

**The Impact of COVID-19 in Homeless Minorities in the United States: A Review of  
Psychological, Social and Economic Perspectives**

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### **Abstract**

The outbreak of COVID-19 exposed acute vulnerabilities homeless minorities face in the United States. The purpose of this study was to highlight the impact of COVID-19 on homeless minorities in the United States from economic, psychological, and physical perspectives. To achieve this goal, structural inequality theory, housing discrimination and segregation theory, public health crisis amplification theory, and crisis theory were used to understand the impact of COVID-19 on homeless minorities in the United States. Based on the analysis conducted, it was established that COVID-19 had far-reaching psychological impacts on homeless minorities, including increased levels of stress and, anxiety and depression attributed to uncertainties created by COVID-19 containment measures. Limited access to mental health care services and trauma related to COVID complications and the death of loved ones significantly impacted the psychological well-being of homeless minorities. The economic effects of COVID-19 on minorities included no income and limited access to crucial resources that worsened the gap between the rich and homeless minorities. The physical impact included social isolation and overcrowding in shelters. Among the ethical issues related to COVID-19 and its impact include burnout among homeless minorities and their care providers and an increase in disinformation about COVID-19. Recommendations for policymakers include the development of a multi-faceted strategy for crisis response and management. One of the strategies is to enhance crisis preparedness through funding and research. In addition, policymakers need to focus on addressing the systemic factors that contribute to homelessness and inequalities in the United States, such as affordable housing programs and equal access to healthcare, education, and employment.

*Keywords:* COVID-19, homeless, homeless, minorities, COVID-19 impact.

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**The Impact of COVID-19 in Homeless Minorities in the United States: A Review of Psychological, Social and Economic Perspectives**

**Introduction**

The impact or effects of the COVID-19 crisis among homeless minorities in the United States was profound, affecting different realms of life, such as the ecological, social, and economic spectrum (Hoffman & Miller, 2020). This study aims to investigate the unique challenges and corresponding implications of COVID-19 presented to homeless minorities. Developing an in-depth understanding of how COVID-19 impacted minorities who are homeless provides an opportunity for developing strategic interventions or policies that can be used to mitigate future effects of pandemics on homeless minorities (Parolin & Lee, 2022).

The COVID-19 pandemic, caused by the coronavirus SARS-CoV-2, emerged in late 2019 in China and rapidly evolved into a global health crisis (Abba-Aji et al., 2022). Just like any other country, the United States was severely affected by COVID-19 (Oberg et al., 2022). The country grappled with the surge in COVID-19 infections, overwhelming hospitalizations, and even historical deaths from those who succumbed to COVID-19 (Hossain et al., 2022). COVID-19, being a public health crisis, not only was responsible for exposing the vulnerability within the social fabric, such as the healthcare system, but also underscored the systemic social and economic disparities within the United States that continuously disadvantage those in the lower class during a crisis (Dennard et al., 2022).

Typically, the issue of homelessness has continued to be a chronic problem in the United States for decades (Hossain et al., 2022). Most of the people in the United States have experienced or are likely to experience housing instability in their lives, particularly those from

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low-income households or minorities (Camara et al., 2022). Data released by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (2022) shows that nearly 580,000 people experienced the status of homelessness on any night as of 2022. The statistics show the chronic nature of homelessness in the United States and the need for policy makers to adopt appropriate laws that would guarantee affordable housing to the vast of Americans who find it challenging to afford or maintain a home (Camara et al., 2022). In terms of composition, the homeless population in the United States consists of different groups of people, such as those with families, military veterans, youths, and other individuals who are struggling with mental health problems or substance abuse (Sun et al., 2022). The homeless population also comprises those who have lost their employment and are yet to find another job or leave prison after serving their time. Historically, minorities in the United States, such as African Americans, Hispanics, and Native Americans, have predominantly been affected by homelessness compared to dominant racial groups (Oberger et al., 2022). The widespread homelessness among minorities in the United States has been attributed to institutional racism disparities in healthcare access, education, and employment opportunities (Hossain et al., 2022).

While homelessness is not a new phenomenon in the United States, the outbreak of COVID-19 and the implementation of containment measures were not the conditions among minorities (Sun et al., 2022). In a typical situation, homeless individuals are likely to reside in crowded shelters and receive donations from well wishes. Implementing social distancing and hygienic measures to avert COVID-19 was a problem in such an environment (Hossain et al., 2022). As such, homeless minorities are disproportionately affected by COVID-19, leading to deaths.

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**Thesis statement:** The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic negatively affected homeless minorities psychologically, physically, and economically. This study aims to investigate the economic, physical, and economic impact of COVID-19 on homeless minorities in the United States. In doing so, the aim is to highlight the distinct challenges homeless minorities experienced during the COVID-19 era while highlighting the need for strategic interventions that can be used to address their unique needs. This study seeks to offer an in-depth understanding of the intertwined repercussions and effects of COVID-19 on homeless minorities in the United States and inform future approaches to improve their well-being as well as public health.

### **Literature Review**

Most people lost jobs globally due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which affected homeless minorities who were laid off due to the business closures. Existing research demonstrates that the loss of jobs negatively impacted homeless minorities' access to sustainable housing and basic needs during the COVID-19 pandemic (Hoffman & Miller, 2020). Ash et al. (2021) investigated urban youth of color and job loss during the COVID-19 pandemic. The findings revealed that the COVID-19 pandemic led to the loss of jobs among the minority homeless communities due to the closure of more employment opportunities to adhere to the national lockdown and social distancing regulations, which reduced family income in these communities (Ash et al., 2021). Consistent findings of Ash et al. (2021) were also reported in quantitative research conducted by Oberg et al. (2022), who demonstrated that most minority homeless individuals worked as casual laborers who depended on daily earnings to survive. The closure of such workplaces made them lose jobs and reduced their household income due to the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak, which contributed to a lack of source of income.

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Homeless minorities often have pre-existing health conditions that can exacerbate the impact of COVID-19, leading to severe illness and complications. Homeless minority individuals with pre-existing respiratory conditions were more susceptible to severe respiratory complications and higher hospitalization rates during the COVID-19 pandemic (Sanchez-Ramirez & Mackey, 2020). Along the same lines, homeless minorities are more likely to have diabetes, a condition that weakens their immune system and increases the risk of COVID-19 complications and infections (Moore et al., 2020). Related findings were established by Khunti et al. (2023), reporting that homeless minorities, particularly the elderly, frequently have pre-existing cardiovascular conditions that can be exacerbated by COVID-19, increasing the risk of severe illness and death. As per the findings of the reviewed studies, it is evident that homeless individuals with pre-existing health conditions like respiratory, diabetes, cardiovascular, and mental health disorders are at a higher risk of severe illness and COVID-19 virus complications.

Pre-existing health issues and chronic diseases such as diabetes, hypertension, and respiratory disorders among minority homeless people can amplify the impact of COVID-19. Existing literature studies have provided evidence showing that homeless people frequently suffer from mental health disorders such as depression, anxiety, PTSD, and substance abuse, which are escalated by the stress and uncertainty caused by the COVID-19 pandemic (Rothman et al., 2020; Egede et al., 2020; Tsai et al., 2023). Agreeing with the previous findings, Parenteau et al. (2022) determined that the lack of access to healthcare and support services during the pandemic made it even more challenging for homeless individuals to receive the necessary treatment and resources for their mental health disorders, which worsened their mental health problems. Cione et al. (2023) reiterated the previous findings by establishing that minority homeless individuals often suffer from pre-existing health conditions because of systemic health

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disparities, poverty, discrimination, and limited healthcare access, which worsened the effects of COVID-19. Overall, there is evidence in existing literature studies showing that homeless minorities who have pre-existing health conditions, such as respiratory, diabetes, cardiovascular, and mental health disorders, are at a higher risk of severe illness and virus complications.

The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic was a challenge to the homeless minority communities, including contributing to food insecurity and malnutrition due to a lack of access to food banks and other food resources. Because of the high unemployment caused by the COVID-19 pandemic as a result of job losses, most homeless minority families stayed hungry for a longer time before accessing community food resources, which led to the risk of malnutrition among individuals, especially children (Upshaw et al., 2021). Wagler et al. (2022) established that the lack of access to food caused by the COVID-19 pandemic led to limited nutritious meals that contributed to malnutrition among homeless minority individuals. Debone et al. (2021) confirmed Wagler et al. (2022) findings by investigating food insecurity among minority homeless populations during the COVID-19 pandemic. They established that food insecurity was a concern for homeless minority communities who had inadequate access to community resources and food banks as a result of COVID-19 pandemic lockdowns. From the evidence discussed, it is evident that COVID-19 contributed to food insecurity and malnutrition among homeless minorities because of a lack of access to food banks and limited income to buy food.

### **Perspectives**

Homeless individuals in the United States unequally experienced the effects of COVID-19 (Debone et al., 2021). With a particular focus on homeless minorities, studies and government reports have indicated that most of the people who were affected by COVID-19



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disproportionately were the minorities without homes (Zufferey et al., 2022). Homeless minorities reportedly experienced some mounting challenges in controlling or managing the consequences of the pandemic. The outbreak of COVID-19 essentially was not their homeless status, leading to multiple social, economic, and physical impacts (Rothman et al., 2020). This literature review seeks to address the current gap in knowledge regarding the impact of COVID-19 on homeless minorities with the aim of providing valuable insights that policymakers can use to achieve and champion equality within society, especially during the pandemic with COVID-19 as a reference point (Egede et al., 2020). In this section, different perspectives on how COVID-19 impacted homeless minorities are discussed. The perspectives are psychological, physical, and economic. Each of these perspectives is discussed below.

### **Physical Perspective**

The outbreak of COVID-19 has brought a significant physical impact and harm to the homeless minorities who already face difficult situations such as lack of proper shelter, limited food, and inadequate healthcare services access. This vulnerable population faced unique challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic, such as increased exposure to the virus, which hindered their access to quality healthcare services (Zufferey et al., 2022). In this regard, their homelessness situation and the pandemic created a hazardous situation for their physical health compared to other populations who had adequate care and protection from the COVID-19 virus infections through quarantine in proper housing and shelter as well as quality food for their consumption (Tsai et al., 2023). Lacking such privileges increased the minorities' chances of getting infected with the virus and other physical harm, as discussed below.

### ***Food Insecurity and Malnutrition***

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Those homeless minorities who relied on community resources and food banks experienced food insecurity and malnutrition issues due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The COVID-19 pandemic interrupted food programs and resources, which contributed to a lack of access to nutritious meals among the homeless minorities, thereby increasing malnutrition that can weaken the immune system, making these individuals vulnerable to being infected by the virus (Kardashian et al., 2021). Dennard et al. (2022) found that the pandemic contributed to food insecurity among minority communities living on the streets by limiting charity foods provided by well-wishers due to the lockdown. Such difficulties led to a lack of food, which contributed to malnutrition and increased exposure to infection (Zufferey et al., 2022). Other researchers, such as Stavridou et al. (2021), examined obesity in minority children during COVID-19 and posited that the pandemic disrupted the sources of food for homeless minorities who received food from community resources, denying them nutritious meals, thus increasing their risk of malnutrition because of irregular supply of food. The COVID-19 pandemic contributed to increased food insecurity and malnutrition among homeless minorities due to limited access to nutritious meals, which increased their risk of COVID-19 infections.

### ***Difficulty in Isolation and Quarantine***

The majority of homeless minorities that had positive COVID-19 tests struggled to isolate effectively due to their housing conditions, which exposed them to the virus. Recent research indicates that homeless minorities live in highly overcrowded places, and they lack privacy, which makes it difficult to isolate, thus increasing the COVID-19 infection rate within the homeless populations (Sun et al., 2022). Diaz et al. (2021) also demonstrated difficulty in isolating and quarantining the homeless minority population with mental health issues due to poor living conditions with limited protection, thus exposing them to the virus infection (Diaz et

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al., 2021). On the other hand, in a quantitative study, Roje Đapic et al. (2020) revealed that it was difficult to isolate homeless communities due to their living conditions with limited protection against the COVID-19 pandemic infections, thus increasing the infection in these communities. According to Roje Đapic et al. (2020), minorities were the most affected because they lacked adequate protection against the virus and abuse, including sexual abuse. It can be confirmed that COVID-19 made it challenging to isolate and quarantine minority populations because they lacked quality shelter to protect them against contact with infected people.

Homeless minorities found it difficult to stay in quarantine places as a result of a lack of suitable housing or shelter, as most of the homeless individuals remain in the streets, thus increasing their risk of COVID-19 virus infection. While Hossain et al. (2022) introduced mental health among homeless minority children as a result of the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, such as isolation and quarantine, by confirming the difficulty of isolating homeless minorities; Leggiadro (2020) contradicted these findings. Leggiadro (2020) investigated homelessness among homeless minority children and the COVID-19 pandemic in the United States. Research data analysis indicated that homeless minorities were more affected by COVID-19 infections because they lacked appropriate shelter or housing, which exposed them to more infections despite the isolation and quarantine measures (Leggiadro, 2020). Conversely, Corey et al. (2022) examined the health effects of COVID-19 on minority individuals with homeless status in North America. They found that as a result of their homelessness, minority individuals were more unlikely to be isolated, which contributed to an increased infection rate compared to other communities. It can be suggested from the findings discussed that COVID-19 makes it challenging to isolate and quarantine homeless minorities.

### *Limited Access to Vaccination*

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Minority homeless individuals had limited access to COVID-19 vaccinations. They had limited information about vaccines and could not access vaccination centers due to the long distance to be covered as well as transportation challenges. Evidence across the extant literature indicates the need for enhanced access to vaccines and addressing hesitancy among homeless minorities (Parolin & Lee, 2022). Abba-Aji et al. (2022) explored the ethnic minorities' homeless minorities' and migrants' access to vaccines during the COVID-19 pandemic. The research outcomes revealed that minority and homeless individuals found it difficult to access vaccines due to a lack of transportation to vaccination centers as well as limited information about the vaccines contributing to resistance (Abba-Aji et al., 2022).

Similarly, Hildreth and Alcendor (2021) examined vaccine hesitancy in homeless minority communities in the United States by adopting a quantitative research design. Hildreth and Alcendor (2021) found that homeless minorities were resistant to accessing vaccines due to a lack of information and transportation barriers, as vaccination centers were out of reach. Evidence across the articles review demonstrates the need for information transportation support as well as awareness about COVID-19 vaccines to enhance access by homeless minority communities.

### **The Physical Impact of COVID-19 on Homeless Minorities**

#### **Increased Vulnerability to Infections**

Homeless minorities frequently live in overcrowded shelters, increasing the risk of COVID-19 transmission and other infections because of their proximity. Homeless minorities often live in crowded shelters, increasing the risk of respiratory droplet transmission, a significant mode of COVID-19 transmission, thus escalating COVID-19 infections in the homeless community (Baral et al., 2021). Similarly, homeless minorities in overcrowded living

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conditions frequently share common spaces, increasing the risk of COVID-19 disease transmission because of poor sanitation and hygiene practices (Chow et al., 2022). Along the same lines, homeless minorities' close living proximity increases their risk of transmission and exposure to potentially infected individuals within the community, as they frequently move through public spaces and interact with various individuals (Rogers et al., 2023). As per the findings of the reviewed studies, it is evident that homeless minorities are at higher risk of infections because of their crowded living conditions, which hinder physical distancing and increase the transmission of COVID-19.

The lack of sanitation facilities among homeless minorities had a significant impact on their ability to maintain good hygiene practices and increased their vulnerability to COVID-19 infections. According to Leggiadro (2020), homeless minorities face barriers to accessing clean, safe restrooms, which frequently result in poor maintenance and unsanitary conditions that impede personal hygiene and increase COVID-19 infection. In agreement with Leggiadro (2020), Abrams et al. (2022) revealed that homeless minorities often lack access to proper hand hygiene stations, which can lead to the spread of COVID-19 because of their lack of essential resources like running water, soap, and paper towels. Alluding to the previous findings, Okonkwo et al. (2021) determined that inadequate sanitation facilities increase the risk of infectious diseases such as COVID-19 and health issues among homeless minorities, resulting in respiratory infections, which are exacerbated by poor hygiene and harm their overall well-being. Based on the reviewed studies, it is evident that homeless minorities face difficulties maintaining hygiene because of a lack of sanitation facilities, clean bathrooms, and hand washing stations, increasing their vulnerability to COVID-19 infections.

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Socioeconomic factors play a significant role in the increased vulnerability to infections among homeless individuals, particularly among minority populations. Homelessness is associated with poverty and unemployment as individuals struggle to meet basic needs such as housing, food, and healthcare, making them more vulnerable to COVID-19 infections (Albon et al., 2020). In support of the previous findings, Flaming et al. (2021), through a qualitative study, revealed that homeless individuals often lack robust social support systems, hindering access to healthcare resources and information and potentially causing isolation and COVID-19 infection escalation. In a similar study, Schneider et al. (2021) found that discrimination and stigma, particularly against minority homeless people, exacerbate vulnerability to COVID-19 infections by limiting employment opportunities, healthcare treatment, and access to housing and social services. Combining the evidence reviewed thus far, it is evident that homeless minorities are more susceptible to infections because of socioeconomic factors like poverty, unemployment, and limited access to resources and social support systems.

### *Limited Access to Healthcare*

Homeless minorities face challenges in accessing healthcare, including COVID-19 testing and treatment, because of a lack of insurance, transportation, and identification documents. Empirical research studies have provided evidence showing that homeless minorities frequently lack continuity of care because of a lack of regular healthcare providers and primary care, limiting their access to COVID-19 testing and treatment (Oberg et al., 2022; Novick et al., 2020; Vissing, 2022). Similarly, homeless minorities may have difficulty accessing specialized care for health conditions such as COVID-19, potentially escalating the virus's spread within their communities because of a lack of regular healthcare providers (Rosenthal et al., 2023). Consistent findings were established by Smitherman et al. (2021), who found that homeless

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minority children are more likely to contract COVID-19 and develop severe complications because of a lack of preventive measures and regular healthcare, as well as a lack of vital health education and guidance. The lack of regular healthcare providers disadvantages homeless minorities when it comes to accessing healthcare, especially COVID-19 testing and treatment.

Homeless individuals may have limited access to accurate and up-to-date information about COVID-19 testing and treatment options. Aiming to understand the impacts of COVID-19 on homeless minorities, Damian et al. (2023) conducted a qualitative study with 19 homeless youths. The researchers found that homeless minorities frequently struggle to find accurate information about COVID-19 because of limited access to media, the internet, and resources, resulting in a lack of essential knowledge. Agreeing with Damian et al. (2023), Doran and Tinson (2021) also revealed that homeless people may lack COVID-19 health education, which can lead to a lack of understanding of symptoms, spread, and risks, resulting in delayed or ignored care. Consistent findings were established by Ambrose (2020), who determined that homeless minorities frequently struggle to access COVID-19 testing site information because of limited internet resources or a lack of awareness, resulting in a lack of testing opportunities. As per the findings of the reviewed studies, it is evident that homeless minorities face significant barriers to accessing necessary care because of limited awareness and information about COVID-19 testing and treatment options, exacerbated by a lack of health education and outreach efforts.

Homeless minorities encounter several challenges when it comes to getting COVID-19 testing, including a lack of transportation to testing venues, significant wait periods at testing centers, and trouble obtaining appointments. Homeless minorities frequently encounter difficulties reaching testing locations because of limited available transportation options, particularly in remote regions or makeshift living arrangements (Brakefield et al., 2023).

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Adopting a similar position, Verna et al. (2021) revealed that high demand for testing facilities in densely populated areas led to long wait times, particularly for homeless minorities with limited resources and time. Corresponding results were established by Gin et al. (2022), who found that homeless minority veterans faced challenges in securing appointments at testing sites because of limited access to robust COVID-19 information, leading to missed testing opportunities. Thus far, the reviewed studies have shown that homeless minorities face barriers to COVID-19 testing because of transportation issues, long wait times, appointment difficulties, and identification requirements.

### ***Challenges in Hygiene and Sanitation***

Homelessness raises the risk of COVID-19 infection because of limited access to clean water, hand washing facilities, showers, and personal hygiene safe spaces. Homeless people frequently have difficulty accessing clean water, which is essential for hygiene practices like hand washing, increasing their risk of transmitting or acquiring the COVID-19 virus because of their inability to effectively clean their hands (Suarez-Lopez et al., 2021). Making a similar point, Montgomery et al. (2021) also revealed that homeless people frequently lack access to proper hand-washing facilities, making it difficult for them to follow recommended hand hygiene practices, critical in preventing COVID-19 spread. Similarly, homeless people often lack access to clean shower facilities, limiting their ability to maintain hygiene and to avoid virus transmission (Marshall et al., 2022). Putting together the reviewed studies, it is evident that homelessness hinders personal cleanliness and sanitation, promoting COVID-19 transmission because of a lack of access to clean water, hand washing facilities, showers, and safe hygiene practices.



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Access to clean water and sanitation facilities is often limited for minorities experiencing homelessness, making it difficult for them to practice proper hand hygiene and maintain cleanliness. Homeless people lack cleanliness as a result of overcrowded shelters and unhealthy conditions, which raises the possibility of COVID-19 transmission (Rodriguez et al., 2021). Along the same lines, Gin et al. (2022) established that homeless minorities faced difficulties in obtaining and affording personal protective equipment, increasing their risk of contracting and transmitting COVID-19. In support of the previous findings, Meehan et al. (2023) revealed that homelessness worsens mental health issues, causing individuals with mental health disorders to struggle with self-care, hygiene, and sanitation, increasing their susceptibility to infectious diseases like COVID-19. There is evidence in existing literature studies indicating that homeless minorities face increased infection risk because of limited access to clean water, hand washing facilities, showers, safe hygiene practices, and lack of personal protective equipment.

### **Psychological Perspective**

The pandemic's uncertainty and fear, combined with a lack of access to accurate information, healthcare services, and a stable environment, heightened anxiety among homeless minorities. Several research studies have shown that homeless individuals, particularly minorities, faced increased anxiety and stress because of limited healthcare access during the COVID-19 pandemic, which hindered their understanding of prevention strategies (Salerno et al., 2020; Rew et al., 2021; Yang et al., 2022). Agreeing with the previous findings, Maleku et al. (2022) reported that the pandemic severely impacted the well-being of homeless individuals and international students experiencing homelessness, limiting access to essential resources like food, clean water, and mental health services, leading to increased stress and anxiety. Similarly, the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted and limited access to essential support systems for homeless

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individuals, causing increased vulnerability, uncertainty, and anxiety among minority groups (Hoffman & Miller, 2020). Thus far, the reviewed studies have shown that the COVID-19 pandemic escalated feelings of anxiety and stress among homeless minorities because of limited access to healthcare and support services.

Homeless individuals from minority backgrounds faced unique challenges and vulnerabilities during the COVID-19 pandemic, leading to increased anxiety and stress. Homeless individuals often live in crowded, unsanitary conditions, causing increased anxiety and stress because of fear of virus exposure, with cultural factors also impacting their understanding of the virus (Versey & Russell, 2023). On the same note, the pandemic exacerbated social isolation among homeless individuals, intensifying feelings of stress and anxiety, as restrictions on gatherings and community centers further escalated the situation (Aykanian, 2022). Alluding to the previous findings, Gibbs (2023), through a qualitative study of youths experiencing homelessness, reported that the pandemic exacerbated the stigma and discrimination experienced by homeless people, leading to feelings of shame, stress, and increased anxiety. As per the findings of the reviewed studies, it is evident that the COVID-19 pandemic impacted the mental health of homeless minorities, causing increased anxiety and stress because of health concerns, fear, limited resources, social isolation, and stigmatization.

The COVID-19 pandemic had a significant impact on the mental well-being of homeless minorities and their financial security, leading to increased anxiety and stress. According to Novacek et al. (2022), the pandemic worsened the economic challenges faced by homeless minorities because of declining job opportunities, business closures, and increased unemployment rates, further escalating anxiety and stress. Consistent findings were reported by Elbogen et al. (2021), who found that homeless individuals lack financial protection with the

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economic hardship brought on by the pandemic, making them more vulnerable, and raising their stress levels as they strived to meet their necessities. Similar findings were also established by Rinfrette (2021), who revealed that homeless minorities face financial insecurity, limiting their access to necessities like food and healthcare, consequently escalating anxiety and stress during the pandemic. Combining the evidence reviewed thus far, it is evident that the COVID-19 pandemic worsened financial insecurity among homeless minorities, causing increased anxiety and stress because of job loss, reduced income, housing challenges, and uncertainty about the future.

### *Isolation and Loneliness*

Lockdowns and social distancing measures have led to social isolation, affecting homeless individuals' mental well-being, particularly for minorities experiencing marginalization and discrimination. Social distancing guidelines limited gatherings in public spaces, affecting homeless minorities, who rely on community centers for social interaction, reducing face-to-face engagement, and exacerbating isolation and loneliness (Genberg et al., 2021). In agreement with Genberg et al. (2021), Wynn et al. (2021) also established that the pandemic led to the closure of vital community spaces like libraries and veterans care homes, resulting in a loss of social connections and support networks for homeless individuals, increasing loneliness. Along the same lines, Coughlin et al. (2020) determined that the virus's fear and stigma increased social distancing from homeless people, including children, escalating their social isolation and loneliness. The COVID-19 pandemic's social distancing measures, including restrictions on gatherings, closure of community spaces, and fear of stigma, exacerbated the isolation and loneliness of homeless minorities.

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During the COVID-19 pandemic, shelter restrictions and closures had a significant impact on homeless minorities, exacerbating their feelings of isolation and loneliness. Shelter capacity reductions for social distancing prevented overcrowding by limiting homeless people's access to temporary housing and social interaction, which increased feelings of isolation and loneliness (Rodriguez et al., 2022). Adopting a similar position, Corey et al. (2022), through a systematic literature review of 96 articles, found that shelters had limited opportunities for social interaction during the pandemic. Homeless minorities experience isolation because of a lack of communal gathering areas, group activities, and shared dining spaces as a result of shelter closures. Corresponding findings were reported by Nnawulezi and HacsKaylo (2022), who revealed that the pandemic disrupted homeless people's support networks as a result of shelter closures, making it challenging to connect with others and leading to feelings of isolation and loneliness. Thus far, the reviewed studies have provided evidence showing that the COVID-19 pandemic impacted homeless minorities, exacerbating feelings of isolation and loneliness because of reduced shelter capacity, limited social interaction, and closures.

Reduced access to support services during the COVID-19 pandemic significantly exacerbated homeless minorities' isolation and loneliness. There is evidence in existing literature studies showing that the pandemic severely restricted outreach programs, affecting the availability and frequency of support services for homeless people and reducing their opportunities for social interaction and assistance (Black et al., 2020; Okoro et al., 2022; Diaz et al., 2021). In support of the previous findings, Duque (2021) established that the pandemic strained healthcare systems, causing reduced availability of services and appointment cancellations, affecting homeless individuals' physical well-being, and contributing to isolation and loneliness because of lack of regular interactions. Similarly, the pandemic caused a reduction

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in volunteer activities, limiting social engagement and support for homeless people and leading to isolation and loneliness (Kardashian et al., 2021). Putting together the reviewed findings, it is evident that the COVID-19 pandemic escalated the social isolation of homeless minorities by limiting access to support services, healthcare, and community center closures.

### **Grief and Loss**

COVID-19 caused grief and loss among homeless people through the loss of community members and the psychological difficulties associated with grieving. According to Reyes (2020), homeless individuals face increased vulnerability to COVID-19 because of a lack of healthcare access, leading to delays in testing, diagnosis, and treatment, resulting in severe illness, higher mortality rates, and grief. In a similar study, Hsu et al. (2020) revealed that homeless minorities are at a higher risk of severe illness and complications because of pre-existing health conditions and difficulties managing them while homeless, which increased their mortality rates, leading to grief and loss. Related results were established by Rodriguez and Quintana (2022), who reported that homeless people face difficulties in outreach programs because of their transient nature, lack of stable addresses, and limited communication channels, resulting in delayed testing and medical care, thus increasing COVID-19 mortality rates. The COVID-19 pandemic increased mortality rates among homeless minorities because of their vulnerability, healthcare access, hygiene challenges, and limited outreach, leading to grief and loss.

The COVID-19 pandemic had a significant impact on the mortality rates among homeless minorities, leading to heightened grief and loss. Homeless minorities are highly susceptible to COVID-19 because of their poor living conditions and inability to maintain proper hygiene, thereby increasing the risk of transmission, mortality, and grief (Metra et al., 2021). Alluding to the previous findings, Ghinai et al. (2020) established that the pandemic worsened the difficulties

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that homeless people face in obtaining healthcare services, resulting in delays in testing, diagnosis, and treatment, raising the risk of mortality and grief. On the same note, during the COVID-19 pandemic, homeless minorities lacked isolation and quarantine facilities, which increased transmission rates and the risk of severe illness and death in overcrowded shelters, leading to grief (Cha et al., 2021). Considering all the evidence reviewed, it is evident that the COVID-19 pandemic disproportionately affected homeless minorities, leading to higher mortality rates and grief because of their weak immune response, limited healthcare access, and crowded living conditions.

### ***Trauma and PTSD***

The pandemic escalated PTSD symptoms in homeless minorities, who may have had a history of trauma because of homelessness, poverty, discrimination, or other adverse life experiences. The COVID-19 pandemic exposed homeless minorities to stressors such as the loss of loved ones, financial instability, and food and housing insecurity, which increased their vulnerability to trauma and increased their risk of PTSD (Boyraz & Legros, 2020). Along the same lines, during the pandemic, homeless people confronted specific health concerns, such as limited access to healthcare, long wait times, and greater susceptibility to COVID-19, increasing fear and uncertainty, which led to the development of trauma (Abbs et al., 2023). Alluding to the previous findings, Nyamathi et al. (2023) determined that the trauma and vulnerabilities of homeless minorities, such as substance use, combined with the COVID-19 pandemic's additional stressors, increased their susceptibility to PTSD, highlighting the need for targeted interventions. Thus far, it is evident that the COVID-19 pandemic worsened trauma and PTSD in homeless minorities because of increased stress, disruption of support systems, health-related trauma, isolation, and pre-existing vulnerabilities.

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The COVID-19 pandemic increased trauma and PTSD among homeless minorities because of a lack of healthcare and stable housing, thus exacerbating existing issues. There is evidence in existing literature studies showing that the pandemic resulted in increased social isolation and loneliness among homeless people, causing emotional distress and PTSD symptoms (Poteat et al., 2020; Seedat, 2021; Nishimi et al., 2022). Similarly, the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted social connections, causing sadness, isolation, and helplessness among homeless individuals, potentially leading to trauma and PTSD and affecting their mental health. Adopting a similar position, Noble et al. (2022) revealed that homeless minorities experienced both structural changes and psychosocial impacts resulting from the pandemic, including a reduction in services, barriers to employment, isolation, worsened mental health, and increased substance use, which led to the development of trauma and PTSD. As per the findings of the reviewed studies, it is evident that the COVID-19 pandemic impacted homeless minorities, increasing vulnerability, trauma, and PTSD because of disruptions in healthcare access, limited resources, and intensified stressors.

### *Coping Mechanisms and Substance Abuse*

The COVID-19 pandemic escalated mental health issues by increasing stress levels and limiting access to healthier coping mechanisms, leading to increased substance abuse among homeless individuals. According to Liu and Wadhera (2022), COVID-19's uncertainty, fear, and isolation burdened homeless minorities, leading to substance use as a coping mechanism to alleviate distress and emotional pain, temporarily escaping their difficult circumstances. Agreeing with Liu and Wadhera (2022), Taparra et al. (2022) also found that substance use offered temporary emotional relief and escape from homelessness and COVID-19 stressors, creating a sense of euphoria and distraction, helping homeless individuals temporarily forget

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their troubles and cope with difficult emotions. Similar findings were reported by Moody et al. (2022), indicating that substance use among homeless minorities served as temporary self-medication for untreated COVID-19-related mental health issues such as depression, anxiety, and PTSD, allowing them to manage their emotional distress temporarily. Based on the reviewed studies, it is evident that the COVID-19 pandemic escalated the stress and trauma experienced by homeless people, leading to substance abuse as a temporary coping mechanism.

The COVID-19 pandemic worsened economic hardship and unemployment, leading to job losses and financial instability, causing homeless minorities to use harmful coping mechanisms such as substance abuse. Homeless minorities resorted to substance use as a temporary escape from COVID-19 economic hardship, coupled with a lack of stable housing, limited resources, and discrimination (Chiappini et al., 2020). Consistent findings were reported by Williams et al. (2022), revealing that during the COVID-19 pandemic, economic hardship led to self-doubt diminishing and increased feelings of shame, guilt, and failure, causing substance use as a temporary solution to cope with stressors and negative emotions among homeless individuals. On the same note, substance use was adopted by homeless minorities as a form of self-soothing, providing temporary relief from the emotional pain and stress associated with COVID-19-related economic hardship (Washington et al., 2022). Based on the reviewed studies, it is evident that the COVID-19 pandemic worsened financial hardship, leading to an increase in substance use among homeless minorities as a coping mechanism for distress and idle time.

### **Economic Perspective**

There is a deep interconnection between homelessness among minorities and economic hardships that lead to increased financial instability and lack of access to essential resources and services, including health services and education. The emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic,



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therefore, made everything worse for these vulnerable homeless minority populations by adding to existing socioeconomic disparities, which contributed to increased financial instability and challenges. Such economic fluctuations among the minority homeless populations caused by the COVID-19 pandemic included job loss and income reduction, unemployment and underemployment, lack of financial support, housing insecurity, and risk of eviction among the homeless minority community persons, as discussed below.

### ***Job and Income Loss***

Loss of jobs and reduced income among the minority population was associated with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic has been linked to the loss of jobs and income reduction among the homeless minority communities as a result of economic instability that led to the closing of more businesses that prompted employers to lay off more staff for survival (Finnigan, 2022). As reported by Okonkwo et al. (2021), more job losses were recorded, with the most affected communities being the homeless minorities who had unstable employment. This job loss contributed to income reduction in most homeless minority households compared to their counterparts who had permanent and pensionable jobs that continued earning them income, although at lower rates (Okonkwo et al., 2021). In contrast to Okonkwo et al. (2021), Duffield (2020) determined the homelessness assistance for children from minority families during the COVID-19 pandemic and found that most children of homeless minority families died due to lack of treatment and food resources as a result of income reduction caused by COVID-19 triggered job losses.

### ***Unemployment and Underemployment***

Homeless minorities face diverse challenges, such as getting stable employment, which was made worse by the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. Research indicates that the COVID-

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19 pandemic led to unemployment and underemployment among homeless minorities, leading to a lack of opportunities to secure decent jobs, and contributing to more homelessness and financial instability (Ruff & Linville, 2021). According to qualitative research conducted by Bernardini et al. (2021), whereas homeless minorities face unemployment with a lack of suitable job offers due to increased racism, the COVID-19 pandemic led to an increased rate of unemployment and underemployment due to the high rate of businesses closing because of COVID-19 restrictions such as social distancing. This made it even worse based on these population's homelessness conditions before the COVID-19 outbreak (Bernardini et al., 2021). However, Rent (2023) found that COVID-19 had limited impact on the employment status of the minority homeless population because the majority were already unemployed before the pandemic, causing their homeless situation. Despite the contradictions in the findings above, it can be confirmed that the economic fallout of the COVID-19 pandemic worsened the unemployment and underemployment status of the homeless minority populations.

The COVID-19 pandemic contributed to the loss of jobs because of the closure of companies, thus contributing to increased unemployment among the homeless minority populations. Researchers such as Martino et al. (2021) explored the loss of employment and unemployment caused by COVID-19 in a nationwide survey at the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in the United States. The results indicated that individuals with homeless status find it difficult to secure stable employment, and the onset of COVID-19 added more misery to their lack of steady employment by disrupting businesses and leading to closure (Martino et al., 2021). These business closures contributed to more job losses, which rendered the majority of the homeless minority people jobless and remain unemployed during the COVID-19 pandemic period (Martino et al., 2021). On the same note, Machlin et al. (2021) opined that the COVID-19

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pandemic limited opportunities for homeless minorities to find appropriate jobs, leading to unemployment. However, Pratap et al. (2021) reported that most homeless minorities are unemployed, and COVID-19 had a limited impact on their employment status.

### *Lack of Financial Support*

Getting economic stimulus payments and unemployment benefits from the government was very challenging for the homeless minorities, leading to a lack of financial support. The hurdles of accessing financial support impeded their ability to access financial assistance as provided by economic stimulus programs. In a quantitative study, Rosenthal et al. (2023) determined the living conditions of minorities in temporary accommodations and the COVID-19 pandemic's impact on financial support and health outcomes in the United States. The findings demonstrated that despite the federal government offering social and economic stimulus payments to vulnerable populations such as homeless minorities, the majority of these populations missed these payments due to a lack of essential documentation, thus limiting them from receiving financial support (Rosenthal et al., 2023). A similar agreement was observed by Wood et al. (2021), who found that homeless minorities lacked proper identification for accessing financial support during COVID-19, which increased their marginalization, hampering their ability to get financial assistance.

On the other hand, there is mixed concerning the relationship between homeless minorities and the COVID-19 pandemic, with some highlighting a lack of consideration because of racism. Empirical evidence in the extant literature demonstrates that documentation and identification details, as well as payment details and racism, contributed to the lack of financial support among homeless minorities (Maleku et al., 2022). Waters et al. (2020) examined the financial burden and COVID-19 pandemic among minority cancer survivors in the United States.

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Minority cancer survivors lacked financial support not because they had no documentation payment details to receive pandemic stimulus payments but because of increased racial discrimination in allocating such resources to the minority families living on the streets (Waters et al., 2020). On the one hand, Jang et al. (2021) analyzed responses to the necessities of the homeless minority communities during the COVID-19 pandemic with initiatives in 20 major cities in the United States. Jang et al. (2021) reported that the majority of homeless minorities lacked guidance, information, and the requirements needed for financial support from the federal stimulus payments during the COVID-19 pandemic.

### ***Housing Insecurity and Eviction Risk***

The economic hurdles caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, including job loss and reduced income, led to housing instability as well as the risk of eviction among homeless minorities. Lack of ability to pay Rent contributed to these communities being evicted from their homes despite those who happened to have homes contributing to increased homelessness (Todres & Meeler, 2021). Previous research indicates that the outbreak of COVID-19 caused more harm to the minority homeless populations through loss of income, which increased their homelessness, making them unable to pay Rent, thus making their homelessness situation much worse than before (Abrams et al., 2022). Benfer et al. (2021) opined that reduced income caused by job losses because of business closures in response to the COVID-19 measures led to housing insecurity because these homeless minorities lacked income to pay for house rent, resulting in eviction and subsequent homelessness.

Increased housing insecurity and eviction among homeless minorities have been attributed to the loss of jobs because of the COVID-19 pandemic economic downturn that led to a high unemployment rate. The high unemployment rate has contributed to the inability to pay

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rent or secure housing facilities among minority populations (Tsai et al., 2023). Versey and Russell (2023) conducted a qualitative study to investigate the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on low-income black women in the United States. Versey and Russell (2023) reported that the COVID-19 pandemic led to increased stress among landlords because of overdue rents unpaid by minorities, resulting in increased evictions caused by accumulated rent arrears because of the economic hurdles of COVID-19. Other researchers, such as Bhat et al. (2022), agreed with Versey and Russell (2023) by demonstrating a significant relationship between housing insecurity and elderly minorities because of limited income caused by the COVID-19 economic downturn in the United States. Housing insecurity and eviction risk were widespread among homeless minorities during COVID-19 because of their inability to pay Rent due to lack of financial support and high unemployment levels.

### **Analysis**

#### **Structural Inequality Theory**

The emphasis of structural inequality theory is on societal systems and structures that contribute to the observed inequalities and disparities as well as the differential effects of the Covid-19 pandemic on minority homeless populations. Research has revealed that ethnic and racial disparities in accessing affordable housing, academic opportunities, and healthcare increase the likelihood of minority groups experiencing homelessness (Olivet et al., 2021; Perri et al., 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in massive job cuts, limited access to healthcare, and reduced income, which have exacerbated the inequalities experienced by minority groups as well as increased the risks of homelessness (Bama et al., 2020; Mishra et al., 2021). A discussion of each of the mentioned inequalities is presented below:

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Over the years, minority groups in the United States have continually been sidelined in accessing affordable housing. Reyes (2020) stated that many minority groups have experienced discriminatory practices such as racial profiling and redlining in the housing market. Although the impacts of COVID-19 were devastating, minority groups bore the brunt of the pandemic with massive job losses and loss of income, which made it harder for them to acquire affordable houses (Ahmad et al., 2020). The risk of homelessness among minority groups is exacerbated by increased financial strain and housing instability.

Among minority groups, job insecurities, inequalities in wages, and unequal access to employment opportunities encompass structural inequalities. Reyes (2020) stated that minority groups were overrepresented in jobs and employment sectors that were hit hard by the pandemic. Loss of employment and pay cuts due to business closures made it impossible for minority groups to pay their house rents, risking evictions and homelessness (Benfer et al., 2021).

Researchers have demonstrated that the COVID-19 pandemic amplified the disparities in healthcare characterized by a lack of health insurance and limited access to quality healthcare (Ahmad et al., 2020). Compared to other groups, the pandemic exacerbated the health crisis experienced by minority groups, given their limited access to healthcare. Benfer et al. (2021) asserted that in minority groups, families lived in overcrowded spaces, which increased the risks of COVID-19 infection. Limited access to quality care and reduced income due to job losses strained access to affordable housing, leading to homelessness among minority groups.

Unequal access to quality education also describes the structural inequalities experienced by minority groups. Hardy et al. (2019) stated that limited access to quality education, training, and skill development made it difficult for members of minority groups to acquire stable employment and overcome poverty and homelessness. As a result of poverty, minority groups

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lacked the technological resources to continue with remote learning, widening the academic gaps experienced by this group (Ahmad et al., 2020). With limited education and training, minority groups experienced challenges securing employment, increasing the risks of homelessness.

The structural inequality theory underscored the relationship between limited access to quality healthcare, housing, education, and employment and homelessness among minority groups during the COVID-19 pandemic. The mentioned structural inequalities play a crucial role in developing interventions and policies that will promote socioeconomic equity as well as address issues with homelessness. Based on the structural inequality theory, both contemporary and historical discrimination practices contributed to limited housing opportunities in low-income minority groups. The significance of affordable and stable housing was informed by the need to protect people from the COVID-19 pandemic (Ahmad et al., 2020). However, the inability or unequal access to affordable houses, increased risks of eviction as a result of reduced income, and crowded living conditions increased the chances of COVID-19 infections (Benfer et al., 2021).

### **Housing Discrimination and Segregation Theory**

The housing discrimination and segregation theory explores the contemporary and historical discrimination practices in housing. Segregation in residential houses has contributed to the disparities in accessing affordable and stable houses by different ethnic and racial groups. This theory is crucial in describing how the Covid-19 pandemic exacerbated homelessness within minority groups.

Minority groups, including Hispanics and African Americans, as a result of discriminatory practices such as redlining and racial segregation, have been prevented from securing fair mortgage terms and buying houses in specific neighborhoods (Banaji et al., 2021).

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These discriminatory practices have limited the minority group's access to affordable housing, and poverty has limited their access to housing (Perri et al., 2020). The historical and contemporary discriminatory practices have resulted in unstable housing as a result of adverse socioeconomic outcomes exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Spatial and residential segregation of different ethnic minorities into distinct communities negatively influenced their quality of life and housing opportunities. Ahmad et al. (2020) reported that in the United States, minority groups are segregated in areas with limited access to essential services, such as limited unemployment opportunities, education and healthcare inequalities, poor quality housing, and limited resources. With the COVID-19 pandemic, living in overcrowded, segregated, and under-resourced neighborhoods increased the risk of Covid-19 infections (Parolin & Lee, 2022). The economic fallout due to the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated the risks of homelessness among minority groups. The closure of businesses and the downsizing of company activities due to COVID-19 resulted in massive job losses and loss of income among minority groups (Engidaw, 2022). The economic instability due to COVID-19, characterized by limited access to financial resources, increased the risks of homelessness among minority groups.

The negative health impacts of COVID-19 on the homeless population emphasized the need for safe and stable housing to reduce the spread of the virus (Perri et al., 2020). However, marginalized groups have limited access to affordable housing as a result of discriminatory practices (Swope & Hernandez, 2019). Strassle et al. (2021) noted that discriminatory practices such as racial profiling and sidelining forced minority groups to live in substandard housing conditions. The mental health challenges and the economic impacts of COVID-19 negatively



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affected the ability of minority groups to access affordable housing, increasing the risks of homelessness.

The theory of housing discrimination and segregation describes how residential segregation and historical discriminatory practices continually shape access and housing stability for minority communities. The constructs of this theory will be used to develop equitable housing policies, address housing discrimination, dismantle residential segregation, increase access to equitable and affordable housing, and consequently address homelessness among minority communities.

### **Public Health Crisis Amplification Theory**

According to the Public Health Crisis Amplification Theory, public health crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic can amplify societal inequalities and issues. The theory will help the researcher describe how the pandemic has increased the risks of homelessness and housing instability among minority communities in the United States. The theory acknowledges that limited access to healthcare services increases the vulnerability of minority communities to the effects of the pandemic. Andraska et al. (2021) stated that compared to other groups, systematic barriers that limited access to healthcare increased their experiences of higher rates of chronic illnesses and health conditions. The disproportionate impacts of COVID-19 and the resulting vulnerabilities raised their health concerns and exacerbated the challenges with stable housing (Perri et al., 2020).

The pandemic has strained the healthcare systems around the world. The COVID-19 pandemic amplified the healthcare barriers experienced by minority groups, making it difficult for them to receive quality medical care (Andraska et al., 2021). The exacerbated health-related challenges affected their well-being, resulting in housing instability.

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The pandemic has been associated with significant economic losses in the existing literature. Minority groups live in neighborhoods with strained resources (Braga et al., 2019). Financial instability stemming from massive job losses and loss of income disproportionately affected the ability of minority communities to acquire stable housing. The economic strain characterized by low income due to COVID-19 increased the risks of homeless minority groups (Ahmad et al., 2020).

During a public health crisis, access to accurate information is crucial (Naeem & Boulos, 2021). Unlike other groups, minority groups experience challenges such as limited access to information, language barriers, and misinformation that affect their access to accurate information. With limited financial capabilities and insufficient access to precise information about COVID-19, their ability to protect themselves and acquire stable housing facilities to reduce the spread of COVID-19 is limited (Ahmad et al., 2020). This theory is critical in elucidating how the pandemic has amplified the health disparities and the vulnerabilities of minority groups. The strain of COVID-19 on the healthcare systems, resources, health disparities, limited access to resources, and economic challenges increased the risks of homelessness within minority groups. Homelessness among minority groups can be addressed by addressing the mentioned issues and increasing their access to resources, economic support, equitable access to healthcare, and accurate information.

### **Crisis Theory**

Crisis theory is founded on the assumption that a crisis is a promoter of extending the existing issues in society and worsening them (Roberts, 2000). As a global crisis, the COVID-19 pandemic caused an unexpected magnitude of impact on the existing issues and inequalities

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across the world. Crisis Theory can be used to comprehend the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on homeless minorities, as discussed below.

The COVID-19 pandemic exposed the major issues that homeless minorities were struggling with daily (Roberts, 2000). The pandemic revealed significant inequalities such as disparities in accessing healthcare, lack of adequate housing, unemployment, and limited educational opportunities that were overlooked among homeless minorities before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. It revealed the vulnerability of the housing conditions and the inadequate resources that were available to these susceptible homeless minority populations.

The existing inequalities among the homeless minorities were severely aggravated by the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, making them more exposed and difficult for these vulnerable communities. The disparities, such as limited access to healthcare, financial difficulties, food and housing insecurity, loss of employment, and lack of access to education, were severely exposed during the COVID-19 pandemic among homeless minorities (Roberts, 2000). While these vulnerable homeless minorities already had living and survival difficulties, such as lack of housing and suitable employment, the pandemic led to increased hardships because of the added economic and health burden imposed by the outbreak of the COVID-19 global pandemic.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak, there was a need for urgent and targeted interventions, policies, and resources to help address the problems faced by homeless minorities. The COVID-19 pandemic was a trigger to the need for action in addressing pertinent issues affecting the homeless minority populations. This wake-up call triggered organizations, governments, and communities to identify the magnitude of the crises and establish all-inclusive and immediate responses to help alleviate the severe situations these communities were exposed to (Roberts, 2000). The crisis did not only demonstrate the need to address the immediate

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problems caused by the COVID-19 pandemic but also address issues such as the structural disparities that accelerate homelessness as well as the marginalization of minority communities.

The pandemic led to a positive response in addressing systemic issues affecting the homeless minority populations. It brought a growing recognition of the need to have a more comprehensive and equitable approach to dealing with the challenges of homelessness among minority communities. The COVID-19 pandemic led to several initiatives and discussions meant to address universal problems, promote inclusiveness, and develop policies and practices that would prioritize the welfare of the homeless and marginalized populations. This crisis resulted in fairness and just responses to the crises, which were more inclined and considerate of the most susceptible communities, such as the homeless minorities (Roberts, 2000). Through the analysis of the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic using crisis theory, we receive a comprehensive understanding of how a worldwide pandemic or crisis can foster a positive change to inspire society to address equitably and intensely and comprehensive issues by working towards creating more permissible, equitable, fair as well as a just future.

### **Ethical Implications of the Effects of Covid-19**

Among the minority groups, the risks of homelessness due to the pandemic are high, and therefore, the ethical implications of the pandemic with regard to homelessness must be assessed.

### **Unequal Economic Conditions and Sustainability**

Organizations, governments, and people have responded differently to the COVID-19 pandemic. Oberg et al. (2022) stated that it was essential for government officials to understand that they were facilitating economic recovery for various groups at different stages. While recovery may take months for some groups, the economic groups of some other groups may take more than a year (Nicola et al., 2020). The unequal impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, as well

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as recovery, exacerbated the risks of homelessness among the different minority groups (Oberg et al., 2022). Wilson et al. (2023) established that compared to the white majority, minority groups were on the receiving end of unfair economic recovery policies, leading to cases of homelessness post-COVID-19. This unequal economic recovery creates opportunities for unethical behaviors.

### **Lack of Adequate Support for Victims**

Following the COVID-19 pandemic, professionals and stakeholders should carefully scout for changes that could affect their decision-making abilities as well as ethical judgments. However, it is doubtful that the pandemic will influence the skills of authorities, employers, professionals, and stakeholders in housing to address housing challenges experienced by minority groups (Mwoka et al., 2021). Despite the difficulties anticipated, concerned authorities, professionals, and stakeholders should practice autonomy when making important decisions that will alleviate the problem of homelessness among minority groups (Nicola et al., 2022).

### **Surge in Disinformation and Cybercrimes**

The COVID-19 pandemic has increased the use of technology and digitization of organizational services, which has increased the risks of cyberattacks on organizations operating in the United States. Okerefor (2021) asserted that as organizations recover from the pandemic, rising trends of cybercrimes might influence their recovery negatively. To abate the negative impacts of pandemics, minorities will need to acquire digital skills to efficiently and ethically operate in digital environments (Nicola et al., 2020). Empowering minority groups to embrace the digital work environment improved their financial well-being and ability to overcome homelessness (Zufferey et al., 2022). However, cybercrimes due to Covid-19 pose significant ethical concerns.

### **Increased Emotional Burnout**

The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly impacted the mental health and well-being as well as the cognitive capabilities of both minority and majority groups in the United States. Sundarassen et al. (2020) stated that since the pandemic started, individuals experienced extreme emotional distress and stress that affected their well-being. The mental health impacts of the pandemic were severe on minority groups who exhibited severe symptoms of anxiety due to the resultant economic difficulties (Camara et al., 2022). The economic impacts of the pandemic have hindered access to affordable housing and increased the risks of homelessness among members of minority groups (Nicola et al., 2020).

### **Policy Recommendations**

The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly threatened the existence of different economic sectors globally, with the healthcare sector most affected. Besides the healthcare sectors, other sectors, including the manufacturing, transport, and service industries, have been impacted by the pandemic. With the impacts of the pandemic being experienced in different sectors, the measures undertaken by the government have been adopted by organizations as well as individuals (Zufferey et al., 2022). However, Bachelet (2020) noted that some of the measures undertaken have been discriminatory, especially towards minority groups. Discriminatory actions may exacerbate the issue of housing among minority groups if not considered carefully (Zufferey et al., 2022). Therefore, it is essential that the recommended policies include the steps to combat the health effects of the pandemic but also guide the post-recovery process with regard to housing for minority groups. Therefore, the different policies that have been recommended are discussed in the following subsequent sections:

### **Ensure Responsiveness and Accountability in Emergency Response**

The pandemic has necessitated the need for emergency response teams and measures. The emergency responses that will be enacted must allow organizations and individuals some levels of autonomy. Repucci and Slipowitz (2020) asserted that emergency response measures that restrict internal movement, association, and assembly should be applied sparingly to allow individuals to recover at their own pace. The enacted emergency measures should be overseen independently and transparently. Effective implementation of emergency policies should grant individuals as well as minority groups to seek compensation and support for affordable housing, which they lost during the pandemic.

### **Provide Adequate Technical Support and Digital Literacy Skills**

The COVID-19 pandemic forced organizations to operate virtually, with companies offering online support and training to help them work comfortably from home. Online support training is crucial in equipping employees with the skills to effectively implement the guidelines for remote working (Zufferey et al., 2022). In collaboration with local and international partners, civil groups should offer the necessary training to identify the best practices for local projects. With homelessness among minority groups becoming a problem in the United States, organizations should provide the necessary digital training to facilitate working from home for different minority groups (Mongelli et al., 2020; O'Regan et al., 2021). Equipping minority groups with the necessary digital skills and training will help address the issues of homelessness within the minority groups as they can continue working even after losing their formal employment.

### **Support Accountable Journalism and Fight Misinformation During Pandemics**

The COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated the need for governments and stakeholders to promote press freedom, access to information, and freedom of expression. Kharas and Dooley (2020) asserted that media workers should have access to mentorship programs, skill training, and financial and technical assistance. Providing journalists with financial support will help them collect information that will aid the public's understanding of the pandemic (Zufferey et al., 2022). With the financial backing, journalists can improve their quality of life, mitigate misinformation, and maintain public perception (Egede et al., 2020). Financially supporting journalists from minority groups will help with their daily tasks and combat the risks of homelessness, as they will have adequate finances to meet their rent obligations.

### **Ensure crisis readiness through Funding and protection of Human Rights**

The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted the activities of numerous organizations, limiting their financial income. Organizations with limited cash flow need emergency funds to continue operating. Sundarassen et al. (2020) asserted that governments should ensure that civil society organizations, especially those working in restrictive environments, are provided with enough funding to support their operations. The COVID-19 pandemic increased the cases of relationship abuse, especially among the minority communities within the United States. Repucci and Slipowitz (2020) asserted that governments should be keen to reduce chances of relationship abuse. Marginalized and minority groups are at an increased risk for social abuse and, as such, must be provided with the necessary support. Besides relationship abuse, minority groups, as a result of the closure of businesses and loss of jobs, were at risk of becoming homeless (Perri et al., 2020).

### **Offer Financial Subsidies and Tax Reliefs to Affected Individuals**



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As a result of the pandemic, many businesses have closed their operations, and employers have initiated paid time off to support their workers and avoid layoffs. Mandated payoffs have put pressure on employers in a difficult position, something that has forced the government to develop strategies aimed at subsidizing the different sectors to ensure their swift recovery, increased purchasing and production effectiveness (Moreira & Hick, 2021). Through subsidies, governments will ensure balanced economic recovery and protect employees from being laid off by their organizations and becoming homeless. In addition to donations, governments may promote legislation that exempts important sectors from taxes to facilitate their quick recovery from the effects of the pandemic. Tax exemptions and tax breaks will increase the circulation of money in the economy, allowing businesses to improve their production and recover economically. Tax breaks will also encourage the reopening of closed companies as well as the start of new businesses, which will employ marginalized groups. Tax exemptions and breaks are necessary not only for essential organizations but also for individuals and groups such as minority groups. Exempting minority groups from taxes will help them retain much of their money, allowing them to pay their rent and thus avoid being homeless (Benavides & Nukpezah, 2020).

### **Helping Victims with Physical Donations and Medical Supplies**

In addition to subsidies and tax holidays, the government should implement practical policies that would improve the well-being of their citizens. Furman et al. (2020) stated that providing health packages to construct clinics and hospitals will ensure access to healthcare. Besides assistance health packages, offering tariffs on healthcare products to reduce the country's reliance on imported medical products will reduce the costs of healthcare, allowing marginalized homeless groups to save enough capital for affordable housing during and post-COVID-19

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pandemic (Quak et al., 2022). Reducing imports will stimulate local production, which will increase employment opportunities for homeless minority groups, reducing homelessness during the COVID-19 pandemic (Benavides & Nukpezah, 2020).

### **Constantly Advocate for Continuous Research on Crisis**

Research and innovation foster exchanges of ideas and effective responses to public health crises such as the current COVID-19 pandemic. Autin et al. (2020) explained that governments should invest in different research and innovation platforms to foster collaborative research. In the context of this study, homelessness within minority groups is a significant problem in the United States. The federal government can mitigate this problem by supporting programs and research platforms aimed at reducing homelessness among minority groups. Keeping research and innovation during the COVID-19 pandemic will help the country prepare for emergencies and crises such as homelessness (Zufferey et al., 2022).

### **Summary**

The outbreak of COVID-19 exposed acute vulnerabilities homeless minorities face in the United States. The purpose of this study was to highlight the impact of COVID-19 on homeless minorities in the United States from economic, psychological, and physical perspectives. To achieve this goal, structural inequality theory, housing discrimination and segregation theory, public health crisis amplification theory, and crisis theory were used to understand the impact of COVID-19 on homeless minorities in the United States. Based on the analysis conducted, it was established that COVID-19 had far-reaching psychological effects on homeless minorities, including increased levels of stress anxiety and depression attributed to uncertainties created by COVID-19 containment measures. Limited access to mental health care services and trauma related to COVID complications and the death of loved ones significantly impacted the

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psychological well-being of homeless minorities. The economic effects of COVID-19 on minorities included no income and limited access to crucial resources that worsened the gap between the rich and homeless minorities. The physical impact included social isolation and overcrowding in shelters, which would contribute to a surge in COVID-19 transmission or infection rates. Among the ethical issues related to COVID-19 and its impact include burnout among homeless minorities and their caregivers, an increase in disinformation about COVID-19, and unequal economic recovery for homeless minorities.

Recognizing the prolonged impact of a crisis, especially a global pandemic like COVID-19, on mental health is crucial. The psychological effects can persist long after the immediate health threat has subsided. They are acknowledging that individuals may experience a range of mental health challenges post-crisis, including anxiety, depression, trauma, and grief. These issues can affect those directly impacted by the crisis and the broader community. Allocating resources involves integrating mental health services into mainstream healthcare systems. This ensures that mental health is treated with the same importance as physical health, reducing the stigma associated with seeking help. They are ensuring that mental health services are accessible to all individuals affected by the crisis. This could involve establishing mental health clinics, helplines, and online resources to provide support to those in need and allocating resources for trauma-informed care that considers the psychological impact of the crisis. This involves training healthcare professionals to recognize and address trauma, fostering a more supportive and empathetic healthcare environment. Recognizing that mental health is integral to overall well-being, integrating mental health support into community health programs ensures a holistic approach to healthcare.

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Thus far, the findings discussed highlight that homeless minorities lacked financial support during the COVID-19 pandemic because of limited information and lack of necessary supporting documents and modes of receiving financial payments from the federal government. Additionally, the findings above indicate little financial support to the homeless minorities during the COVID-19 pandemic. The evidence across the studies discussed indicates that COVID-19 led to increased housing insecurity and risk of eviction among homeless minorities because of a significant reduction in income. Racial profiling, segregation in the housing market, and limited affordable housing opportunities exacerbated the risks of homelessness among minority groups during the COVID-19 pandemic. Setting up and providing these groups with emergency financial support alleviated their chances of becoming homeless. Providing support packages will ensure access to affordable care, decrease costs of production, and increase employment opportunities for minority groups, reducing the risks of homelessness.

Recommendations for policymakers include the development of a multi-faceted strategy for crisis response and management. One of the strategies is to enhance crisis preparedness through funding and research. In addition, policymakers need to focus on addressing the systemic factors that contribute to homelessness and inequalities in the United States, such as affordable housing programs and equal access to healthcare, education, and employment.

Allocating funds for research involves conducting a comprehensive analysis of past crises. Policymakers can identify patterns, successes, and failures in crisis management strategies by studying the responses to previous emergencies. Identifying Weaknesses research helps in pinpointing weaknesses in the existing response systems. Understanding where previous strategies fell short allows for targeted improvements, ensuring that the same mistakes are avoided in future crises. Research provides a solid foundation for evidence-based decision-

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making. Policymakers armed with comprehensive data are better equipped to design and implement effective crisis management plans tailored to the specific needs of their communities. Allocating funds to adopt and develop cutting-edge technologies enhances the speed and accuracy of crisis response. This includes leveraging data analytics, artificial intelligence, and communication tools to streamline information flow and decision-making during emergencies. Investing in resilient infrastructure ensures that communities are better equipped to withstand and recover from crises. This could involve fortifying critical structures, improving emergency shelters, and enhancing communication networks to ensure seamless coordination during a problem.

Allocating funds for training programs equips emergency responders and healthcare professionals with the necessary skills to handle complex situations. This involves regular drills, simulations, and continuous education to keep personnel updated on the latest crisis management techniques. Investing in personnel training also fosters collaboration between different agencies involved in crisis response. This interdisciplinary approach ensures a more coordinated and efficient response, particularly during large-scale emergencies like pandemics. Funding can be directed towards public awareness campaigns and educational programs, ensuring that the general population is informed about crisis preparedness measures. This includes disseminating information on evacuation procedures, emergency contacts, and the importance of individual preparedness.

There is also the need to focus on combating racism and discrimination as the fundamental factors contributing to socioeconomic disparities and vulnerabilities among low-income individuals. That is also needed to guarantee that those affected by COVID-19 have

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access to mental healthcare to support their recovery under integration into the community post-COVID-19.

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