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Pathways to Adult Education for Emerging Adults Surviving Poverty

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Abstract

This research seeks to investigate African American emerging adults living in under-resourced communities while pursuing education and career pathways. In this study, the researcher will employ the emerging adult theory.

Keywords: emerging adults, African American, poverty, pathways, education

Since the beginning of human existence, there has been a struggle to overcome the challenges of undue hardship that poverty continues to impose on under-served communities (Sanz et al., 2017). Indeed, poverty makes life difficult in a nation dealing with widespread discrimination and inequality (Noguera & Alicea, 2020). Also, lots of emerging adult students live in under-resourced communities where they must cope with high levels of stress, because of their family's economic situations (Ciuffetelli Parker, 2017). Additionally, there are underlying problems families are experiencing while confronting hurdles and hindrances of severe poverty in urban communities, and emerging adult learners are no exception. Moreover, pathways to education for emerging adults from under-served communities seem unreachable because of the poverty difficulties they must overcome to transition academically (Toussaint, 2021).

To this end, education is the crucial pathway that leads to financial stability and self-adequacy and is associated with continuous improvement (Gough, 2010). In addition, science and technology continue to develop know-how for civilization to produce economic wealth and industrial productivity, but the lack of access to technical and digital equipment such as computers, laptops, tablets, and Wi-Fi connection is a disadvantage to emerging adults from under-resourced communities in their pursuit of education. Gough (2010) suggests adult education is significant to the process of workforce development that enhances individual prosperity and economic competitiveness regionally. Also, many American young adult workers have low foundational skills that impede them from succeeding in the workplace (Mann, 2019). Many of these emerging adults are from under-resourced communities.

However, Hyland-Russell (2011) asserts it is more than poverty that impacts disadvantaged non-traditional adult learners. Accordingly, and thereof, relationships such as marital and family, the lack of economic improvement, and other non-materials hurdles limit the adult learners' support system. This reduces their chances of success and create a handicap on their support system and future progress. Similarly, African American low-income emerging adult learners understand the intricacies of the various hindrances that reduces their opportunity to enroll in educational programs. Hyland-Russell (2011) states those who fall into this category are from a working-class background - they are the educationally and socially marginalized; including immigrants and minority groups who experience all forms of systemic racial and economic disparities.

Therefore, this study will examine African American emerging adults between the ages of 18 to 25 living in under-resourced urban communities amid poverty while trying to pursue the pathways of education and career goals. The American Heritage Dictionary (2001) defines poverty as the conditions of being poor or living with limited resources. Indeed, poverty is the experience of living amid a low-quality state of insufficiency of material goods and services. From the perspective of public health, "poverty is multidimensional in its symptoms, multivariate in its causes, dynamic in its health. Concern about poverty, and its association with health is as old as public health itself" (Mowafi, 2005, p 260). Also, poverty is a lived reality that many people are experiencing globally. Therefore, emerging adult learners surviving poverty are dealing with challenges that originate from social, economic, and unfulfilled educational needs.

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