

# Racially Minoritised Young People's Experiences of Navigating COVID-19 Challenges: A Community Cultural Wealth Perspective

Claudia Bernard<sup>1,\*</sup>, Anna Gupta<sup>2</sup>, Monica Lakhnpaul<sup>3</sup>, Anita Sharma<sup>2</sup> and Teresa Peres<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*Goldsmiths, University of London, London SE14 6NW, UK*

<sup>2</sup>*Royal Holloway, University of London, Egham, Surrey TW20 OEX, UK*

<sup>3</sup>*University College London, UCL GOS Institute of Child Health, London WC1N 1EH, UK*

\*Correspondence to Claudia Bernard, Goldsmiths, University of London, New Cross, London SE14 6NW, UK. E-mail: [c.bernard@gold.ac.uk](mailto:c.bernard@gold.ac.uk)

## Abstract

This article explores the impact of the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic on racially minoritised children and young people. It draws on a study that investigated the factors that impacted the well-being and resilience of Black and Asian children and young people in the UK during the pandemic. The study employed a qualitative approach using semi-structured interviews and focus groups with Black and Asian children aged twelve to nineteen years, to explore their perspectives of the contributing factors that impacted the health, well-being and the coping strategies and support they were able to draw upon to navigate challenges. The thematic analysis highlighted themes of: (1) Support and well-being and (2) coping strategies and resilience to understand the layered elements of multiple intersecting identities and inequities. The findings revealed insights into the intersection of multiple disadvantages, namely economic stressors, food poverty, digital inequality, disrupted education and disproportionate losses that impacted family functioning, peer-to-peer support, friendships and social connection. Through the lens of community cultural wealth, this article seeks to examine key factors that need to be foregrounded when lived experiences are rooted in the cumulative effects of multiple intersecting inequalities. The findings provide insights into the challenges exacerbated by structural inequalities and racial disparities that disproportionately impacted youth experiences.

© The Author(s) 2024. Published by Oxford University Press on behalf of The British Association of Social Workers.

This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>), which permits unrestricted reuse, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

**Keywords:** community cultural wealth, COVID-19, racially minoritised youths, resilience and well-being

*Accepted: May 2024*

## Introduction

The coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic has profoundly affected the lives of racially minoritised children and their families in the UK, underscoring the role of social and health disparities in intensifying impact. Indeed, the COVID-19 pandemic amplified deep-rooted racial injustices in British society. There was significant evidence early in the pandemic that racial bias, inequities and disparities resulted in Black, Asian and minority ethnic people from socially disadvantaged backgrounds being disproportionately impacted (Campbell, 2020a; Audet *et al.*, 2022). An emerging literature shows that the negative impact of the pandemic compounded the psychosocial adversity for Black and Asian children and young people in the UK (Campbell, 2020b; Audet *et al.*, 2022). Indeed, research has highlighted how structural inequities play an important role in worsening racial inequalities (Blundell *et al.*, 2020; Harris *et al.*, 2021). However, limited research has drawn on the voices and experiences of racially minoritised children and young people. The study reported here relates to the *Children, Young People and Families* research, which is part of the larger CoPOWeR (2022) study that used mixed methods and community participatory approaches to examine the combined impact of COVID-19 and racial discrimination on Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities. The *Children, Young People and Families* study examined the factors that impacted the health, well-being and resilience of Black and Asian children, young people and families during the pandemic. For the purposes of this article, we focus on the children and young people's perspectives. This article proceeds with a review of existing literature on racially minoritised communities' experiences of COVID-19, which is followed by a description of the methodological approach. Next, we discuss some of the findings, and the article concludes by highlighting the implications for policy and practice interventions.

## Background

Evidence emerged in 2020 showing that racially minoritised communities were disproportionately affected by the COVID-19 pandemic (Blundell *et al.*, 2020; Deivanayagam *et al.*, 2020; Gidda, 2020; Platt and Warwick, 2020; Public Health England, 2020; The Children's Society, 2020;

Children's Commissioner Report, 2021). At the start of the pandemic in 2020, media often reported ethnic minorities' higher death rates with emphasis on factors, such as living in close-knit, multi-generational households, rather than the long-term systemic racism and discrimination, which was found to be a crucial underlying reason for higher death rates amongst Black and Asian key workers in the NHS (Campbell, 2020a; BBC, 2020). Prior research has shown that throughout the pandemic, racially minoritised groups were adversely affected because of escalating inequalities, and psychosocial impacts on their families and communities (Katikireddi *et al.*, 2021; Audet *et al.*, 2022). A growing body of research highlighted greater vulnerability to the impact of the pandemic, due to higher infection and death rates, which resulted in an increase in racism aimed at racially minoritised groups perceived as being potential spreaders of the virus (Campbell, 2020a; Doyle, 2020; Office for National Statistics, 2020). It has been argued that the pandemic has exposed and amplified existing racial, social and economic injustices structural within society (Katikireddi *et al.*, 2021; Platt and Warwick, 2020; Audet *et al.*, 2022). Studies suggest that the emergency powers introduced by the UK government to deal with the coronavirus pandemic in March 2020, such as lockdown regulations, limiting freedom of movement, were being disproportionately applied to racially minoritised people who faced higher rates of being questioned or fined by the police for breach of 'COVID rules' (Busby and Gidda, 2020; GOV, 2021; Harris *et al.*, 2021). Evidence was presented supporting the claim that racially minoritised people were being impacted differently by the pandemic compared to the rest of the population, due to the direct impact of the virus, as well as to an apparent increase in racially motivated prejudice and discrimination, which illuminated that psychological harms must be located to structural factors such as material poverty and racial bias (Campbell, 2020a; Donà, 2021).

In the case of racially minoritised youth, they were disproportionately exposed to the wider societal impact of intersecting inequalities and had to face a range of adversities even before the pandemic started (Hu, 2020; Anders *et al.*, 2021). An area of concern was that children and young people had challenges in sustaining resilience to resist the impacts on their well-being and mental health (Blundell *et al.*, 2020; Abdinansir and Carty, 2021). It is also important to consider that for some groups of racially minoritised children, such as unaccompanied minors and children whose families had no recourse to public funds, and children whose families were homeless, the ramifications of the pandemic were more severe (Rosenthal *et al.*, 2020). Additionally, migrants, and displaced children's lives were already marked by insecurity and hardship and were thus affected even more seriously by the effects of the pandemic. This population of young people were therefore caught at the intersection of the pandemic and longstanding racial inequalities. Although a few studies have highlighted the stressors

caused by the pandemic on young people's happiness and confidence ([Anders et al., 2021, 2022](#); [Holt and Murray, 2022](#)), the role of strengths-based assets in promoting resilience in racially minoritised children were minimally examined.

## Current study

A qualitative study design was employed to examine the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on Black and Asian children and young people's well-being. Using interviews and focus groups the study aimed to understand the adverse conditions that impacted their well-being and coping strategies, and the support they received during the pandemic. Data were gathered from children, young people, parents and professionals from community and statutory organisations. We also worked collaboratively with a Youth Engagement Panel consisting of ten young people (aged sixteen to twenty years) from Black and Asian backgrounds to guide the design of the study and advise throughout the entire research process.

This research is theoretically grounded in community cultural wealth theory, which is rooted in critical race theory ([Yosso, 2005](#)). Central to community cultural wealth is the notion of the cultural knowledge, skills and assets that racially minoritised people utilise to make sense of lived experiences rooted in racialised processes. In this study, we thus draw on three key elements of community cultural wealth: aspirational, navigational and resistant capital to better understand how oppressive systems affect the experiences of racially minoritised groups. [Yosso \(2005\)](#) maintains that aspirational capital encompasses how individuals may have hopes, dreams and aspirations despite persistent inequities, whilst navigational capital is concerned with the skills and attributes used to navigate unsupportive and toxic environments. Resistant capital refers to the means by which Black communities engage with social justice issues to secure equal rights and collective freedom. One of the key benefits of a community cultural wealth perspective is specifically to shift away from deficit discourses and stereotypes of racially minoritised communities to extend our insights into the socio-cultural, neighbourhood and community-cultural assets that can foster resilience ([Yosso, 2005](#)). A community cultural wealth lens would enable us to capture lived experiences that are situated in systems of oppression. Because we sought to delve into the barriers and vulnerabilities that affected the well-being, resilience, coping strategies and support networks of Black and Asian youth during the pandemic, community cultural wealth provided a theoretical lens to frame the following research questions: (1) Which factors and processes affected Black and Asian children/young people's vulnerability, health, wellbeing, and resilience during the pandemic? (2) What are the strengths and opportunities to build on to develop resilience in Black and Asian families and communities? (3) How can

statutory and third-sector services promote children/young people's resilience and well-being?

## Methods

### Sample and recruitment

Purposive sampling (Patton, 2002) was utilised to recruit participants from community organisations, youth groups and schools across England and Wales. In total, there were 140 participants consisting of young people aged twelve to nineteen years, parents and professionals (social workers, teachers, community workers and youth workers), but we focus here on the youth participants consisting of sixty-six young people. Ethical approval for the research was granted by the authors' Research Ethics Boards. Participants were provided with information about the purpose of the research, what their participation would involve and protocol concerning anonymity and confidentiality. Participants confirmed their consent in various ways, including via an online consent form or emailing a consent form back to the researcher team. Participants aged sixteen to nineteen years were encouraged to inform their parents that they agreed to be involved in the research. For participants aged twelve to fifteen years, consent from parents/carers and assent from the children was sought and obtained.

With regards to youth participants, the sample mix comprised Black children from Caribbean backgrounds as well as children from Nigerian, Ghanaian, Zimbabwean, Somalian and North African heritage. The participants from South Asian backgrounds consisted of young people from Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Sri Lankan heritage. The study's eligibility criteria aimed to represent the heterogeneity of Black and South Asian children and young people from different socio-economic, cultural and religious backgrounds (Table 1).

### Data gathering

Data were collected through focus groups and semi-structured interviews conducted between July 2021 and March 2022. The interviews and focus

**Table 1.** Participants.

Sixty-six children and young people aged 12–19 years	Twenty-nine aged 12–15 years
Fifty-five parents/kinship carers	Thirty-seven aged 16–19 years
Nineteen professionals	Five grandparents
	Youth workers, social workers, community workers, teachers

group discussions were conducted face-to-face or virtually on Zoom or MS Teams. The focus groups and interviews took place simultaneously and the interviews ranged in length from fifteen minutes to two hours. A pilot focus group was conducted, to hone and simplify the topic guide. All the focus groups and interviews were recorded either using a digital voice recorder or using software built into online meeting platforms (Zoom/MS Teams). Sound files were transcribed verbatim, and the transcripts were then checked against the sound file for accuracy, before being anonymised. We also obtained demographic information from participants to track progress towards recruitment quotas and ensure representation from different groups. All participant's names were replaced by numbers but, where we have demographic data, is accompanied by gender identity, ethnic heritage, age and location.

## Data analysis

We employed thematic analysis for data analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2022). The first step in the process started with data familiarisation which involved reading and re-reading the transcripts multiple times before starting the initial coding. The transcripts were checked for accuracy against the sound files to make corrections and anonymise the text. The second round of familiarisation involved annotating transcripts to select sections of narratives in relation to concepts (well-being, resilience, vulnerability, cultural wealth, intersectionality); theories (socio-ecological theory, critical race theory); the impact of different factors (work, housing, education, food, relationships, health, support, racism). After developing a set of initial codes, we conducted a more detailed selective coding, after which a sample of 25 per cent of transcripts was annotated. The annotated transcripts were imported into NVivo software for data management to facilitate the qualitative analysis. The final stage of analysis involved more refinement of the coding, and breaking down of the codes into various subthemes, which were then organised into thematic categories, to explore their interrelationships.

## Findings

In what follows we discuss two core themes: support and well-being, and coping strategies and resilience using a community cultural wealth lens.

### Support and well-being

Participants described a range of factors such as poor mental health and well-being, isolation and heightened anxiety, as well as dealing with

bereavement and grief, separation from school and friends and conducting their lives online, that negatively impacted their well-being during the pandemic. Most of the participants were living in low-income households in deprived areas. Also, some of the participants were living in households where domestic violence was taking place. Many children and young people were in households with parents in low-paid insecure work, with variable hours and some were not entitled to furlough and thus experienced severe hardships. These families were therefore very dependent on support from a range of community networks. Indeed, many participants stressed the vital role that locally based community and faith groups played in supporting their family as a consequence of pandemic-related financial hardship. One participant recalled:

We are both [he and his brother] quite lucky in the sense that we know quite a lot of shop owners as well. So we could buy things that are often cheaper prices maybe, because they like to help the community ... we live in a Tamil community, and we generally have a connection with all the Tamil people, and quite a lot of them do own shops ... So connections with, like, friend groups, or families and stuff like that really did help us. (Asian male, 17)

Some participants were unable to access or receive help from statutory services, such as schools and children's services, indicating that informal community networks were their primary source of support. One participant described how their family was supported through a period of financial hardship during COVID-19:

We rely on the community more than institutions. We have strong friendship groups, you know, I don't think food will ever really be an issue because we have family friends who feed [us] and we have a very good network. (mixed-race male, 17)

Another spoke of the practical help he received with his education from the local Boxing club:

they [the school] ran out of laptops, and then, you know, they had to make me wait for months and obviously that made me slack on my work ... I'm just using the one from the boxing gym, they helped me out a lot. (Asian male, 18)

Several described the seemingly hostile or unsupportive neighbourhoods. One participant expressed that because she and her mother had felt isolated and unsafe in the small, majority white town they had lived in before the pandemic, moving to a diverse area where they had more support had been one of the best things to happen for her during the pandemic.

We lived in the town centre. So, we were surrounded by nine pubs and there was a lot of night life and we didn't really feel very safe in the building. Because again, there wasn't anyone there that we felt like we

could turn to if something were to happen ... we couldn't trust people in our building. Being in this community now was the best thing that came out of the pandemic. (mixed-race female, 17)

Another participant reflected:

Where I live, I didn't even talk to my neighbours. So I don't think I had, really had that sense of community. So, things like sharing food, there was none of that where I live. I think it just depends where you are. (Asian male, 17)

Typically, it was largely the support networks, such as extended family, peer relationships and community projects (often unfunded, and attended to by volunteers) who were able to cushion some of the complex challenges the young people had to endure during the pandemic. Thus, as Yosso states, a community cultural wealth approach to the individual and community assets can mitigate effects and help cultivate resilience for racially marginalised youth (Yosso, 2005).

### Coping strategies and resilience

The findings also revealed how young people experienced the psychological impact of the pandemic on their coping strategies to recover from stressful events and navigate their daily lives. For instance, the global coverage of the murder of George Floyd and resurgence of the Black Lives Matter movement during the first lockdown in 2020 led to widespread public discussions about racism that the participants were able to benefit from. Thus, the Black Lives Matter protests had a significant impact on many of the participants by providing a point of connection and engagement at the beginning of the pandemic, which encouraged them to think about and discuss their individual experiences of racism in new ways to help them build a sense of identity. Whilst some of the participants encountered negative reactions from their White peers to discussions about racial justice, many talked candidly about what, for example, their schools were doing to engage pupils in conversations about systemic racism. Below, a participant gives an example of the positive impact of a Black Lives Matter book club hosted by a teacher in her school.

My head of year ... he does a Black Lives Matter reading club. And basically, you come and then you read different books by someone who is obviously Black or of a racial minority. So we read *Natives* by Akala. Then we'll also talk about what's happening politically. (mixed-race female, 17)

However, a minority of participants voiced concerns that their schools were not doing enough to address what they saw as a systemic problem



about racial equity in the education system more generally. Here, one participant voiced her frustrations:

I think that there are a lot of problems that pretty much stem from the education system where it's like, you aren't giving the options for people to have these talks, to discover certain things. You're avoiding teaching things about gender and race and ethnicity and sexuality and that's causing more problems. (Black female, 18)

Some participants felt that engaging with the Black Lives Matter movement on social media was an important point of connection and engagement, for it was clearly a defining moment that elicited a reflective awareness of racism. Indeed, some felt increasingly empowered to speak out about the lived reality of the racism they experienced day-to-day. One participant stated:

I think the Black Lives Matter movement and the incident with George Floyd it affected me and quite a lot of people around me. So, there was a movement going on social media, such as Instagram. They would just post awareness and information about the Black Lives Matter movement. And I think that affected me. I was actually quite involved with it for quite a long time. (mixed-race female, 15)

Another participant described feeling hopeful about the positive impact of social media in publicising globally the prevalence of police brutality which he felt was rooted in racism:

I thought it's just another really unfortunate thing that's happened, it's just another case of racism and there's not much we can do about it. But I saw the huge uproar that social media ... everyone was making a stand for it I thought that it's actually good because there is some sort of hope. (mixed-race male, 17)

Resistance capital also enables us to understand how collectively organising to resist racism can have positive psychological outcomes that will build resilience to adapt and cope (Turner *et al.*, 2022). The Black Lives Matter movement not only provided a moment of engagement and hopefulness for participants, but also influenced the way in which they made sense of their own lived experiences of racism. For example, in a focus group with young Muslim women, a participant linked reactions online about the murder of George Floyd and Black Lives Matter with her own experiences of racism from classmates before the pandemic:

And many of them [friends] would call like me the "P" word and stuff like, I had a few white friends, and they were really nice people. They just, they used slurs that's all. But, I say that's all but it's very bad... but now it's like, it's more defensible, especially because like race is not talked about as much as we think... it's just little microaggressions, and like, sometimes many of us like look past that because we don't want to create a commotion. (Asian female, 17)

Several young people felt they were over-surveilled by the police through stop-and-search which caused sustained impact on their well-being. One participant remarked:

You'd get stopped so quick. Even like, with me, I could barely make it around the corner, I would literally go around the corner, and they would stop me straight away. [...] They would see me in my running shoes and running kit and still be like "where are you going?" [...] You can't argue. They'll think you're lying. I remember one time, yeah, I told them I was going on a run, I thought they were going to be calm and then they were like, "Oh yeah, go off, go on, do your run". So I started running and I swear the car just followed me for 10 minutes. Because they thought I was lying. So they were just like, "Okay just go on your run" and then they trailed behind me for 10 minutes in their car. (Black male, 17)

For some participants the undertows of racism were constant, increasing their emotional health issues. One participant recounted:

During the pandemic I suffered from anxiety and depression ... I was very discriminated on this Saturday just because I was a Black male around 5'3", and some policeman came up to me and put me in handcuffs and they said that I was being a very bad boy and they accused me of stealing an electric scooter off a man and I wasn't in the wrong ... I felt very discriminated against and dehumanised because I was just a normal kid walking on the street. (Black male, 13)

The extracts above describe the harshness of their experiences and raise issues about the pervasive ways racism permeates through their everyday lives. Navigational capital gives us a lens here to consider how traumatic racial encounters leave racially minoritised youths with psychological scars that threaten their resilience. There has been sustained criticism of the disproportionate over-policing of Black youth during the pandemic, which has also been highlighted in the data addressing how the lockdown rules were interpreted by the police (Busby and Gidda, 2020; Deivanayagam *et al.*, 2020; GOV, 2021; Harris *et al.*, 2021).

The intertwining of Black Lives Matter movement and the ways in which the pandemic amplified racial injustices during the first wave of the pandemic gave participants a voice to speak openly about racism, racial identity and racial microaggressions. Also, and most importantly, young people used the Black Lives Matter as a form of resistance, as it helped them to nurture emotional resources, and to see possibilities for hope in environments where their sense of self-worth is continually being undermined. By engaging with the issues that Black Lives Matter gave rise to, the young people demonstrated their capacity for hope, and indeed some underwent a transformation, in terms of how it politicized them and developed their social competence. As has been noted elsewhere, engaging in political activism like the Black Lives Matter

movement can be a mediating factor in buffering the effects of racial stressors and isolation, thus offering positive outcomes for psychological well-being (Audet *et al.*, 2022).

## Discussion

This study placed a strong emphasis on the cumulative impact of disadvantage and racism for racially minoritised youth during the COVID-19 pandemic. The aim of this study has been to explore the cumulative impact of long-existing racial disparities and the COVID-19 pandemic on the well-being and resilience of racially minoritised youth. The study findings have shown how the uneven impact of the pandemic was exacerbated by environments of racial injustice for the youth participants. Specifically, the study found significant evidence of social determinants such as racial discrimination and economic deprivation that worsened the adverse circumstances for this subgroup of youth.

Undeniably, the circumstances for the youths worsened by the pandemic and this is not surprising keeping in mind that research shows that racially minoritised communities were already disproportionately impacted by health and economic disparities (Campbell, 2020a; Maddison, 2020). Crucially, the undertows of racial bias were a constant in their everyday lives, and participants poignantly described the deleterious effects of race-based trauma on their emotional health and well-being, posing a real test to their resilience. Woven into the youth narratives were accounts of marginalising experiences that illustrated the ways in which their life chances were constrained by stigma, stereotyping, racism and other intersecting forms of discrimination (Bernard, 2022). Linked to this is the growing evidence that demonstrates that the policing of racially minoritised youths during the pandemic not only criminalised them but caused psychological harm (Busby and Gidda, 2020; Deivanayagam *et al.*, 2020; Harris *et al.*, 2021). Study findings have highlighted that the perceptions and experiences of racially minoritised youth of being negatively surveilled and under-supported by the child welfare systems led to a multi-layered mistrust of statutory services. Moreover, there is compelling evidence to show how racially minoritised youth's feelings of being criminalised and punished by services rather than helped and supported are justified (Koch *et al.*, 2023). This may explain, for example, why many racially minoritised youth have difficulty trusting public services, including the police, the justice system, social services and schools (Davis and Marsh, 2022; Millar *et al.*, 2023). Consequently, this mistrust means that racially minoritised young people were often reluctant to voluntarily access and engage with child welfare services (Burgess *et al.*, 2022). It should be noted that factors such as racism affect the levels of trust in services (Brown, 2023). These findings therefore fit with previous

research that stressed the importance of creating safe and inclusive spaces for racially minoritised youth to give voice to their lived experiences (Driscoll *et al.*, 2021; Boakye, 2022).

In many ways, incorporating key tenets of community cultural wealth theory provided a means to surface the life circumstances that systematically disadvantage racially minoritised youths to fully comprehend the ingredients that foster and sustain resilience for this population of youths. As such, drawing on a community cultural wealth perspective is especially helpful in expanding thinking of the socio-structural elements that can facilitate or hinder resilience for racially minoritised young people grappling with lived experience-centred adversities that are rooted in racial disparities and compounded by entrenched intersectional forms of social inequalities. In essence, a community cultural wealth lens can serve many functions here. Most importantly, it provided the critical tools for us to utilise non-deficit ways in order to recognise how youths harness their own resources and strengths to cope with stressful life events when their identities and self-worth are constantly brutalised by racism (Yosso, 2005). Specifically, key concepts of community cultural wealth theory, notably aspirational, navigational and resistance capital, allowed for a more complex analysis of the individual and socio-structural factors that impact participants' coping strategies (Yosso, 2025). Importantly, a community cultural wealth lens furthered an intersectional analysis to provide a more nuanced appreciation of the compounding factors that undermined resilience in racially minoritised youth. Most notably, community cultural wealth facilitates a deeper understanding of the significance of community and neighbourhood networks of support that can be critical for buffering against adverse mental health consequences. Youth participants particularly identified youth groups and sporting clubs as important for physical, as well as emotional well-being, providing spaces for connection and belonging. As such, our findings speak to the issues that are important to consider when intervening to support the needs of racially minoritised young people. Therefore, when considering how to intervene to support racially minoritised youths to cultivate resilience, community cultural wealth can help to shed light on the individual and community assets that they utilise to overcome barriers to survive and thrive.

## Limitations

Although this study has yielded valuable insights into some of the issues that affected racially minoritised youth experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic, this is not to say that there are not some limitations. Specifically, the sample was self-selecting, and all but two of the young people were living with their families, and not in care. Further, the

number of children with disabilities who were interviewed as part of the youth sample was small. Therefore, the study cannot be considered as demographically representative of all Black and Asian children, and as such, cannot be generalised to all racially minoritised youth. Another limitation is in relation to measuring resilience. It should also be acknowledged that the analysis did not distinguish experiences of resilience as the research did not assess and evaluate resilience in individual participants. We are mindful that there are varied definitions of resilience. A further limitation of group discussion methods is the possibility that group dynamics may have resulted in the more dominant individuals in the group silencing some who may have found it difficult to express words their experiences. Despite these limitations, this research contributes additional knowledge to understandings of the lived experiences of racially minoritised youth during the pandemic. As has been highlighted elsewhere, experiential knowledge from people with lived experiences is imperative for deepening understandings for meaningful engagement with groups who are marginalised and whose voices are often missing from knowledge building (Maglajlic and Ioakimidis, 2022).

## **Conclusion**

In this article, we have explored the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on racially minoritised youth. Our intention has been to give close consideration to the experiences of racially minoritised youth to better understand how this group might be supported post-pandemic. It has suggested that a persistent challenge relates to how service providers respond to the disproportionate impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on racialised youth in a context of intersectional forms of inequalities, who have complex individual support needs because of the cumulative effects of pre-existing disadvantage amplified by the pandemic. Indeed, this study offers fresh insights into the deleterious effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on racially minoritised youth and how already challenging circumstances were intensified. Thus, if racially minoritised youth are to be meaningfully engaged and supported in children and youth services, this must involve interventions that can acknowledge the impact of structural racism and other intersecting inequalities which are embedded in the child welfare systems. In this way, interventions that are adaptable, community-centred, culturally congruent and grounded in principles of anti-racism, are critical for creating safe spaces for relationship-based practice that is built on trust. In practical terms, this can only happen if senior leaders in children and youth services move beyond a performative recognition of racism, and proactively champion the changes that are necessary for developing anti-racist practices that can effectively support racially minoritised youth. In sum, the pandemic's unequal impact

will increase the disparities for racially minoritised youth who are already disproportionately experiencing poor educational and health outcomes. Thus, we conclude that failure to fully consider the challenges facing racially minoritised young people in the pandemic's aftermath carries a major risk for their well-being as the long-term impact of COVID has consequences for their future developmental needs. This research shed light on some of the key issues that must be considered for developing policy and practice interventions with racialised youth involved within the child welfare system.

## Acknowledgements

The authors would like to thank all the young people, caregivers, practitioners and organisations for participating in this study.

*Conflict of interest statement.* The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

## Funding

The research was funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) Grant 123187. The views expressed in this publication are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the funding body.

## References

- Abdinasir, K. and Carty, S. (2021) *Young Black Men's Mental Health during Covid-19*, London, Centre for Mental Health.
- Anders, J., Macmillan, L., Sturgis, P. and Wyness, G. (2021) 'Inequalities in young peoples' educational experiences and wellbeing during the COVID-19 pandemic', CEPEO Working Paper No. 21-08, Centre for Education Policy and Equalising Opportunities, UCL.
- Anders, J., De Gennaro, A., Shao, X. and Yarde, J. (2022) 'Differences by ethnicity in young people's educational experiences and wellbeing in the aftermath of COVID-19', COSMO Technical Note 1, London, UCL Centre for Education Policy and Equalising Opportunities & Sutton Trust.
- Audet, E. C., Leboeuf, J., Holding, A. C., Davids, J., Fang, X. and Koestner, R. (2022) 'Better together: Family and peer support for Black young adults during the COVID-19 pandemic and the Black Lives Matter Movement', *Trends in Psychology*, **30**(4), pp. 688–705.
- BBC (2020) 'Coronavirus: Report on BAME Covid-19 deaths sparks call for action', available online at: <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-5306530> (Accessed August 28, 2022).
- Bernard, C. (2022) *Intersectionality for Social Workers: Introduction to Theory and Practice*, Abingdon, Routledge.
- Blundell, R., Costa Dias, M., Joyce, R. and Xu, X. (2020) 'COVID-19 and inequalities', *Fiscal Studies*, **41**(2), pp. 291–319.

- Boakye, J. (2022) *I Heard What You Said*, London, Picador.
- Braun, V. and Clarke, V. (2022) *Thematic Analysis: A Practical Guide*, London, Sage.
- Brown, D. (2023) 'Childhood experiences, growing up "in care," and trust: A quantitative analysis', *Children and Youth Services Review*, **144**, p. 106734.
- Burgess, R. A., Kanu, N., Matthews, T., Mukotekwa, O., Smith-Gul, A., Yusuf, I., Lamptey, I., McCauley, N., Wilson, R., Pirisola, M. and Gul, M. (2022) 'Exploring experiences and impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on young racially minoritised people in the United Kingdom: A qualitative study', *PLoS One*, **17**(5), pp. e0266504.
- Busby, M. and Gidda, M. (2020) 'BAME people fined more than White population under coronavirus laws', available online at: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/may/26/bame-people-fined-more-than-white-population-under-coronavirus-laws> (accessed November 20, 2022).
- Campbell, D. (2020a) 'Racism contributed to disproportionate UK BAME coronavirus deaths, inquiry finds', available online at: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/jun/14/racisdisproportionate-uk-bamecoronavirus-deaths-report> (Accessed November 4, 2022).
- Campbell, D. (2020b) 'COVID-19 affects BAME youth mental health more than white peers—Study', available online at: <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2020/jun/21/covid-19-hits-bame-youth-mental-health-worse-than-white-peers-study> (Accessed September 1, 2022).
- Children's Commissioner Report. (2021) 'The big answer', available online at: [https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/occ\\_the\\_big\\_ask\\_the\\_big\\_answer\\_2021.pdf](https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/occ_the_big_ask_the_big_answer_2021.pdf) (Accessed September 21, 2022).
- CoPOWeR (2022) 'Policy brief and recommendations', available online at: <https://co-power.leeds.ac.uk/policy-brief-launch> (accessed July 11, 2023).
- Davis, J. and Marsh, N. (2022) 'The myth of the universal child', in Holmes, D. (ed.), *Safeguarding Young People: Risks, Rights, Resilience and Relationships*, London, Jessica Kingsley Publications, pp. 111–28.
- Deivanayagam, T. A., Lasoye, S., Smith, J. and Selvarajah, S. (2020) 'Policing is a threat to public health and human rights', *BMJ Global Health*, **6**(2), pp. 1–4.
- Donà, G. (2021) 'Race, immigration and health: The hostile environment and public health responses to Covid-19', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, **44**(5), pp. 906–18.
- Doyle, E. (2020) 'BAME families 'Subject to Structural Racism' amid COVID 19 response', available online at: <https://www.cypnow.co.uk/news/article/bame-families-subject-to-structural-racism-amid-covid-19-response> (accessed November 10, 2022).
- Driscoll, J., Hutchinson, A., Lorek, A., Kiss, K. and Kinnear, E. (2021) 'Hearing the voice of the child through the storm of the pandemic: The impact of Covid-19 measures on the detection of and response to child protection concerns', *International Journal of Children Rights*, **29**, pp. 400–25.
- Gidda, M. (2020) 'BAME people disproportionately targeted by coronavirus fines, liberty investigates, 27<sup>th</sup> May', available online at: <https://libertyinvestigates.org.uk> (accessed November 18, 2022).
- GOV, U.K. (2021) *The Government Response to Covid-19: Fixed Penalty Notices*, London, GOV.UK.
- Harris, S., Joseph-Salisbury, R., Williams, P. and White, L. (2021) *A Threat to Public Safety: Policing, Racism and the Covid-19 Pandemic*, London, Institute of Race Relations.

- Holt, L. and Murray, L. (2022) 'Children and Covid 19 in the UK', *Children's Geographies*, **20**(4), pp. 487–94.
- Hu, Y. (2020) 'Intersecting ethnic and native–migrant inequalities in the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in the UK', *Research in Social Stratification and Mobility*, **68**, p. 100528.
- Katikireddi, S. V., Lal, S., Carrol, E. D., Niedzwiedz, C. L., Khunti, K., Dundas, R., Diderichsen, F. and Barr, B. (2021) 'Unequal impact of the COVID-19 crisis on minority ethnic groups: A framework for understanding and addressing inequalities', *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health*, **75**(10), pp. 970–74.
- Koch, I., Williams, P. and Wroe, L. (2023) "'County lines": Racism, safeguarding and statecraft in Britain', *Race & Class*, **65**(3), pp. 3–26.
- Maddison, F. (2020) *A Lifeline for Our Children: Strengthening the Social Security System for Families with Children during This Pandemic*, York, Joseph Rowntree Foundation & Save the Children.
- Maglajlic, R. A. and Ioakimidis, V. (2022) 'The deliberately silenced and preferably unheard, Part Two—Discriminatory epistemic injustice and distributive injustice in social work', *British Journal of Social Work*, **52**(1), pp. 1–5.
- Millar, H., Walker, J. and Whittington, E. (2023) 'If you want to help us, you need to hear us', in Firmin, C. and Lloyd, J. (eds) *Contextual Safeguarding: The Next Chapter*, Bristol, Policy Press, pp. 105–120.
- Office for National Statistics (2020) 'Coronavirus (COVID-19) related deaths by ethnic group, England and Wales: 2 March 2020 to 10 April 2020', available online at: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/deaths/articles/coronavirusrelateddeathsbyethnicgroupenglandandwales/2march2020to10april2020> (Accessed October 8, 2022).
- Patton, M. (2002) *Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods*, 3rd edn, Thousand Oaks, CA, Sage.
- Platt, L. and Warwick, R. (2020) 'Are some ethnic groups more vulnerable to COVID-19 than others?', London, Institute for Fiscal Studies, available online at: <https://www.ifs.org.uk/inequality/chapter/are-some-ethnic-groups-more-vulnerable-to-covid-19-than-others/> (Accessed September 9, 2022).
- Public Health England (2020) *Beyond the Data: Understanding the Impact of COVID-19 on BAME Communities*, London, PHE.
- Rosenthal, D. M., Ucci, M., Heys, M., Hayward, A. and Lakhampaul, M. (2020) 'Impacts of COVID-19 on vulnerable children in temporary accommodation in the UK', *Lancet. Public Health*, **5**(5), pp. e241–e242.
- The Children's Society (2020) *The Good Childhood Report 2020*, London, The Children's Society.
- Turner, E. A., Harrell, S. P. and Bryant-Davis, T. (2022) 'Black love, activism, and community (BLAC): The BLAC model of healing and resilience', *Journal of Black Psychology*, **48**(3–4), pp. 547–68.
- Yosso, T. (2005) 'Whose culture has capital? A critical race theory discussion of Community cultural wealth', *Race Ethnicity and Education*, **8**(1), pp. 69–91.



© The Author(s) 2024. Published by Oxford University Press on behalf of The British Association of Social Workers.

This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>), which permits unrestricted reuse, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

British Journal of Social Work, 2024, 00, 1–16

<https://doi.org/10.1093/bjsw/bcae090>

Original article