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**A Qualitative Exploration of the Impact of Mutual Aid on the COVID-19 (Coronavirus) Pandemic Response**

**Kalimah Ibrahiim**

*K Ibrahiim*<sup>1,2,3</sup>, *V Ogheneyerovwome Iki*<sup>2,1,3</sup>, *V Jackson*<sup>3,1,2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Health and Social Care Professions, Buckinghamshire New University, Buckinghamshire, UK

<sup>2</sup>Allied Health, University Hospital Southampton NHS Foundation Trust, Southampton, UK

<sup>3</sup>GIFTS Institute, Florida, USA

Contact: kalimah21@yahoo.com

**Background:**

During the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic, responses of mutual aid took place at both the national and community levels. A study was conducted in the United Kingdom to investigate how grassroots community action helps people during pandemics and other types of emergency circumstances to meet their immediate health, care and social needs. In addition, the necessity for community self-organization, its success, and any challenges that developed are also evaluated.

**Methods:**

An interpretative approach was utilised in order to gain an understanding of the points of view held by (N = 15) organisers, volunteers, and people who received support from mutual aid, who were a part of the first mutual aid group that was founded by a community in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. A purposive sampling technique was used with semi-structured interviews conducted virtually. The results of the interviews were transcribed verbatim and analyzed using thematic content analysis.

**Results:**

The results of the interviews yielded the following themes: 1) lack of trust in government during the COVID-19 pandemic, 2) people feeling forgotten by the national government and their local council, and 3) the need to support vulnerable populations and members of the community, including those who belong to marginalized groups. It has been demonstrated how grassroots community organizing may build community cohesiveness and attempts to reinforce local and national government activities, particularly in times of emergency, that can bring communities together to assist one another.

**Conclusions:**

This approach could be used to co-produce sustainable public health services in collaboration with communities and government, building trust and meeting population health needs by co-creating equitable services while also developing community cohesiveness.

**Key messages:**

- This study is innovative. The community identified their needs and developed a support system.
- Working with a local council to develop a sustainable community service to meet the population health needs of the community.