. J., Britto, P. R., Dreyer, B., Leckman, J. F., Lye, S. J.,

Ponguta, L. A., Richter, L., M., & Stein, A. (2020). Effects of the global COVID-

19 pandemic on early childhood development: Short-and long-term risks and

mitigating program and policy actions. *The Journal of Pediatrics*, 223.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jpeds.2020.05.020>