

**SOCIO-ECONOMIC DETERMINANTS OF STUDENTS DROPOUT RATE
DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC TIMES IN PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS
IN LOWER YATTA-SUB COUNTY, KITUI COUNTY, KENYA.**

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**A Research Project Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the requirements for the
Degree of Master of Education, in Educational Administration of South Eastern
Kenya University**

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DECLARATION

I understand that plagiarism is an offence and I therefore declare that this research project is my original work and has not been presented to any other institution for any other award.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this research work to my husband John Muoki and children Patience Kiluti and son Antony Mutua who have always supported, encouraged and inspired me. I also dedicate this work to my late father, Francis Musamu Kalundu and mother Telesiah Kiluti who made me know the value of education.

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ADEA	:	Association for the Development of Education in Africa
BPS	:	Board of Postgraduate Studies
CDF	:	County Development Fund
CDC	:	Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.
CFA	:	Confirmatory Factor Analysis
CHWs	:	Community Health Workers
COVID-19	:	Corona Virus Disease 2019
DCC	:	Deputy County Commissioner
EdTech	:	Educational Technology
EES	:	Ehsaas Education Stipends
EFA	:	Exploratory Factor Analysis
FDSE	:	Free Day Secondary Education
FGDs	:	Focused Group Discussions
IDIs	:	In-depth Interviews
KNA	:	Kenya News Agency
MENA	:	Middle East and North Africa
NEMIS	:	National Education Management Information System
PEAS	:	Promoting Education in African Schools
SDG	:	Sustainable Development Goal
SRH	:	Sexual and Reproductive Health
UNESCO	:	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	:	United Nations Children Education Fund

DEFINITIONS OF TERMS

COVID-19 protocols:	This refers to all the measures set by the ministry of education to prevent the spread of COVID-19 at schools and other public places.
Determinant:	This refers to a factor that defines the nature of something or conditions an outcome.
Household income:	This refers to the income or earnings by breadwinners during the COVID-19 times.
Parental level of education:	This refers to the achievement in terms of education by the parents based on the level they have completed such as primary secondary, college, or university.
Peer pressure:	This refers to the negative influence among friends that make them do something to feel accepted and valued by friends.
Predispose:	Make someone liable or inclined to a specified attitude, action, or condition.
Public secondary school:	This refers to a schools that is built and maintained using public funds mainly obtained from the government, parents and the community. The school can either be boarding or day school or both.
Socio-economic:	This refers to both public and financial factors.

Students dropout:

This refers to individual students who are registered for specific academic programmes but are unable to successfully complete the programme owing to some challenges.

ABSTRACT

To contain the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic schools in Kenya just as in many other countries worldwide, educational institutions had to close temporarily. This study sought to examine the socio-economic determinants of students' dropout rate during COVID-19 pandemic times in public secondary schools in Lower Yatta-Sub County, Kitui County, Kenya. The study examined the influence of COVID-19 protocols, household income, peer pressure and parental level of education on students' dropout rate over the period of COVID-19 pandemic. The study adopted an ex post facto survey research design. The target population for the study constituted 28 principals and 247 teachers in public secondary schools in Lower Yatta Sub-county. Census was used to pick all the 25 principals as sample. A sample of 153 teachers was used in the study. Proportionate technique was used to determine the number of teachers to be included in the study in each school. Fish bowl sampling method was used to identify the specific teachers to be interviewed in each school. Both Qualitative as well as quantitative data were collected from the respondents' using questionnaires. Piloting was done in three schools within the sub-county in order to ascertain the face validity of research instruments while content validity was done through expert judgement by university supervisors. A test re-test technique was used to assess the reliability of the research instruments. Pearson's product moment correlation was employed to compute the correlation coefficient. Data was analyzed with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26 and involved descriptive statistical procedures for quantitative data and content analysis for qualitative data where data was transcribed into themes and reported in narratives. The analyzed data was presented using frequency distribution Tables, tabulation Tables, percentages. The findings of the study will be significant to education sector and stakeholders; principals, teachers, parents and students in the overall awareness and response measures for unforeseen pandemics and calamities such as COVID-19. The results and findings of the research were; The Pearson's Product Correlation Co-efficient for teachers and principals indicated a positive relationship with $r(150) = 0.640$, $p < 0.05$ and $r(25) = 0.624$, $p < 0.05$ respectively between COVID-19 protocols and students' dropout rate, there is a strong positive relationship $r(25) = 0.678$, $p < 0.05$ between household income and student's dropout rate and there is a strong positive relationship $r(25) = 0.721$, $p < 0.05$ between parental level of education and student's dropout rate.

CHAPTER ONE

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

Dropping out of school is defined as a long-term process of disengagement from school without completion to a formal qualification awarded which happens at all levels of education. As per rigorous reviews across the world, including Asia, students ascribe their decision to drop out of school to many diverse reasons (Moscoviz and Evans, 2022). A research in Asia by Khan & Ahmed (2021) concluded that school dropout rates was a significant concern globally as the phenomena greatly influenced both individuals, families and society at large.

Globally, all governments commit to ensuring that equitable quality education is offered to all children as expected in the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) number four on education where education is key to the realization of the 2030 agenda for global sustainable development. A study by Blaskoz (2022) indicated that pandemic school closures led to learning losses and widened pre-existing socio-economic gaps across many European countries. Additionally, education is recognized as a necessity and a fundamental human right (UNICEF, 2021). Report released in the United States by National Center for Education Statistics (2023) linked the rising absenteeism and disengagement to higher dropout risk, a direct challenge to ensuring the right to complete basic education. Research showed the world could face a substantial setback in achieving the goal if appropriate policy responses were not prepared (Azevedo et al., 2021).

The onset of COVID-19 caused several social and economic disruption across the globe. Khari et al. (2021) found that globally, COVID-19 pandemic led to an education emergency of unprecedented global scale with widespread lockdown, affecting more than 1.5 billion children and youth. The pandemic caught most of the world's education systems unprepared. In Asia, over 760 million children had their education disrupted by school closures (UNICEF, 2021). A case study in China by UNICEF (2020) indicated that over 600,000 kindergartens and schools, affecting 241 million children were closed abruptly.

UNESCO (2020) reveals that school closures sent about 90 percent of all students out of school, among them more than 800 million girls. At the end of April 2020, schools across 186 countries across the world had been closed. This affected about 74 percent of the total enrolled students across the world (Di Pietro et al., 2020). Research highlights that globally, at the peak of the crisis, 90 per cent of learners globally faced educational disruptions (Azevedo et al., 2021). As of October, 2020 Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) had infected more than 35 million people globally, with more than 1 million deaths (Alwan et al., 2020). The International Labor Organization (ILO) pointed that 2.7 billion workers (81 percent) globally were impacted by COVID-19, with 1.25 billion workers (38 percent) globally facing a severe impact or unemployment (Stylianou, 2021). To mitigate learning losses, international bodies such as UNESCO, UNICEF, and the World Bank developed joint policy frameworks emphasizing continuity of learning, equitable access to digital technologies, psychosocial support, and targeted interventions for marginalized learners. These policies highlighted that socio- economic vulnerabilities exacerbated the risk of student dropout during prolonged school closures.

In Sub-Saharan Africa, the COVID-19 pandemic intensified pre-existing educational challenges, such as high poverty levels, limited access to digital learning technologies, and weak education infrastructure. According to the African Union (AU) and the Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA), prolonged school closures in 2020 and 2021 put over 250 million learners at risk of learning loss and permanent dropout (ADEA, 2021). The pandemic magnified socio-economic inequalities across the region, particularly affecting rural households, girls, and children from low-income families. The African Union COVID-19 Response Fund was created to enable Africa CDC raise resources to strengthen the continental response to COVID-19 by mitigating the pandemic's socioeconomic and humanitarian impact on African populations. Evidence from regional studies shows that socio-economic pressures increased the risk of student dropout during the pandemic (UNICEF, 2021). Countries such as Uganda, Tanzania, and Malawi recorded significant increases in adolescent pregnancies and child marriages during school closures, leading to higher female dropout rates (Gondwe et al., 2025). Similarly, in Kenya's neighboring countries like Ethiopia and South Sudan, many students were forced into

income-generating activities to support their families, further limiting school re-enrollment after reopening (UNICEF South Sudan, 2021).

Kitui County is a predominantly rural, semi-arid county where households rely heavily on rain-fed agriculture and casual labor. Pre-existing vulnerabilities in the county: high poverty levels, food insecurity, and limited access to income-generating opportunities were amplified by the COVID-19 shock. National emergency responses (the Basic Education COVID-19 Emergency Response Plan and Ministry of Education re-entry guidelines) provided a framework for continuity and reintegration (MoE, 2020). The digital divide, household income shocks, increased adolescent pregnancies and limited county-level social protection likely amplified dropout risk among public secondary school students in Lower Yatta. Studies reveal that 6 percent of girls and 8 percent of boys (10–19 years) in Kenya did not re-enroll when schools opened in January, 2021. This is attributed to lack of funds for school fees, pregnancy and opting to work instead (Presidential Policy and Strategy Unit Kenya and Population Council, 2021). Donnelly & Patrinos (2022) pointed out the need for strong understanding of how COVID-19 school closures were impacting on student learning progress in order to equip educators, policy-makers, and researchers going forward.

Various countries applied risk mitigation measures (COVID-19 Protocols) at unprecedented level globally to curb the spread of COVID-19. Upon confirmation of the first COVID-19 global case in China on January 12, 2020, and with the absence of cure or a vaccine, controlling the infection from spreading, various risk control measures were put in place to prevent widespread of the virus (De Bruin et al., 2020). They included travel restrictions, isolation of travelers, school closures, strict quarantine and isolation measures and contact tracing. De Bruin further highlights the importance of citizen awareness, social trust in authorities and well-coordinated risk mitigation communication. The research concludes that COVID-19 demonstrates the weaknesses of the world health systems as the world was insufficiently prepared for the pandemic and that scientific warnings were not picked up quickly enough.

A study was conducted on the potential effect of COVID-19-related school closures on schooling and learning outcomes across the globe (Azevedo et al., 2021). Using data on 174 countries, the research observes that Close to 11 million students (12-17 years) from primary up to secondary education across the globe could drop out due to the income shock of the pandemic alone. Further, it observes that exclusion and inequality was at risk of being exacerbated upon the marginalized and vulnerable groups due to adverse effects by school closures. The study recommends that governments should also implement appropriate actions to accelerate learning by building more equitable Table and resilient post-COVID education systems that enable children to learn continuously both in schools and at home. The current study identified whether there was sufficient infrastructure to facilitate learning from home in public secondary schools in lower Yatta-Sub-county during COVID-19 period.

An empirical research by Sengai et al. (2022) explored the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic in rural schools in Lesotho. The study targeted teachers at rural schools. Participants for the study were 10 rural-based teachers. Data was gathered using semi-structured online interviews. Some of the challenges faced by rural learners as identified by teachers included disturbance of schooling, the increase in school drop-outs, hunger, learners engaging in bad behavior, limited access to the internet, child abuse, poverty, early marriage, and unwanted pregnancy as well as the lack of enough knowledge about Covid-19 that led to their risking infection. Participants further revealed that the parents faced the burden of feeding their children, a responsibility normally shouldered by schools since most rural schools received supplementary food handouts from the government and donor agencies to feed their learners as confirmed by (Pitikoe et al., 2021). Lesotho in comparison to other developing countries has a very poor economy and schools are less developed in terms of modern standards because of their over- reliance on the traditional face-to-face mode of learning (Makiba, 2020). The current study was able to identify whether similar challenges faced by rural learners in Lesotho during COVID- 19 pandemic period were evident in Lower Yatta Sub-county and the innovations adopted to mitigate the effects of the pandemic.

Angode & Ressa (2021) in their Case Study on the impact of COVID-19 Pandemic on students with special needs in Kakamega County, Kenya observed that COVID-19 protocols like social distancing and restrictive movements altered traditional educational practices. The study revealed that in addition to school dropout after lockdown, COVID-19 significantly affected the education of students with special needs. Further findings indicate that the pandemic affected the rate of income parents, forcing the students to work to support their families; this resulted in deficient performance in schools and school dropouts, significantly affecting their education. In reference to the above findings, this study helped us understand how COVID-19 Protocols affected students drop out in lower Yatta Sub-county.

Peer pressure refers to either direct or indirect influence on members of social groups who share similar social status, experiences, and interests (Costello & Hope, 2016). According to Kambona (2025) negative or positive influences of peer groups cause peers to involve themselves with drug, crime, and violence. The COVID -19 pandemic affected almost all students, causing devastating social and economic impacts among vulnerable students (Parsitau & Jepkemei, 2021; Wenham et al., 2020). Lohiniva & Isomottonen (2021) explored students' perceptions of their study motivation during COVID-19 pandemic in USA. Data for the study was collected using semi-structured Interviews (SSI). Eleven adult learners aged 21-50 participated in the study, seven participated in classes in person and four remotely. The respondents indicated that peers had a great impact on study motivation. The study found out that peer pressure had a great impact on students' motivation. These could only be accessed through onsite classes. COVID-19 pandemic encouraged online classes hence the pandemic negatively influenced the students' study motivation. The current study examined whether online classes contributed to school dropout in public secondary schools in Lower Yatta-Sub- county as evident from the above study.

Rwigema (2021) examined the impact of COVID-19 pandemic lockdown on education in Rwanda. The study adopted survey design and data was collected using self-prepared questionnaires. The study's target population was 150 respondents who included educators, students, parents and policy makers from the three districts of Kigali City. 110 respondents

were used in the study. Collected data was analyzed using factorial analysis using SPSS. The study revealed that school closures were likely to increase the rate of crime, since prolonged school closures results to idleness eventually leading to negative peer influences and youth involvement in crimes. Further, the study indicated that working parents had no option but to leave their children alone when schools closed exposing them to risky behaviors such as increased influence of peer pressure and substance abuse. From the above study, it was evident that many educators and students relied on technology to ensure continued e-learning during the Coronavirus pandemic despite limitations on limited digital skills hence the current study determined whether cases of students drop out in Lower Yatta Sub-county were directly linked to peer pressure arising from school closures.

Study by Oulo et al. (2021) examined the experiences of 382 vulnerable adolescent girls in Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda and Tanzania who were enrolled in schools prior to the COVID-19 closures. The study's target population was 382 adolescent girls from the four countries. Sample for the study was composed of 274 participants aged between 13-19 years. Findings were that social barriers such as coerced or forced marriages and negative peer pressure caused girls to drop out of school. Further, the study revealed that peers heavily rely on each other for connections for emotional support and social development. This research was gender sensitive since it targeted adolescent girls in four countries while the current study targeted selected respondents regardless of their gender.

The parent's educational level has also been identified as a key factor that causes school dropout (Kambona W., 2025). Evidence indicates that children who have more educated parents received more schooling than their counterparts whose parents were poorly educated (Hahn and Barnett, 2023). Well educated parents could easily guide their children in home- schooling assignments during the COVID-19 period since most of them had television, the internet, and electronic gadgets (Rehman et al., 2020). This made the children of such parents adopt to online learning with ease compared to their counter-parts. Agostinelli et al. (2022) investigated the effects of school closures during the Covid-19 pandemic on children's education in the United States. The research gathered and analyzed pre-pandemic data from multiple sources. The study found out that well educated parents

could easily work from home hence substituting the role of teachers compared to their counterparts who were working in the informal sector. This in turn indicated that learners without proper guidance from home during the lockdown period and especially from uneducated parents were unlikely to return to school hence increasing drop outs when schools re-opened. During normal school closure, the learners did not require much parental guidance for their home assignments compared to COVID-19 period where parents played the main role of instructors to children.

Researchers Sarker et al. (2019) explored the factors associated with school dropout in Bangladesh and found that Parental education had a significant effect on children's enrollment in school. The study observed that educated parents are more conscious about the education of their children than illiterate parents. Furthermore, illiterate parents have less interest and less engagement to education-related activities, as a result, their children are more vulnerable to drop out than literate parent's children. This study occurred before the onset of COVID-19 pandemic hence the current study used the findings of the research to identify whether parents' education literacy significantly impacted on dropout rates during COVID-19 period among students in public secondary schools in Lower Yatta-sub county.

Research by Damani et al. (2022) addressed the use of educational technology (EdTech) in girls' education at PEAS (Promoting Education in African Schools) schools in rural Uganda during the COVID-19-related school closures. The research found out that students with highly educated parents are 1.32 times more likely to find academic messages helpful than students with less well-educated parents. The study further highlighted that parents with less formal education, and therefore weaker English language skills, dismiss the educational SMS messages as spam. The study concluded that formally educated parents may be better able/more likely to facilitate their children's engagement with technology. For instance, individual phone calls from teachers to students and caregivers supported students with low confidence and at risk of dropping out. The study recommends on need for caregivers' involvement through provision of sessions about how to help children to study if students are to benefit from technology-mediated distance education hence the current

study determined the intervention measures adopted to curb the drop-out rate in Public secondary schools in Lower Yatta Sub- county.

Mabeya (2020) investigated the Primary and Secondary School Parents Experiences during COVID-19 Crisis in Homa- Bay, Kenya. The study incorporated qualitative and quantitative techniques using mixed method research methodology. Data was gathered from 29 parents with children at primary, secondary and tertiary level. The results of the study are in agreement with Daniel (2020) that the COVID-19 pandemic in Kenya caused significant challenge on the quality of education across the counties where learners from low-income households and urban slums are most affected. Further finding revealed most of the parents were unable to offer required instructional and assessment support to their learners to enable them continue with education hence likely to increase drop out cases when schools re-opened. The current study determined whether such challenges of parents' difficulty in offering educational instructions to their children at home during COVID-19 lockdown period contributed to the drop-out rate of students in public secondary schools in Lower Yatta Sub-county.

Household income refers to a measure of the combined incomes of all individuals who share a specific household or residence place. It comprises all forms of income such as wages, salaries, retirement benefits, government transfer, and investment gains (Benin and Randriamamonjy, 2008). Research by Breaux et al. (2022) investigated how COVID-19 resulted in lower grades for male high school students and students with attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) in the United States. Evidence from the study indicated that male students, adolescents and young adults with ADHD were more likely to drop out of high school and not attend or finish college relative to female students, and students without ADHD. This was attributed to socio-economic backgrounds that were greatly affected by the COVID-19 Pandemic. The study suggested the need for more research on greater range of diversity among students with regard to race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status. The current research will help understand how socio-economic factors influenced students drop out in the current study locale.

Similarly, Asanov et al. (2021) & Becker et al. (2020) agree that low income families struggled more with the shift from in person to remote learning, with students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds being less likely to engage in remote learning over the pandemic period. Datzberger & Parkes (2021) on their study in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) observed that COVID-19 pandemic was likely to result to increased drop out among children due to family inequities that affected children and their families. Similarly, Datzberger et al. (2023) in Uganda observed that COVID-19 lockdown was related to the loss of family income. Ndung'u & Mutegi (2021) in their study on the effects of Corona Virus pandemic on University students in Uasin-Gishu County, Kenya revealed that students from lower income households were likely to drop out of the Universities due to financial challenges. Further, the research highlighted that the closures were likely to increase rate of students drop outs due to lack of resources to continue the studies. The current study determined how family income impacted on dropout rates among students in public secondary schools in Lower Yatta Sub-county.

An economic survey released by KNBS (2021) indicated that 233,300 secondary school learners did not resume learning when institutions re-opened after closure due to COVID-19 pandemic. This translated to 5.7 per cent decrease in number of students in secondary schools from 3.5 million in March 2020 to 3.3 Million in March 2021 in the entire Country. Since COVID-19 pandemic hit the country in March 2019, Kitui County recorded 3,207 teen pregnancies of ages 10-19 years as at August 2020 (Kenya News Agency, 2020). Data from Ministry of Education Lower Yatta Sub-county indicated that a total of 87 girls and 48 boys dropped out of school 2019-2022. The current study investigated how household income, peer pressure, parental level of education and COVID-19 protocols hiked school dropout rates in many schools in Kenya despite government effort to put in place policies to ensure minimal interruption to learning process. This study focused on pre-disposing determinants of students' dropout rate during the COVID-19 in Lower Yatta Sub-county, Kitui County Kenya.

Table 1.1: Data on students drop out in Lower Yatta Sub-county 2019-2022

Year	Girls	Boys
2019/2020	55	29
2020-2021	26	15
2021-2022	6	4
Total	87	48

Source: Sub-county Director of Education office (2024)

1.2 Statement of the problem

The onset of COVID-19 in Kenya led to school closures in order to curb spread of the virus. Research indicates that dropout rates over the period ranged dramatically, from under 1 percent to more than 35 percent, with much higher rates for older students, suggesting that pandemic school closures together with other pandemic-related shocks may have curtailed many adolescents' schooling careers (Moscoviz et al., 2022). During the COVID 19 pandemic, the school dropout rate in Kenya was estimated at 21percent (UNICEF, 2020).

Data from Lower Yatta Sub-County Director of Education Office (2024) showed that a total of 135 students dropped out of public secondary schools in the sub-county during COVID-19 times (2020-2021). In 2020, 55 girls and 29 boys, in 2021, 26 girls and 15 boys and in 2022, 6 girls and 4 boys dropped out of school as indicated in Table 1.1. below. Data from the Sub- county (2024) indicated that over 26 teenage girls got pregnant by end of 2020 most of whom eventually dropped out when schools re-opened. The high dropout rates which hiked in 2020 which was the peak period of COVID-19 raises a lot of concern over high rates despite government measures such as COVID-19 Policy Response Guidelines, FDSE, CDF bursaries and County pro-poor bursaries. This persistence high dropout rates, particularly in 2020, suggests that the existing interventions may have been inadequate or misaligned with the students' needs. Furthermore, the absence of specific research, and the need for a detailed research to understand and address the socio-economic determinants of student dropout rates in Lower Yatta Sub-County justifies the need for this study.

1.3 Objectives of the study

1.3.1 General Objective

The general objective of the study was to examine the socio-economic determinants of students' dropout rate during COVID-19 pandemic times in public secondary schools in Lower Yatta- Sub County, Kitui County, Kenya.

1.3.2 Specific objectives

This study was guided by the following specific objectives:

- i. To assess the influence of COVID-19 protocols on students' dropout rate during COVID-19 pandemic times in public secondary schools in Lower Yatta-Sub County, Kitui County.
- ii. To examine the influence of household income on students' dropout rate during COVID-19 pandemic times in public secondary schools in Lower Yatta-Sub County, Kitui County.
- iii. To determine the influence of peer pressure on students' dropout rate during COVID- 19 pandemic times in public secondary schools in Lower Yatta-Sub County, Kitui County.
- iv. To establish the influence of parental level of education on students' dropout rate during COVID-19 pandemic times in public secondary schools in Lower Yatta-Sub County, Kitui County.

1.4 Research Questions

This study was guided by the following research questions:

- i. To what extent did COVID-19 protocols influence students' dropout rate during COVID-19 pandemic times in public secondary schools in Lower Yatta-Sub County, Kitui County?
- ii. What was the influence of household income on students' dropout rate during COVID- 19 pandemic times in public secondary schools in Lower Yatta-Sub County, Kitui County?
- iii. How did peer pressure influence students' dropout rate during COVID-19 pandemic times in public secondary schools in Lower Yatta-Sub County, Kitui County?

- iv. What was the influence of parental level of education on students' dropout rate during COVID-19 pandemic times in public secondary schools in Lower Yatta-Sub County, Kitui County?

1.5 Significance of the study

The findings of the study will guide education sector and stakeholders; principals, teachers, parents and students in the overall awareness and response measures for unforeseen pandemics and calamities such as COVID-19 to enable learning to continue smoothly post the COVID-19 pandemic. Policymakers in the Ministry of Education might find the results significant as they will inform policy formulation with regard to minimizing the rising cases of school dropout in secondary schools across the country. Future researchers might also find the findings of this study significant as it will offer a point of reference for their study with regard to pandemics. Besides, the fact that this study provided suggestions for future study; hence, will inform their future studies. Additionally, findings of the study have contributed to the body of knowledge and theory about the causes of school drop outs in secondary schools in times of pandemics and calamities.

1.6 Limitations of the study

Limitations of the study are matters or occurrences that arise in a study that are beyond the researchers' control (Simon & Marylin, 2011). The ex post facto research design used by the study limits the researchers control over the variables. Data collection was limited to principals' and teachers' tight schedules as they had to work extra hard to recover the time lost during School closures during COVID -19 Pandemic. However, the respondents were given adequate time to respond to the questionnaires. The research instruments used gathered secondary data hence gathered limited information with regard to the variable under study since the students who dropped out of school were not accessible to give firsthand information. Another limitation was that learners who dropped out of school during COVID-19 period were not reachable to give more reliable information on drop out. However, this was overcome by listening to opinion of teachers of the respective learners.

1.7 Delimitations of the Study

The proposed study was delimited to COVID-19 protocols, household income, positive peer pressure, and parental level of education as the possible factors responsible for increased students drop out rate during COVID-19 pandemic times. Second, the proposed study was delimited to the public secondary schools in Lower Yatta Sub- County in Kitui County. Further the study was delimited to responses of principals and teachers only.

1.8 Assumptions of the Study

The study assumed that public secondary schools have records on students drop out during COVID-19 pandemic period. It also assumed that principals, and teachers in secondary schools in the Lower Yatta Sub-County were aware of the students' dropout. The study also assumed that students' dropout rate in public secondary schools in the sub-county was high. Finally, the study assumed that the participants were honest in their responses.

1.9 Organization of the Study

The study is organized into six (6) chapters. Chapter one consists of background to the study, statement of the problem, objectives of the study, general objective of the study, specific objectives of the study, research questions, significance of the study, limitations of the study, delimitations of the study, assumptions of the study, definition of significant terms, and organization of the study. Chapter two consists of literature review was based on sub themes derived from study objectives, summary of literature review, theoretical framework and conceptual framework. Chapter three dealt with the research methodology. It commenced with an introduction followed by research design, target population, Sampling techniques and sample size, research instruments, validity of research Instruments, reliability of research instruments, data collection procedures, data analysis techniques, and ethical considerations. Chapter four dealt with data analysis and presentation of research results based on the four objectives. Chapter five focused on discussion and interpretation of research findings. Chapter six provided conclusion, recommendations and suggestions for further research.

CHAPTER TWO

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter consists of review of literature organized into sub themes in line with the research objectives as follows; COVID-19 protocols, household income, peer pressure, and parental level of education as predisposing determinants of students drop out rate during COVID-19 pandemic times. Besides, the chapter presents theoretical framework and conceptual framework.

2.2 Concept of Socio-economic determinants

Social and economic determinants are societal forces that influence an individual's or community's worth of life, chances, and overall well-being. Individual well-being is influenced by a number of economic and social factors among them income, education, social relationships and employment (Livingstone et. al., 2022). According to Likhar et al. (2022) social determinants influence the long-term developmental and health consequences of individuals. Socioeconomic status (SES) refers to the social standing of an individual or family within a society determined by income, educational level, and occupational attainment (Abo Hamza et al., 2024).

2.3 Meaning of the concept drop -out

Dropout, in the context of education, refers to the phenomenon in which students leave school before completing their studies. Dropping out of school is viewed as the final outcome of a long process of disengagement and disinterest from schooling (Fenizia et al., 2025). When students drop out of school, the smooth process of learning is not only interrupted at personal, family and school level but also at the national level. The student dropout rate is a critical issue affecting educational systems worldwide, with significant implications for individual students, educational institutions, and society (Hassan et al., 2024). Effective learning is seen where learners transition rate from one level to another is high hence smooth learning. Estimated 24 million learners, from pre-primary to university level, were reported to be at risk of not returning to school following the

education disruption due to COVID-19 (UNESCO, 2020). Further the report by UNESCO indicated that the largest share of learners at risk of not returning to school were in South and West Asia (5.9 million) and sub-Saharan Africa (5.3 million). In 2008, the Government of Kenya introduced Free Secondary Education Policy that aimed to enhance the transition rate of learners.

2.4 COVID-19 Protocols and Students' Dropout Rate

COVID-19 protocols refer to the different mitigating strategies provided by relevant authorities to combat the spread of COVID-19 (Azene et al., 2020). Part of the measures included wearing face masks, washing hands, maintaining physical distance, cough etiquette, and avoiding crowded places (Amgain et al., 2020). In order to ensure adherence to these protocols most governments opted to close educational institutions. Globally, there were 42,549,383 cumulative cases of COVID-19 by October (Worldometers, 2020). Of these, a cumulative total of 1,150,163 (2.7percent) patients had died of the disease while 31,456,279 cases had recovered from the disease. In March 2020, schools in 22 countries on 3 continents, Africa, Asia, and Europe were closed (UNESCO, 2020). The closure implied that over 290 million students had no access to education in the physical classroom environment (UNESCO, 2020). East Africa governments in line with WHO guidelines and the global practice put in place various restrictions to contain the spread COVID-19 within their boundaries. These included; country- wide partial lockdowns and curfews restricting movement of individuals, a ban on public gatherings, closure of all learning institutions, hotels, restaurants, and places of worship and suspension of international passenger flights (Kansiime et al., 2021). Study reveals that COVID-19 exacerbated primary and secondary student drop-out rates (Wodon, 2020). Goldberg (2021) observes that students across the globe may have suffered throughout the COVID-19 pandemic and so was their learning. While most of the above literature acknowledge that COVID-19 exacerbated school dropouts and disrupted learning, few have explored the intersection between socio-economic determinants such as poverty, household income, child labor, gender disparities, parental support and the enforcement of COVID-19 protocols in shaping students' ability to remain in school.

To avoid person to person transmission behavioral measures such as social distancing, quarantining and wearing facemasks were taken. Studies in the realm of post-disaster contexts reveal that the psychological impact of the disruption of everyday activity due to disasters, as observed in developing and developed countries, had serious repercussions on educational learning achievements (Fauci et al., 2020; Shakil et al., 2020). Covid-19 protocols inevitably impacted on drop-out of students locally, regionally and globally.

A study in the United Kingdom by Cage & McManemy (2022) on Burnt Out and Dropping Out comparing the Experiences of Autistic and Non-Autistic Students during the COVID-19 Pandemic, showed that both Autistic and Non-autistic students felt COVID-specific fears and worries, with the pandemic itself, its associated restrictions, regulations, and the risks of catching or spreading the virus to others. In the study 70 autistic as well as 315 non-autistic students were required to fill a mixed methods questionnaire with standardized measures of burnout (personal and academic), coping styles (adaptive and maladaptive), stress, mental health (depression, and anxiety). The study adopted cross-sectional mixed methods exploratory survey. Quantitative data was then analysed by use of SPSS version 27. Both groups indicated aspects of feeling socially isolated, missed their friends and family, and felt they were unable to connect with other students on their courses. Additionally, both groups indicated that online university is harder, overwhelming and un-motivating. Many participants felt the emergency shift to online teaching had made their courses much more difficult and stressful. Whereas Cage & McManemy's (2022) study examined the psychological and academic experiences of autistic and non-autistic students during COVID-19, little is known about the perspectives of teachers and principals on the socio-economic determinants that influenced student dropout in public secondary schools, particularly in contexts such as Lower Yatta Sub-County, Kenya.

An empirical study done in Pakistan by Shuja et al. (2022) investigated the factors affecting Students' Dropout Rate during COVID-19. The information meant for this study was collected from 20 public and private schools of two divisions, including seven districts of the province of Punjab, Pakistan, using interviews. The target group and respondents were policymakers, parents of dropouts, teachers, and students. The study observed that

lockdown measures were put in place to curb the spread of the pandemic. The lockdown caused financial pressures on poor parents who could no longer go to work. Additionally, the slogan “stay home stay safe” aggravated the fear of the parents to send their children to schools. The study concluded that The study concluded that financial conditions and lockdown effects were the major factors for students drop out. Study reveals that estimated dropout rate in rural Pakistan drastically increased in urban areas from 10percent to 25percent during 2020 (Abbasi, 2021). This forced the Pakistan government to launch a specific Ehsaas Education Stipends (EES) program for primary, secondary, and higher education” to address the school dropout crisis in Pakistan where an estimated 21.7 million children aged 5 to 16 were out of school (Jamal, 2021). Whereas Shuja et al. (2022) focused on financial pressures and lockdown effects as drivers of student dropout in Pakistan, this study focused on the socio-economic determinants of dropout in public secondary schools within rural Kenyan contexts, where structural and cultural factors may uniquely shape students’ retention during COVID-19.

Wodon (2020) investigated the impact of COVID-19 Crisis on Catholic Schools in Sub-Saharan Africa. The study focused on developing countries, and especially on sub-Saharan Africa. A short survey was implemented with the International Office of Catholic Education to inform a series of conference calls with representatives of national Catholic education associations. 171 responses were received from 31 countries. The study observed that conditions of stress were exacerbated by the crisis especially the social distance aspect. Schools were expected to observe COVID-19 protocols during and after re-opening despite the strain in finances and other resources. For instance, low-cost private schools were likely to suffer the most from the loss in tuition revenues while public schools were likely to strain from cuts in national education budgets. The study concluded that the likely hike in cost of schooling was likely to exacerbate drop out cases. Whereas this study examined the financial and operational challenges of Catholic schools in Sub-Saharan Africa during COVID-19, there remains limited empirical evidence on the socio-economic determinants of student dropout in public secondary schools, particularly in rural contexts such as Lower Yatta Sub-County, Kenya.

Zulaika et al. (2022) did a study on the impact of COVID-19 lockdowns on adolescent pregnancy as well as school dropout amidst secondary school girls in Kenya. The research was carried out in 12 secondary day schools in the rural western parts of Kenya (2018-2021). Causal-comparative design was used to compare Sexual as well as Reproductive Health (SRH) versus schooling outcomes among 403 girls who graduated after finalizing school examinations in November 2019, pre-pandemic with 507 girls whose schooling was disrupted by COVID-19 and sat for their examinations in March 2021. The study found that Girls experiencing the COVID-19 containment measures had twice the risk of falling pregnant before completing secondary school. The study used causal-comparative design while this study used ex post facto research design to establish the relationship that existed between COVID-19 protocols and the high dropout cases in Lower Yatta Sub-county. This study examined the impact of COVID-19 lockdowns on adolescent pregnancy and school dropout among girls in rural western Kenya using a causal-comparative design whereas the current study explored the broader socio-economic determinants of student dropout during COVID-19 in other Kenyan contexts such as Lower Yatta Sub-County using an ex post facto design.

2.5 Household Income and Students' Dropout Rate

Kundu et al. (2022) in their study investigated the COVID-19 challenges and employees' stress; mediating role of work-life imbalance as well as family-life disturbances in India. Primary data was gathered by online means. The research instruments used were online questionnaires. A total of 5,000 questionnaires were shared online with the respondents. 1,556 respondents gathered from 45 countries across all the continents were included in the research. Statistical techniques such as confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), exploratory factor analysis (EFA, multiple regression), correlations and bootstrapping were employed to do data analysis. The study portrayed income shortfall caused by COVID-19 as among the cause of drop out. The findings were family-life disturbance and work-life imbalance mediated the relationship between COVID-19 challenges and employees' stress individually as well as serially. The study examined the mediating effects of family-life disturbances and work-life imbalance on employee stress across multiple countries, however, little is known about how such socio- economic disruptions, particularly income

shortfalls, influenced student dropout rates in public secondary schools within rural contexts such as Lower Yatta Sub-County, Kenya during the COVID-19 pandemic.

An investigation by Hassan et al. (2024) leveraged data from the 2022 National Education Accessibility Survey (NEAS) to predict student dropout rates using supervised machine learning techniques in Somaliland. The study used machine learning algorithms to identify significant predictors and explore variations across different demographic and socioeconomic groups. Results indicated that Lower levels of household income were linked to higher rates of students leaving school before completing their education. Whereas the study employed predictive machine learning models to identify potential socio-economic determinants of student dropout in Somaliland, little is known about the actual, lived impacts of these determinants on dropout rates during the COVID-19 pandemic in real-world contexts such as public secondary schools in Lower Yatta Sub-County, Kenya. This gap will be addressed by the current study.

Nuwematsiko et al. (2022) investigated unintended socio-economic and health consequences of COVID-19 among slum dwellers in Kampala, Uganda. Mixed methods cross-sectional design was used in the study. 425 respondents were selected randomly the face-to-face interviews using systematic sampling. Data was collected using face-to-face interviews, focused group discussions (FGDs) and photo voice. The respondents included household heads of slum dwellers aged 18 years and purposively selected Community Health Workers (CHWs) and community members. Findings were that some of the children ended up being exposed to child labour either to provide extra income to the family consequentially increasing school dropout. The study explored the unintended socio-economic and health consequences of COVID-19 among slum dwellers in Uganda from the perspective of household heads, whereas the current study explored how the socio-economic factors influenced student dropout during the pandemic as perceived by school principals and teachers in public secondary schools in Kenya.

Maina (2021) investigated the Influence of household income level on secondary school dropout in Kenya. Descriptive research design was used to collect data from respondents.

The study adopted questionnaires as the research instruments. The respondents for the study were 300 students' dropout from Murang'a East Sub-County. Findings were that the level of household income influence secondary school dropout. The study established the influence of household income on secondary school dropout in Murang'a East Sub-County using dropouts as respondents, whereas the current research will help understand the broader socio-economic determinants of dropout during COVID-19 from the perspectives of principals and teachers in Lower Yatta Sub-County.

2.6 Peer Pressure and Students' Dropout Rate

Adolescents, unlike any other age group, rely heavily on friendships and social contacts, and peer interactions in the development of their identity, personality, and perspective taking (Brechwald & Prinstein, 2011). Di Sano et al. (2023) in their research analyzed the longitudinal changes in adolescents' social emotional skills, resilience, and behavioral problems. Three European Countries were involved in the study. A total of 512 questionnaires were administered to adolescents and parents from the three countries. The research found out that adolescents who experienced pre-pandemic vulnerabilities, namely lower socio-economic status, lower family support, and lower social emotional skills, experienced more significant mental health problems due to a reduction in the family income, problems with connectivity for online schooling, family conflicts, and neglect by family or peers arising from limited or no physical social interaction. This in return caused considerable learning and academic loss. Similarly, Sharma et al. (2021) conducted research sponsored by UNICEF in Italy covering 130,000 children and adolescents across 22 countries addressing adolescents' well-being during the COVID-19 outbreak. The research observed that despite disruptions of peer relationships and social confinement caused by the pandemic, there were positive outcomes such as decreased exposure to some risks at school, such as peer bullying, since children became more protected with the imposed restrictions and online classes. Whereas Di Sano et al. (2023) and Sharma et al. (2021) examined adolescents' social-emotional well-being and resilience during COVID-19 in European contexts, the current study focused on how socio-economic determinants directly influenced secondary school dropout rates during the pandemic in rural African settings such as Lower Yatta Sub-County, Kenya.

Aruna, (2022) investigated the rise in Teenage Pregnancy and Covid-19 Lockdown in Southern Senatorial District of Ondo State, Nigeria. The research instruments used to gather data was an in-depth Interviews (IDIs). 30 respondents who had experienced unwanted pregnancies were used to gather data using purposive sampling technique. The study attributed the rapid increase in adolescent pregnancies during the lockdown period to peer pressure. This was as result of the critical stage of life of teenagers who felt lonely and bored during the lockdown while experiencing bodily changes hence finding it favorable to engage in experimental sexual activities. Similarly, Ndlovu et al. (2021) notes that Peer Pressure was a contributory factor to increased cases of teenage pregnancy during COVID-19 period. The above research by Aruna (2022) and Ndlovu et al. (2021) have linked peer pressure to increased teenage pregnancies during the COVID-19 lockdown, whereas the current study examined how broader socio- economic determinants contributed to secondary school dropout during the same period, particularly in rural Kenyan contexts like Lower Yatta Sub-County.

Omollo, & Yambo, (2017) did a study on the influence of peer pressure on secondary school students dropping out in Rongo Sub-County, Migori County, Kenya. The study involved forms 3 and 4 students. Descriptive design which involved qualitative strategies for data collection was employed. 755 students, teachers, and head teachers were targeted for the study. A sample of 235 respondents was identified as follows, 200 students, 20 principals, and 15 class teachers. Data collection was done using questionnaires and interview schedules as the main research instruments. The data was analysed using frequencies and percentages presented in Tables and discussed. A cross-sectional research design was used and the findings revealed that peer pressure influenced student dropout at 43.75percent. The findings were similar to research by Tonkei, (2008) in which the study identified peer pressure among the factors responsible for girls' dropout. Omollo and Yambo (2017) found peer pressure to be a major cause of student dropout in Rongo Sub-County. This current study went further to address how pandemic- specific socio-economic disruptions, such as those experienced during COVID-19, influence dropout rates in contexts like Lower Yatta Sub-County.

2.7 Parental Level of Education and Students' Dropout Rate

Conto et al. (2020) points out that educational offer creates contents that instruct parents and caregivers on the use and appropriation of remote education tools for preschool and elementary school children and thus guarantee the continuity of their studies at a distance. Shahidul, & Karim, (2015) notes that parental education is the most consistent determinant of student's education. A higher parental (household head) level of education is associated with increased access to education, higher attendance rates, and lower dropout rates (Ainsworth et al., 2015). Several reasons are put forward for the link between parental education and retention in school. Some researchers indicate that non-educated parents cannot provide support or often do not appreciate the benefits of schooling (Juneja, 2001; Pryor & Ampiah, 2003).

Tsolou & Babalis (2020) did a study on the Contribution of Family Factors to Dropping out of School in Greece. Data was collected by use of student questionnaire among one thousand five hundred twenty-eight (1528) students (799 boys and 729 girls) in various schools in Greece. Qualitative research data was collected by interviewing thirty-three (33). Findings from the study indicated that lack of parental professional encouragement, parental school help, parental support in low school performance and parental encouragement contributed towards Secondary School dropping out. The study revealed that those at risk of dropping out were children from socially disadvantaged family environments and students that belong in socially vulnerable groups, such as children with special needs, children coming from families of different ethnicities and races, of refugees and Roma. The study concluded that good living conditions and family support as among the factors responsible for successful completion of school. The study focused on family-related factors influencing school dropout in Greece, whereas the current study addressed how socio-economic determinants shaped dropout rates within the unique disruptions of the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly in the context of public secondary schools in rural Kenya.

Kizito (2021) carried out qualitative phenomenological study to investigate the effects of School closures in COVID-19 era among various stakeholders in Uganda Martyrs

University. The study targeted Uganda Martyrs University students (postgraduates and undergraduates), administrators, teachers/lecturers and community members (parents and non-parents). The sample size for the study was eight lecturers, eight students, four administrators, and four community members. Research instruments used were interview protocol guides that were digitally recorded. The study revealed that parents were unprepared for distance and home schooling thus when schools closed, parents with limited education had challenges of facilitating the learning of their children at home. The study examined the effects of COVID- 19 school closures among university stakeholders in Uganda, whereas the current study addressed how socio-economic factors contributed to secondary school dropout during the pandemic in public schools in Kenya, particularly in Lower Yatta Sub-County.

Mutua (2014) did a study on Household factors influencing students' dropout in public secondary schools in Kitui Central District, Kenya. The study targeted 31 public secondary schools in Kitui Central District. Principals, class teachers and form four students were the targeted population. Parental level of education was noted to be among the factors responsible for students drop out. A similar study by Muthaa et al. (2012) on Dropout among Male Pupils in Primary Schools of Igembe District, Kenya, involving head teachers and guidance and counselling teachers as the key respondents had similar findings. From the findings 66.7 percent of head teachers reported that low level of parental education was responsible for drop out. Similarly, an empirical research by Tonkei (2008) investigating factors that contribute to drop out among girls in public primary schools in Olokurto division of Narok District, 58.7 pupils reported that parental level of education and ignorance among the parents contributed to drop out among girls. While the above studies in Kenya have highlighted parental education as a key factor in student dropout, they did not address how multiple socio-economic determinants influenced dropout rates in public secondary schools within Lower Yatta Sub-County during the COVID-19 pandemic. This gap was however addressed by the current study.

2.8 Summary of Literature Review

From the reviewed literature, it is evident that COVID-19 significantly influenced students

drop out. Study findings by Shakil et al. (2020); Cage and McManemy (2022); Shuja et al. (2022) and Wodon (2020) were in agreement that COVID 19 protocols including school closures, social distancing, self- isolation increased cases of students' drop out. Study by Zulaika et al. (2022) laid focus on girls and concluded that girls experiencing COVID-19 containment measures had twice the risk of falling pregnant before completing secondary school.

Studies by Kundu et al. (2022) and Maina (2021) found out that financial strain arising from COVID-19 impact made it difficult for most parents to sustain their children in school leading to increased drop out. Nuwematsiko et al. (2022) concluded that COVID-19 exposed some children to forced labor eventually exposing them to COVID-19, sexual violence, early pregnancies, undesirable behaviors and increase school dropout.

Di Sano et al. (2023) concluded that adolescents who experienced pre-pandemic vulnerabilities experienced significant mental health problems arising from neglect by family and peers. Research by Khari et al. (2021) observed that despite disruptions of peer relationships and social confinement caused by the pandemic, there were positive outcomes such as decreased exposure to some risks at school, such as peer bullying, since children became more protected with the imposed restrictions and online classes. Study findings by Aruna (2022) concluded that Peer Pressure was a contributory factor to increased cases of teenage pregnancy during COVID-19 times. Omollo, & Yambo, (2017) and Tonkei (2008) agreed that peer pressure is among the factors responsible for girls' dropout.

Tsolou & Babalis (2020); and Kizito (2021) in other parts of world and Mutua (2014) in Kenya agree that parental level of education is closely related to student's retention in schools. These researches are in agreement to a conclusion by Shahidul & Karim (2015) that parental education is the most consistent determinant of student's education. The study was done to fill a research gap on predisposing determinants of students' dropout rate during COVID-19 pandemic times in public secondary schools in Lower Yatta-Sub County, Kitui County, Kenya.

2.9 Theoretical Framework

The study was guided by Classical Liberal Theory of Equal Opportunities advocated by Sherman and Wood cited by Njeru and Orodho, (2003) who advances the perspective of the need for equal opportunities in education for every learner. The theory advocates for fairness, freedom, and equality among individuals by creating systems that allow everyone a fair chance to succeed, especially in areas like education. Classical Liberal Theory is based on the “call for freedom of speech and thought” (Gaus, 2003). The theory provides learners with the best opportunity to use their own knowledge to excel by ensuring that education systems and structures are structured in ways that removes social, economic, political, and geographic and gender gaps likely to prevent learners taking full gain of innate talents.

According to the theory the ultimate goal of a human being should be the pursuit of happiness through the self-development resulting in a well-lived existence. The core belief of Classical Liberals includes new ideas. The theory advocates for government that protects individual rights and provide services that cannot be provided in a free market including building and maintaining public institutions as well as building and upkeep communications service. The theory insinuates that education systems and structures ought to be undecided from institution-based dynamics which inhibit students from gaining from their innate talents. The theory promotes equality in education and education systems hence promoting equality among marginalized and vulnerable students. Classical Liberal Theory helps individuals prosper and achieve their full potential as they realize the importance of community and social responsibility by providing even platform through freedom of speech and expression. However, the theory has flaws in that it may isolate individuals from social and community participation since in a Liberal society, there are no shared traditions such as values and religious beliefs. The theory may shield and divide people by rights leaving them isolated in a society with no form of community presence. Critiques argue that the theory has no history as people do not share traditions because they only represent themselves. Despite the flaws Classical Liberal theory fits best in this study.

Classical Liberal Theory is quite appropriate for this study as it provides a strong foundation for understanding how socioeconomic inequalities (low income, parental

education, digital divide, labor pressures) denied many learners in Lower Yatta Sub-County equal opportunities during COVID-19, leading to higher dropout rates. It highlights the need for governments and education systems to address structural inequalities so that vulnerable students are not left behind during future crises. COVID-19 pandemic challenges affected more the poor, marginalized and vulnerable parents and guardians, consequently the effect trickled down to their children. Most governments imposed preventive measures meant to tackle the transmission of the virus including unexpected prolonged closures of schools posing a lot of challenges to marginalized and vulnerable learners. Learners of un-educated parents hardly got proper guidance in school-home assignments unlike their counterparts whose parents were educated and could even afford private teachers for their children hence denial of equal access to education. Additionally, unequal provision of education through the digital platform outside learning institutions discriminates the learners from unprivileged families in their quest for basic education. The situation was worsened by the digital divide; as the fortunate learners were being taught through radio, Television, YouTube, among other digital gadgets, the less fortunate were busy labouring to put make ends meet hence not having equal opportunity to education. This is aligned to Njeru & Orodho (2003) views that uneven involvement in education finally complicates the status of the underprivileged and the susceptible learners.

2.10 Conceptual Framework

The researcher conceptualizes the dependent and independent variables as shown in Figure 2.1.

Independent Variables

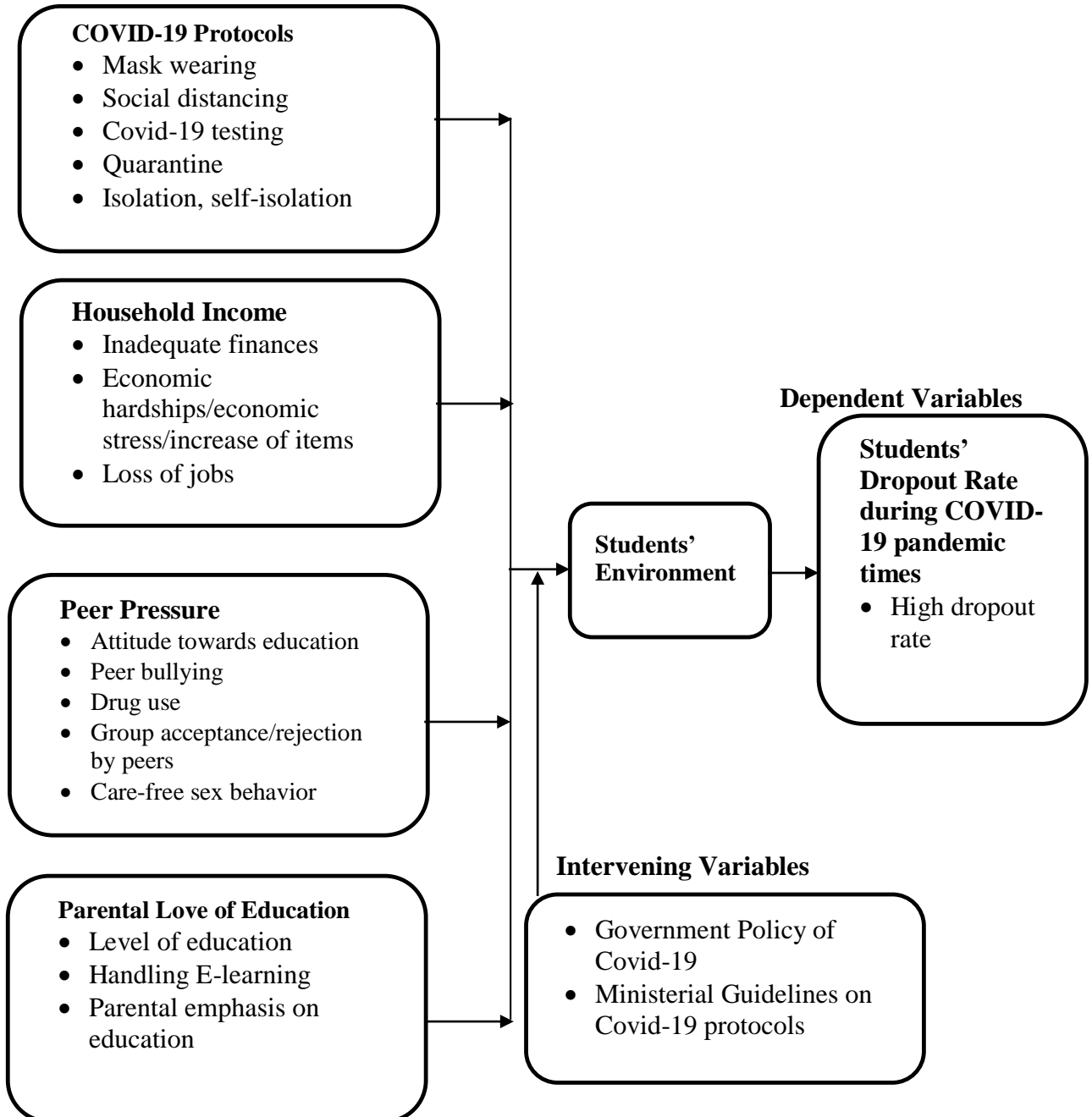


Figure 2.1. Conceptual /Framework for the study

The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic which led to government putting in place measures to curb spread of the virus witnessed great changes in learning of students. For instance,

the sudden closure of educational institutions in which neither the parents nor the students were prepared for made it difficult for students to adjust to home environment, some ended up succumbing to the effects of peer pressure from their age mates and peers at home. Girls got married, boys engaged in drug and substance abuse while others in attempt to provide for their families ended up in child labour activities. Uneducated parents had difficulties in guiding their children in home assignments while others lacked gadgets such as radios, televisions, smartphones and internet to access online learning and assignments. Some parents lost their jobs while others closed their businesses due to the pressure of the pandemic. This affected the income of the parents and increased the dependency rate. Ultimately most households found it difficult to afford not only education but also basic needs for their children. The home environment of the students during school closures in this study forms the media/channel in which the likelihood of students drop-out or failure to return to school occurred. The intervening variables which included government policies with regard to COVID-19 and ministerial guidelines put in place determined the effectiveness and smooth transition of school –home learning as well as learners’ ability to adjust to home environment.

CHAPTER THREE

3.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the methodology used in the study. It includes; research design, target population, sample size and sampling technique, research instruments, validity of research instruments, data collection procedures, data analysis techniques, and ethical considerations.

3.2 Research Design

A research design is an overall plan, structure, or framework a researcher uses to guide a study (Tisdell et al., 2025). The study used ex post facto survey research design. This research design enables the researcher to predict a possible effect that has already occurred by observing the dependent variable or variables (Medley, 1965) Thus, this approach was suitable for this study since the researcher collected data on an event that had already occurred. COVID19 times are already past and that students have already reported back to schools hence the study seeks to establish the pre-disposing determinants of students' dropout rate during COVID-19 pandemic times in public secondary schools in Lower Yatta-Sub County, Kitui County, Kenya.

3.3 Target Population

Target population refers to the whole group of individuals, events or objects taken from general population having similar observable features (Kombo & Tromp, 2006). This study targeted public secondary schools in Lower Yatta Sub County. Statistics from Lower Yatta Sub-County Director of Education Office (2023) indicates there are 28 public secondary schools in the sub- county. Thus, the study's targeted population constituted 28 public secondary schools which had 28 principals, 247 teachers in public secondary schools in Lower yatta Sub-county.

3.4 Sampling Techniques and Sample Size

Sampling involves a systematic procedure for selecting and including individuals from

diverse cultural, ethnic, linguistic, or socioeconomic backgrounds (Patton, 2023). Lower Yatta Sub-county has 28 public secondary schools. Mugenda (2013) state that if the sample is less than 30, a census survey is applied. Therefore 28 Schools was involved. Census was used to pick all the 25 principals as sample.

The sample size for determining the number of teachers to be included in the study was Yamane (1967) formula at a 95 percent confidence level and $p = .05$. Using this equation, we obtained the sample for the study:

Equation 3.1: Yamane (1967) Formula

$$n = \frac{N}{1+N(e)^2} = \frac{247}{1+247(.05)^2} = 153 \text{ teachers}$$

Where:

n = the sample size,

N= is the population size,

E= the level of precision.

To calculate the sample size, the researcher is required to know the population size, either exact or estimated. The population size of teachers in public secondary schools in Lower Yatta Sub- county is 247.

The study utilized proportionate technique to determine the number of teachers to be included in the study in each school. According to Alvi, (2016) proportionate to size ensures that each subgroup is represented in the sample in proportion to its size.

Table 3.1: Sample size for the teachers

Sample size per school proportionate to the number of teachers in the school		
School	Number of teachers	Sample size
1. St. Pauls Kwa Vonza	14	9
2. Kwa Kilui	6	4
3. A.I.C Masimba	9	6
4. Kawongo	14	9
5. Iiani	5	3
6. Mwakini Mixed	4	2
7. Ilika	8	5
8. St. Bridgit Syomunyu	15	9
9. Matu	7	4
10. Kiseuni	8	5
11. St. Francis of Assisi Mandongoi	6	4
12. Hon. C. Nyamai - Muvitha	17	9
13. Muselele Mixed	6	4
14. Masaani	8	5
15. Kanyongonyo	7	4
16. St. Lukes Yatta	15	9
17. Kalulini	5	3
18. Kathome	7	4
19. Tanganyika	6	4
20. Nyanyaa	11	7
21. St. James Matulani	7	4
22. Nzambia	6	4
23. Lower Yatta Girls	13	8
24. St. Augustine Kanyangi	9	6
25. Mamole	9	6
26. Kavumbuni	8	5
27. Kyaithani	6	4
28. Kanyangi Girls	11	7
Total	247	153

To identify the specific teachers to be interviewed in each school fish bowl sampling method was used to obtain a sample of 153 teachers. Small uniform pieces of paper were written names of all teachers in the school, folded and mixed in a bowl. A research assistant picked the sample proportionate to size randomly and the names of teachers picked constituted the sample to size for that specific school.

3.5 Research Instruments

The data was collected by the use of a questionnaires. The choice of questionnaire was informed by Taherdoost (2021) who agreed that use of questionnaires have great advantages which includes but not limited to: the ability to Collect large amount of data from a large sample size; time saver, are cost-effective, are highly structured and have the possibility of gaining high accurate data. Moreover, questionnaires have the possibility of being carried out by other people instead of the researcher regardless of affecting the reliability and validity term, and the possibility of group administrations. Two sets of questionnaires were used namely, the principal's questionnaire and the teacher's questionnaire. The research instruments used collected primary data from the principals, teachers and secondary data from class registers and National Education Management Information System (NEMIS). The questionnaires were divided into five sections. Section A gathered biographic data about the respondents. Section B collected information regarding COVID-19 protocols, section C gathered information on household income, section D on peer pressure and section E on parental level of education.

3.6 Validity of Research Instruments

Validity refers to accurately a methodology measures a variable that it intends to measure (Amed and Ishtiaq, 2021). According to Bell et al. (2010) piloting research, instruments is necessary because it is a way of finalizing them and enables the validity of the instruments to be determined. This study used questionnaires whose validity was tested by expert judgement from opinions of experts. The content experts are professionals who have published or worked in the field and offers concrete suggestions for improving the measure (Davis, 1992). In order to establish the content validity of the questionnaires, a team of supervisors from South Eastern Kenya University was given the questionnaires to evaluate their relevance in accordance to research objectives. The supervisors and the researcher held discussion in order to correct any inconsistencies identified and improve on the research instruments. Piloting was done in three (3) schools that were excluded from the study sample. Connelly (2008) suggests that utmost 10percent of the entire study target is ideal for piloting. Therefore, pilot testing was conducted in 3 (10percent of 28=2.8) schools hence were excluded in the main study. Piloting ensured content validity of the research

instruments whereby any inconsistencies identified were rectified.

3.7 Reliability of Research Instruments

Reliability is the extent to which an experiment, test, or any measuring procedure yields the same result on repeated trials (Kennedy, 2022). A reliable instrument gives the same results when administered on repeated trials. The researcher used test re-test technique to determine the reliability of research instruments. The developed research instruments were administered to principals and teachers were not included in the research study. Tests were repeated at intervals of two weeks. The scores between the two tests were used to calculate the correlation coefficient using Pearson's product moment formulae. A reliability coefficient was determined from the results of the pilot study where the value of r should lie between -1 and +1; the closer the value was to +1 the stronger the relationship. This study established a correlation of 0.81 hence it was deemed reliable.

The formulae used is given below;

$$r = \frac{n(\sum xy) - (\sum x)(\sum y)}{\sqrt{[n \sum x^2 - (\sum x)^2][n \sum y^2 - (\sum y)^2]}}$$

Where;

r = Pearson correlation Coefficient n= number of total items

$\sum xy$ = sum of products of the paired stocks

$\sum x$ = sum of the x scores

$\sum y$ = sum of the y scores

$\sum x^2$ = sum of the squared x scores

$\sum y^2$ = sum of the squared y scores

3.8 Data Collection procedures

The data collection process started after obtaining an introduction letter from the Board of Postgraduate Studies (BPS), South Eastern Kenya University, and a research permit from the National Commission of Science, Technology, and Innovation (NACOSTI). Then the research permit enabled the researcher to proceed with data collection. Copies of the

research permit were presented to Lower Yatta Deputy County Commissioner (DCC) then to Lower Yatta Sub-County Director of Education Office in order to obtain the necessary authority to proceed with the study. A letter of introduction was shared to the principals of the sampled schools. The researcher visited the respective public secondary schools via the principals' and explained the aim of the study. The researcher went ahead and administered the questionnaires in person to the teachers and principals.

3.9 Data Analysis Techniques

Data analysis is the application of statistical techniques to the collected data (Bua & Adzongo, 2014). In order to ascertain the accuracy, completeness and uniformity of the information, the data obtained from the research study was analyzed by cross checking the questionnaires. Content analysis was done to thematically analyze qualitative data gathered from open ended questionnaires and then reported using narratives. Quantitative data was processed through editing, coding and entered into a computer then analyzed by use of descriptive statistics with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26. The analyzed qualitative and quantitative data was presented using frequency distribution Tables, tabulation Tables and percentages.

3.10 Ethical Considerations

The study addressed both ethical and human challenges so as to effectively and successfully complete a research thesis as emphasized in Social Science research over the recent years. The researcher sought permission from the relevant authorities to avoid unsanctioned collection of data. An overview of the research was presented to the respondents. The participants were given the freedom to decide whether to participate in the research or not. The participants were not coerced to solicit information from them. To ensure anonymity, the respondents were assured of treatment of their identities with utmost confidentiality and privacy. Participants were not mandated to reveal their identity on the data collection tools in order to observe privacy and anonymity of the respondents.

CHAPTER FOUR

4.0 RESULTS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter consists of data analysis, interpretation and presentation of research findings. The purpose of this study was to examine the socioeconomic determinants of students' dropout rate during COVID-19 pandemic times in public secondary schools in Lower Yatta Sub-County, Kitui County, Kenya. The results presented in this chapter are based on findings from four research objectives: COVID -19 protocols, Household income, peer pressure and parental level of education.

4.2 Questionnaire Return Rate

According to Mugenda and Mugenda (2003), questionnaire return rate refers to the number of respondents who returned usable instruments for the study out of the total number contacted for study. The questionnaires for this study were administered to 25 principals 153 teachers. The data was analyzed on the basis of these questionnaires. The results of questionnaire return rate are as shown in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1: Questionnaires Return Rate

Respondents	Returned	Not Returned	Total
Principals	25(100percent)	0 (0percent)	25(100percent)
Teachers	150(98percent)	3(2percent)	150(100percent)

The questionnaires return rate as presented in Table 4.1 became possible because the researcher personally took the questionnaires to the sampled public secondary schools in Kitui County and a time frame of two weeks was given to the respondents to fill the questionnaires. Mugenda and Mugenda (2019) classify questionnaire return rates, suggesting that a rate of 50% is adequate, 60% is good and over 70% is excellent. The response rate for the principals was 100 percent while for the teachers the return rate was

98 percent. The response rate for this study was therefore excellent since it was over 70 percent. This would provide the required information for purposes of data analysis hence this could enhance sample representation and meaningful generalization.

4.3 Demographic Information for the Respondents

The respondents were requested in the questionnaires to indicate their demographic characteristics which included; gender, age, highest academic qualifications and their working experience.

4.3.1 Distribution of Respondents by Gender

The information on gender distribution helped the researcher to ascertain the real representation in the study in terms of the gender. The results on gender were shown in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2: Respondent’s Gender.

Teachers			Principals	
Gender	Frequency	percent	Frequency	percent
Male	76	50.7	13	52.0
Female	74	49.3	12	48.0
Total	150	100.0	25	100.0

The findings in Table 4.2 established that 50.7 percent of the teachers were male while 49.3 percent were female. On the other hand, majority, 52 percent of the principals were male while 48 percent were female. This revealed that in each category of respondents, males were more than females. This gender distribution shows a good representation in terms of gender as it followed a two thirds constitutional requirement of majority rule of either gender.

4.3.2 Distribution of Respondents by Age

The respondents were requested to indicate their age. The age characteristic is likely to

show the physical maturity rate of a principal and teachers and the results were presented in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3: Age of respondents

Teachers			Principals	
Age in Years	Frequency	percent	Frequency	Percent
Less than 30	49	32.7	2	8.0
31-40	58	38.7	3	12.0
41-50	40	26.6	7	28.0
More than 50	3	2.0	13	52.0
Total	150	100.0	25	100.0

Table 4.3 indicates that majority, constituting 52 percent of the principals were more than 50 years old. This was followed by those of the age bracket 41-50 constituting 28 percent. The principals aged 31-40 constituted 12 percent while those less than 30 years old were only 8 percent. These findings reveal that the highest percentage of the principals were mature enough to understand and response appropriately to the research questionnaires. Responses from teachers revealed that the highest percentage of 38.7 percent were aged 31-40 years. It also revealed that 32.7 percent of teachers were less 30 years old while 26.6 percent of the teachers were aged between 41-50. Only 2 percent of the teachers were more than 50 years old. Based on the above findings, most of the teachers were below 50 years of age hence able to understand and respond to questionnaires regarding students drop out during COVID-19 times bearing in mind most of the students are below 20 years of age hence the teachers understood the challenges better of these students better.

4.3.3 Distribution of Respondents by Academic Qualification

Academic qualification determines the professional development of a teacher. The principals as well teachers were expected to indicate their highest academic qualifications. The results were as presented in Table 4.4.

Table 4.4: Highest Academic Level

Teachers			Principals	
Academic level	Frequency	percent	Frequency	percent
Diploma	9	6.0	3	12.0
Post graduate Diploma	24	16.0	4	16.0
Bachelor Degree	106	70.7	14	56.0
Master Degree	11	7.3	4	16.0
PhD	0	0.0	0	0.0
Total	150	100.0	25	100.0

Table 4.4 indicates that majority of teachers, representing 70.7 percent had Bachelor's degrees as opposed to the other academic qualifications. This was followed by 16 percent with Post Graduate Diploma, 7.3 percent of the teachers had masters' degrees and 6 percent of the teachers had Diplomas. None of the teachers had a Ph.D. Similarly, 56 percent of the principals had Bachelor's degree. This was followed by 16 percent of the principals with Master's degree and similar percentage in Post Graduate Diploma. It was as well revealed that 12 percent of the principals had Diplomas with None holding a Ph.D. The above data revealed that both the principals as well teachers in the public secondary schools in Lower Yatta were professionally trained and qualified to teach secondary schools as per the TSC policy hence possessed the right knowledge to response to questionnaires appropriately.

4.3.4 Distribution of Respondents by Length of Stay in Current Station

The experience of teachers is a pointer to quality leadership and management including student's behavior. This experience is usually determined by the number of years worked. The respondents were requested to indicate the teaching experience in the current school. The results are presented in Table 4.5.

Table 4.5: Length of Stay in the Current Station

Teachers			Principals	
Experience in Years	Frequency	percent	Frequency	percent
Less than 1	18	12.0	2	8.0
1 – 5	31	20.7	12	48.0
6 - 10	65	43.3	8	32.0
More than10	36	24.0	3	12.0
Total	150	100.0	25	100.0

Table 4.5 reveals that Majority of teachers, constituting 43.3 percent had worked in the current station for 6-10 years. This was followed by 24 percent who more than 10 years. The teachers who had been in the current station for 1-5 years were 20.7 percent while those with less than 1year experience in their current work station were 12 percent. On the other hand, the distribution indicated that 48 percent of the principals had stayed in their current work station for 1 -5 years, 32 percent had stayed for 6-10 years, 12 percent for more than 10 years while 8 percent for less than 1 year. The above data indicates that a good percentage of the teachers and principals had over 5 years teaching experience in their current work stations hence sufficient experience to understand their work environment and teacher responsibilities.

4.4 COVID-19 Protocols and Students Drop Out Rate

The first objective of the study sought to establish the influence of COVID-19 protocols on students' dropout rate during COVID-19 pandemic times in public secondary schools in Lower Yatta Sub-County, Kitui County. The respondents were requested to indicate their opinion on the level of influence of COVID-19 protocols on students drop out rate on a 3 point Likert scale; influential, moderately influential and not influential. The responses were presented in Table 4.6. Additionally, both the teachers and principals were requested to indicate the extent to which they agreed with the statements in Table 4.7 and 4.8 respectively using 5 point Likert scale with; strongly agree (5), agree (4), undecided (3),

disagree (2) or strongly disagree (1). Since the statements were the same for both teachers and principals, the responses were merged. All the principals and teachers (100 percent) reported that at least 7 students dropped out of school during COVID-19 period.

Table 4.6: Level of COVID-19 protocols and students drop out from school.

Teachers			Principals	
Options	Frequency	percent	Frequency	percent
Influential	88	58.7	14	56.0
Moderately influential	49	32.7	10	40.0
Not- Influential	13	8.6	1	4.0
Total	150	100.0	25	100.0

The findings in Table 4.6 established that 58.7 percent of the teachers and 56 percent of the principals respectively indicated that COVID-19 protocols were influential to students drop out in the school. However, 32.7 percent of the teachers and 40 percent of the principals indicated that the COVID-19 protocols were moderately -influential. It was also noted that 8.6 percent of teachers and 4 percent of principals indicated that COVID-19 protocols were not influencing students drop out.

Responding to the question on how COVID-19 protocols influenced drop out in their school, one of the principals said, “the impromptu closure of schools affected learners psychologically”. Same sentiments were anchored by one of the teacher who said, “when schools closed impromptu, some students took advantage of that and never returned even when the schools reopened.” It was however noted that the government, principals and teachers had a role to play in minimizing students drop out during COVID-19 times.

Table 4.7: Teacher’s Opinion on COVID-19 protocols and students' dropout rate

Statement	5		4		3		2		1	
	F	percent	F	percent	F	percent	F	percent	F	percent
School closures exacerbated students dropping out in your school	72	48.0	35	23.3	20	13.3	13	8.7	8	5.3
Attitude, perceived norms, self-efficacy, and several beliefs made students fail to adhere to COVID-19 which led to most of them dropping out of school	75	50.0	55	36.7	5	3.3	15	10.0	5	3.3
COVID-19 Protocols hiked the cost of schooling increasing drop out cases.	65	43.3	43	28.7	10	6.7	20	13.3	12	8.0

Table 4.7 reveals that 48 percent of the teachers Strongly agreed while 23.3 percent agreed with the statement that School closures exacerbated students drop out in schools. Those who were neutral on the same were 13.3 percent, 8.7 percent of the teachers disagreed with the statement while 5.3 percent of the teachers strongly disagreed that School closures exacerbated students drop out in schools. Majority of the teachers agreed with the statement that, attitude, perceived norms, self-efficacy, and beliefs made students fail to adhere to COVID-19 which led to most of them dropping out of school as illustrated by 50 percent of the teachers who strongly agreed with the statement and 36.7 percent of the teachers who agreed with the statement. Nevertheless, 10 percent of the teachers disagreed with the statement while 3.3 percent of the teachers strongly disagreed with the statement whereas 3.3 percent were undecided on the belief that attitude, perceived norms, self-efficacy, and beliefs made students fail to adhere to COVID-19 which led to most of them dropping out of school. The statement that COVID-19 Protocols hiked the cost of schooling increasing drop out cases was supported by many teachers as illustrated by 43.3 percent of the teachers

who strongly agreed with the statement and 28.7 percent of the teachers who agreed with the statement. Nevertheless, 13.3 percent of the teachers disagreed with the statement and 8 percent strongly disagreed with the statement while 6.7 percent of the teachers were unsure of the statement that COVID-19 Protocols hiked the cost of schooling increasing drop out cases.

Table 4.8: Principal’s Opinion on COVID-19 Protocols and Students' Dropout Rate

Statement	5		4		3		2		1	
	F	percent	F	percent	F	percent	F	percent	F	percent
School closures exacerbated students dropping out in your school	13	52.0	7	28.0	1	4.0	2	8.0	2	8.0
Attitude, perceived norms, self-efficacy, and several beliefs made students fail to adhere to COVID-19 which led to most of them dropping out of school	16	64.0	4	16.0	1	4.0	3	12.0	1	4.0
COVID-19 Protocols hiked the cost of schooling increasing drop out cases.	9	36.0	6	24.0	2	8.0	4	16.0	4	16.0
The COVID-19 pandemic protocols affected the education and amplified school dropout in your school especially the social distance	14	56.0	5	20.0	2	8.0	3	12.0	1	4.0

Table 4.8 demonstrates that most principals believed that school closures exacerbated students drop out from schools as illustrated by 52 percent of the principals who strongly agreed with the statement and 28 percent of the principals who agreed with the statement. Nevertheless, 8 percent of the principals disagreed with the statement and only a small portion of 8 percent strongly disagreed whereas 4 percent were undecided on the believe

that school closures exacerbated students drop out from schools. Additionally, majority of the principals agreed with the statement that, attitude, perceived norms, self-efficacy, and several beliefs made students fail to adhere to COVID-19 which led to most of them dropping out of school as illustrated by 64 percent of the principals who strongly agreed with the statement and 16 percent of the principals who agreed with the statement. Nevertheless, 12 percent of the principals disagreed with the statement that attitude, perceived norms, self-efficacy, and several beliefs made students fail to adhere to COVID-19 which led to most of them dropping out of school, 4 percent of the principals strongly disagreed with the statement whereas 4 percent of the principals were undecided on the same. The statement that COVID-19 Protocols hiked the cost of schooling increasing drop out cases was supported by huge portion of principals as illustrated by 36 percent of the principals who strongly agreed with the statement and 24 percent of the principals who agreed with the statement. Nevertheless, 4 percent of the principals disagreed with the statement, 4 percent strongly disagreed with the statement while 8 percent of the principals were unsure of the statement that COVID-19 Protocols hiked the cost of schooling increasing drop out cases. This was followed by the principals who agreed with the statement that COVID-19 pandemic protocols affected the education and amplified school dropout school especially the aspect of social distance as illustrated by 56 percent of the principals who strongly agreed with the statement and 20 percent of the principals who agreed with the statement. Nevertheless, 12 percent of the principals disagreed with the statement and an additional 14 percent of the principals strongly disagreed with the statement whereas 8 of the principals' percent were unsure of the statement that COVID-19 pandemic protocols affected the education and amplified school dropout school especially the aspect of social distance.

Table 4.9: Correlation for Teacher’s Opinion on COVID-19 protocols and Students’ Dropout Rate

		COVID-19 protocols	Students’ Rate	Dropout
COVID-19 protocols	Pearson Correlation	1	.640 (**)	
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	
	N	150	150	
Student’s Dropout Rate	Pearson Correlation	.640(**)	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		
	N	150	150	

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The findings of the research as revealed in Table 4.9 indicated that there is a positive relationship $r(150) = 0.640$, $p < 0.05$ between COVID-19 protocols and student’s dropout rate. Pearson’s correlation analysis on principal’s responses were indicated in Table 4.10.

Table 4.10: Correlation for Principals Responses on COVID-19 protocols and students’ Dropout Rate

		COVID-19 protocols	Students’ Rate	Dropout
COVID-19 protocols	Pearson Correlation	1	.624(**)	
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	
	N	25	25	
Students’ dropout rate	Pearson Correlation	.624(**)	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		
	N	25	25	

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The findings of the research in Table 4.10 indicated that there is a moderate positive relationship $r(25) = 0.624$, $p < 0.05$ between COVID-19 protocols and student’s dropout rate.

4.5 Household Income and Student's Dropout Rate

The second objective for this study sought to establish the influence of household income on student's dropout rate in public secondary schools in Lower Yatta Sub- County, Kitui County. To achieve this objective, the respondents were first asked whether they thought household income influenced dropout of students in their schools in the times of COVID-19. The respondents were requested to indicate the extent to which they agreed with the statements in Table 4.11. and 4.12 using 5 point Likert scale with; strongly agree (5), agree (4), undecided (3), disagree (2) or strongly disagree (1). The results were presented in Table 4.11. and 4.12.

Table 4.11: Teacher's Opinion on Household Income and Student's Dropout Rate

Statement	5		4		3		2		1	
	F	percent	F	percent	F	percent	F	percent	F	percent
COVID-19 made most students drop out of school because their parents had low income such that they are unable to afford basic needs	68	45.3	42	28.0	6	4.0	20	13.3	14	9.4
COVID-19 made most students drop out of school to look for income-generating activities and raising income for the family	55	36.7	49	32.7	12	8.0	17	11.3	17	11.3
COVID-19 protocols caused many parents/caregivers lose their jobs and source of livelihood hence making it difficult to source income to sustain the education of their children	79	52.8	67	44.8	1	0.6	1	0.6	2	1.2

Table 4.11 reveals that a substantial number of teachers concurred that COVID-19 made most students drop out of institutions due to low income of their parents such that they were unable to afford basic needs as shown by 45.3 percent of the teachers who strongly agreed with the statement and 28 percent of the teachers who agreed with the statement. Nonetheless, 13.3 percent of the teachers strongly disagreed that COVID-19 made most

students drop out of school because their parents had low income, 9.4 percent of the teachers agreed with the statement while 4 percent of the teachers were undecided on the same. The statement that COVID-19 made most students drop out of school to look for income-generating activities and raising income for the family was supported by 36.7 percent of teachers who strongly agreed with the statement and 32.7 percent of teachers who agreed with the statement. Nevertheless, 11.3 percent of the teachers disagreed on the same, 11.3 percent of the teachers strongly disagreed with the statement while 8 percent were unsure. It was also revealed that most teachers concurred with the statement that the COVID-19 protocols caused many parents/caregivers lose their jobs and source of livelihood hence making it difficult to source income to sustain the education of their children as illustrated by 52.8 percent who strongly agreed with the statement and 44.8 percent of the teachers who agreed that COVID-19 protocols caused many parents/caregivers lose their jobs and source of livelihood.

Nevertheless, 0.6 percent of the teachers disagreed with the statement and another 1.2 percent strongly disagreed with the statement whereas only 0.6 percent of the teachers were undecided.

Table 4.12: Principals Opinion on Household Income and Student’s Dropout Rate

Statement	5		4		3		2		1	
	F	percent	F	percent	F	percent	F	percent	F	percent
COVID-19 caused income shortfall among households making most students drop out of school because their parents could not sustain their education	15	60.0	6	24.0	1	4.0	3	12.0	0	0.0
COVID-19 made most students drop out of school to look for income-generating activities and raising income for the family	12	48.0	6	24.0	2	8.0	3	12.0	2	8.0
COVID-19 caused many parents/caregivers lose their jobs and source of livelihood hence making it difficult to source income to sustain the education of their children	16	64.0	7	28.0	0	0.0	1	4.0	1	4.0

The data presented in Table 4.12 reveals that principals agreed on the statement that COVID- 19 caused income shortfall among households making most students drop out of school because their parents could not sustain their education as shown by 60 percent who strongly agreed and 24 percent who agreed. It was also noticed that, 12 percent of the principals disagreed with the statement and none of the principals strongly agreed with the statement while 4 percent of the principals were undecided on whether COVID-19 caused income shortfall among households making most students drop out of school. This was followed by the principals who concurred with the statement that COVID-19 made most students drop out of school to look for income- generating activities and raise income for the family as supported by 48 percent of principals who strongly agreed and 24 percent who agreed. Nevertheless, 12 percent of the principals disagreed with the statement with a small percentage of 8 strongly disagreeing that COVID-19 made most students drop out of school to look for income-generating activities and raise income for the family and 8 percent being unsure of the statement. The analysis also indicates that majority of the

principals agreed with the statement that the COVID-19 protocols caused many parents/caregivers lose their jobs and source of livelihood hence making it difficult to source income to sustain the education of their children as illustrated by 64 percent of the principals who strongly agreed with the statement and 28 percent of the principals who agreed that COVID-19 protocols caused many parents/caregivers lose their jobs and source of livelihood. Nevertheless, 4 percent of the principals disagreed with the statement, similarly, 4 percent of the principals strongly disagreed with the statement whereas none were undecided on the statement whether COVID-19 protocols caused many parents/caregivers lose their jobs and source of livelihood.

Table 4.13: Correlation for Teacher’s Opinion on Household Income and Students’ Dropout Rate

		COVID-19 protocols	Students’ Rate	Dropout Rate
COVID-19 protocols	Pearson Correlation	1	.771 (**)	
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	
	N	150	150	
Student’s Rate	Dropout Pearson Correlation	.771(**)	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		
	N	150	150	

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The findings of the study in Table 4.13 indicated that there is a positive relationship $r(150) = 0.771$, $p < 0.05$ between household income and student’s dropout rate. Pearson’s correlation analysis on principal’s responses were presented in Table 4.14.

Table 4.14: Correlation for Principals Responses on Household Income and students' Dropout Rate

		Household Income	Students' Dropout Rate
Household Income	Pearson Correlation	1	.678(**)
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	25	25
Students' dropout rate	Pearson Correlation	.678(**)	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	25	25

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The findings of the study in Table 4.14 indicated that there is a strong positive relationship $r(25) = 0.678$, $p < 0.05$ between household income and student's dropout rate.

4.6 Peer Pressure and Students' Dropout Rate During COVID-19

The third objective of this study sought to establish the influence of peer pressure on students' dropout rate during COVID-19 pandemic times. The respondents were requested to indicate the extent to which they agreed with the statements in Table 4.14. and 4.15 using 5 point Likert scale with; strongly agree (5), agree (4), undecided (3), disagree (2) or strongly disagree (1). The results were presented in Table 4.14. and 4.15

Table 4.15: Teacher’s Opinion on Peer pressure and Students Drop Out Rate

Statement	5		4		3		2		1	
	F	percent	F	percent	F	percent	F	percent	F	percent
Peer pressure during the COVID-19 pandemic caused dropping out of school by many students	97	64.6	24	16.0	6	4.0	10	6.7	10	6.7
Peer influence occasioned by lack of sex education, idleness, media influence during the COVID-19 times caused rapid increase in adolescent pregnancies resulting in the dropping out of girls’	77	51.3	31	20.7	12	8.0	15	10.0	15	10.0
The Social environment of students occasioned by restrictions during COVID-19 caused students to shift to online studies exposing them to bad company that lowered morale to study exacerbating drop out cases	79	52.7	42	28.0	4	2.7	15	10.0	10	6.7

Table 4.15 shows that majority of the teachers believed that peer pressure during the COVID- 19 pandemic caused dropping out of school by many students as illustrated by 64.6 percent who strongly agreed and 16 percent who agreed. Nevertheless, 6.7 percent of the teachers disagreed with the statement, similarly 6.7 strongly disagreed whereas 4 percent were undecided. On the other hand, the statement that the peer influence occasioned by lack of sex education, idleness, media influence during the COVID-19 times caused rapid increase in adolescent pregnancies resulting in the dropping out of girls was supported by most of the teachers as indicated by 51.3 percent who strongly agreed and 20.7 percent who agreed with the statement. However, 10 percent of the teachers disagreed with the statement. Similarly, 10 percent strongly disagreed whereas 8 percent were undecided. This was followed by the teachers who concurred with the statement that the social environment of students occasioned by restrictions during COVID-19 caused students to shift to online studies exposing them to bad company that lowered morale to study exacerbating drop out cases as shown by 52.7 percent who strongly agreed and 28 percent who agreed. Nonetheless, 10 percent of the teachers disagreed with the statement and 6.7 percent strongly agreed while 10 percent were undecided.

Table 4.16: Principal’s Opinion on Peer pressure and Students Drop Out Rate

Statement	5		4		3		2		1	
	F	percent	F	percent	F	percent	F	percent	F	percent
Peer pressure during the COVID-19 pandemic caused dropping out of school by many students	15	60.0	4	16.0	1	4.0	3	12.0	2	8.0
Peer influence occasioned by lack of sex education, idleness, media influence during the COVID-19 times caused rapid increase in adolescent pregnancies resulting in the dropping out of girls’	7	32.0	8	24.0	3	12.0	4	16.0	3	12.0
The Social environment of students occasioned by restrictions during COVID-19 caused students to shift to online studies exposing them to bad company that lowered morale to study exacerbating drop out cases	14	48.0	7	24.0	2	8.0	1	0.4	1	0.4

Table 4.16 demonstrates that majority of the principals believed that peer pressure during the COVID-19 pandemic caused dropping out of school by many students as illustrated by 60 percent of the principals who strongly agreed and 16 percent who agreed. Nevertheless, 12 percent of the principals disagreed with the statement and another 8 percent of the principals strongly disagreed whereas 4 percent of the principals were undecided on the believe that peer pressure during the COVID-19 pandemic caused dropping out of school by many students. Similarly, most of the principals concurred with the statement that peer influence occasioned by lack of sex education, idleness, media influence during the COVID-19 times caused rapid increase in adolescent pregnancies resulting in the dropping out of girls’ as indicated by 32 percent of the principals who strongly agreed with the statement and 24 percent of the principals who agreed with the statement. However, 16 percent of the principals disagreed with the statement while 12 percent of the principals strongly disagreed whereas 12 percent were undecided that peer influence occasioned by lack of sex education, idleness, media influence during the COVID-19 times caused rapid increase in adolescent pregnancies resulting in the dropping out of girls’. This was followed

by a large number of principals who concurred with the statement that the social environment of students occasioned by restrictions during COVID- 19 caused students to shift to online studies exposing them to bad company that lowered morale to study exacerbating drop out cases as shown by 48 percent of the principals who strongly agreed with the statement and 24 percent of the principals who agreed with the statement. Nonetheless, 4 percent of the principals disagreed with the statement, 4 percent of the principals strongly disagreed with the statement while 8 percent of the principals were unresolved on whether restrictions during COVID-19 caused students to shift to online studies exposing them to bad company that lowered morale to study exacerbating drop out cases.

Table 4.17: Correlation for Teacher’s opinion on Peer pressure and Student’s Dropout rate

		Peer pressure		Student’s dropout rate
Peer pressure	Pearson Correlation	1	.711(**)	
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	
	N	150	150	
Student’s dropout rate	Pearson Correlation	.711 (**)	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		
	N	150	150	

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The findings of the study in Table 4.17 indicated that there is a strong positive relationship $r(150) = 0.711, p < 0.05$ between peer pressure and student’s dropout rate in public secondary schools.

Table 4.18: Correlation for Principals Responses on Peer Pressure and Student's Dropout Rate

		Peer pressure	Student's rate	dropout
Peer pressure	Pearson Correlation	1	.601(**)	
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	
	N	25	25	
Student's dropout rate	Pearson Correlation	.601(**)	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		
	N	25	25	

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The findings of the study in Table 4.18 indicated that there is a strong positive relationship $r(25) = 0.601$, $p < 0.05$ between peer pressure and student's dropout rate.

4.7 Parental Level of Education and Student's Dropout Rate

The last objective of this study sought to establish the influence of parental level of education on students' dropout rate during COVID-19 pandemic times in public secondary schools in Lower Yatta-Sub County, Kitui County. The respondents were requested to indicate the extent to which they agreed with the statements in Table 4.19. and 4.20 using 5 point Likert scale with; strongly agree (5), agree (4), undecided (3), disagree (2) or strongly disagree (1). The results were presented in Table 4.18. and 4.19.

Table 4.19: Teacher’s Opinions on Parental level of Education and Student’s Dropout Rate

Statements	5		4		3		2		1	
	F	Percent	F	Percent	F	Percent	F	Percent	F	Percent
Most non-educated parents had difficulties in facilitating learning of their children from home during COVID -19	71	47.3	52	34.7	4	2.7	13	8.6	10	6.7
The education level of parents determined how well parents could guide their children academically during COVID-19 period consequently influencing the dropout of students	69	46.0	56	37.3	3	2.0	11	7.3	11	7.3
Parents with a low level of education hardly motivated their children to enhance their completion by engaging private teachers, or ensuring assignments for their children were done hence leading to some dropping out	81	54.0	47	31.3	8	5.3	7	4.7	7	4.7

The findings in Table 4.19 have established that a large number of teachers agreed that most non-educated parents had difficulties in facilitating learning of their children from home during COVID -19 as shown by 47.3 percent who strongly agreed and 34.7 percent who agreed. Nonetheless, 2.7 percent of the teachers disagreed and 6.7 percent strongly disagreed with the statement while 2.7 percent were unresolved. Similarly, most of the teachers agreed with the statement that the education level of parents determined how well parents could guide their children academically during COVID-19 period consequently influencing the dropout of students as indicated by 46 percent of the teachers who strongly agreed and 37.3 percent who agreed with the statement. However, 7.3 percent disagreed and 7.3 percent strongly disagreed whereas 2 percent were undecided. On the other hand, 54 percent and 31.3 percent of the teachers strongly agreed and agreed respectively that the parents with a low level of education hardly motivated their children to enhance their completion by engaging private teachers, or ensuring assignments for their children were

done hence leading to some dropping out. Nevertheless, 4.7 percent of the teachers disagreed and another 4.7 percent strongly disagreed with the statement whereas 5.3 were undecided.

Table 4.20: Principals’ Opinions on Parental level of Education and Student’s Dropout Rate

Statements	5		4		3		2		1	
	F	Percent	F	Percent	F	Percent	F	Percent	F	Percent
Most non-educated parents had difficulties in facilitating learning of their children from home during COVID -19	12	48.0	6	24.0	2	8.0	3	12.0	2	8.0
The education level of parents determined how well parents could guide their children academically during COVID-19 period consequently influencing the dropout of students	10	40.0	8	32.0	4	16.0	2	8.0	1	4.0
Parents with a low level of education hardly motivated their children to enhance their completion by engaging private teachers, or ensuring assignments for their children were done hence leading to some dropping out	13	52.0	7	28.0	1	4.0	2	8.0	2	8.0

The results presented in Table 4.20 reveals that majority of non-educated parents had difficulties in facilitating learning of their children from home during COVID -19 as exemplified by 48 percent of the principals who strongly agreed with the statement and 24 percent of the principals who agreed with the statement. Conversely, 12 percent of the principals disagreed with the statement, 8 strongly disagreed and only 8 percent were unsure that non-educated parents had difficulties in facilitating learning of their children from home during COVID -19. Comparably, most of the principals asserted that the

education level of parents determined how well parents could guide their children academically during COVID- 19 period consequently influencing the dropout of students as indicated by 40 percent of the principals who strongly agreed with the statement and 32 percent of the principals who agreed with the statement. On the other hand, 8 percent of the principals disagreed with the statement, 4 percent strongly disagreed with the statement and yet 16 percent were uncertain that education level of parents determined how well parents could guide their children academically during COVID-19 period. Similarly, a large number of principals were in conformity that the parents with a low level of education hardly motivated their children to enhance their completion by engaging private teachers, or ensuring assignments for their children were done hence leading to some dropping out as illustrated by 52 percent of the principals who strongly agreed with the statement and 28 percent of the principals who agreed with the statement. Contrarily, a small proportion of the principals, 8 percent strongly disagreed with the statement and 8 percent disagreed with the statement whereas 4 percent of the principals were undecided on whether parents with low level of education hardly motivated their children to enhance their completion.

Table 4.21: Correlation for Teacher’s Opinion on Parental Level of education and Student’s Dropout rate

		Parental level of education	Student’s dropout rate
Parental level of education	Pearson Correlation	1	.65411(**)
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	150	150
Student’s dropout rate	Pearson Correlation	.654 (**)	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	150	150

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The findings of the study in Table 4.21 indicated that there is a strong positive relationship $r(150) = 0.654$, $p < 0.05$ between parental level of education and student’s dropout rate in public secondary schools.

Table 4.22: Correlation for Principals Responses on Parental Level of Education and Student's Dropout Rate

		Parental level of education		
		Student's dropout rate		
Parental education	level of Pearson Correlation	1	.721(**)	
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	
	N	25	25	
Student's dropout rate	dropout Pearson Correlation	.721(**)	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		
	N	25	25	

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The findings of the study in Table 4.22 indicated that there is a strong positive relationship $r(25) = 0.721$, $p < 0.05$ between parental level of education and student's dropout rate.

CHAPTER FIVE

5.0 DISCUSSION AND INTERPRETATION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter includes the discussion and interpretation of research findings based on the study objectives.

5.2 COVID-19 Protocols and Students Dropout Rate

This first objective sought to establish the influence of COVID-19 protocols on students' dropout rate during COVID-19 pandemic times in public secondary schools in Lower Yatta Sub-County, Kitui County. The teachers and principals were requested to indicate their opinion on the level of influence of COVID-19 protocols on students drop out rate. The responses were indicated in Table 4.6. The results from Table 4.6 established that majority of the teachers and principals indicated that COVID-19 protocols influenced students drop out in schools during COVID-19 pandemic period. Cumulatively, 91.4 percent of the teachers agreed to the assertion that COVID-19 protocols influenced students drop out in schools during COVID-19 pandemic. Similarly, 96 percent of the principals agreed to the same assertion that COVID-19 protocols influenced students drop out in schools during COVID-19 pandemic period. It is worth noting that only a small percentage of teachers, 8.6 percent as well as 4 percent of principals indicated that COVID-19 protocols were not influential on students drop out rate during COVID-19 pandemic period. Additionally, the feedback indicated that the main stakeholders involved in either formulating or implementing the COVID-19 protocols including the government, principals and teachers had a great role to play in minimizing drop out cases of students' during the COVID-19 period. The findings demonstrate a strong consensus among teachers and principals that COVID-19 protocols had a significant influence on student dropout rates in public secondary schools in Lower Yatta Sub-County during the pandemic. With 91.4% of teachers and 96% of principals acknowledging the impact, it is evident that the protocols were closely associated with increased dropout cases. Despite the fact that the study by Wodon (2020) was done in Catholic schools while the current study was done in public schools, both agree in their findings that COVID-19 protocols caused drop out of students

to hike.

Table 4.7 revealed that 48 percent of the teachers strongly agreed with the statement that school closures exacerbated students drop out in schools while 23.3 percent agreed with the statement. This translated to 71.3 percent of the teachers who concurred with the statement that school closures exacerbated students drop out in schools. Additionally, 13.3 percent of the teachers were undecided on the same while 8.7 percent of the teachers disagreed with the statement that school closures exacerbated students drop out in schools. These findings resonate with global, regional, and local studies which show that COVID-19 protocols, particularly school closures, contributed heavily to student dropouts. According to UNESCO (2020), by March 2020, school closures in 22 countries left over 290 million students without access to in-person learning. Wodon (2020) and Goldberg (2021) similarly argue that the closure of schools disrupted educational attainment and worsened dropout rates. Moreover, 5.3 percent of the teachers strongly disagreed that school closures exacerbated students drop out in schools. The study revealed that 50 percent and 36.7 percent of the teachers agreed and strongly agreed, respectively, indicating that 86.7 percent of the teachers backed up the statement that, attitude, perceived norms, self-efficacy, and several beliefs made students fail to adhere to COVID-19 which led to most of them dropping out of school. 10 percent of the teachers disagreed with the statement and another 3.3 percent of the teachers strongly disagreed that attitude, perceived norms, self-efficacy, and several beliefs made students fail to adhere to COVID-19 which led to most of them dropping out of school. only 3.3 percent of the teachers were undecided on whether attitude, perceived norms, self-efficacy, and several beliefs made students fail to adhere to COVID-19 which led to most of them dropping out of school. 43.3 percent of the teachers strongly agreed that COVID-19 Protocols hiked the cost of schooling increasing drop out cases and 28.7 percent of the teachers agreed with the statement. This corresponded to 72 percent of the teachers who concurred with the statement that COVID-19 Protocols hiked the cost of schooling increasing drop out cases. Nevertheless, 13.3 percent of the teachers disagreed with the statement, 8 percent of the teachers strongly disagreed while a small percentage of 6.7 percent were undecided on whether COVID-19 Protocols hiked the cost of schooling increasing drop out cases. The findings collectively

show that school closures, behavioral factors, and increased schooling costs due to COVID-19 protocols were major drivers of student dropout during the pandemic. Further, the results strongly affirm that the COVID-19 pandemic created both academic and socio-economic barriers, amplifying dropout rates in public secondary schools.

The findings from the principals as indicated in Table 4.8 aligned with those of the teachers regarding the influence of COVID-19 protocols on students' dropout rate during COVID-19 pandemic times. The results in Table 4.8 demonstrates that most principals believed that school closures exacerbated students drop out in schools. This was illustrated by 52 percent of the principals who strongly agreed with the statement and 28 percent who agreed with the statement. This meant that 80 percent of the principals believed that school closures exacerbated students drop out in schools during COVID-19 pandemic times. Nevertheless, 8 percent of the principals disagreed with the statement while a similar percentage, 8 percent strongly disagreed with the assertion. A small number of 4 percent of the principals were undecided on the assertion that school closures exacerbated students drop out in schools. Both the current study's findings and existing literature point to school closures as a critical factor in explaining elevated dropout rates during the COVID-19 pandemic. While some students managed to adapt to alternative modes of learning, the majority were negatively affected, especially in contexts such as Lower Yatta Sub-county where limited resources, financial strain, and social vulnerabilities made it harder for learners to remain in school. Empirical studies reinforce this view. Shuja et al. (2022) in Pakistan observed that financial hardship from lockdown and parental fears of infection aggravated student dropouts, with rural-to-urban dropout rates rising sharply. Similarly, Wodon (2020) also found that resource constraints and heightened costs of education due to health protocols worsened the dropout situation, particularly in low-income schools.

The results further indicated that 64 percent and 16 percent of the principals agreed and strongly agreed respectively with the statement that, attitude, perceived norms, self-efficacy, and several beliefs made students fail to adhere to COVID-19 which led to most of them dropping out of school. On average, 80 percent of the principals concurred that attitude, perceived norms, self- efficacy, and several beliefs made students fail to adhere to COVID-

19 which led to most of them dropping out of school. Nevertheless, 12 percent of the principals disagreed with the statement, 4 percent strongly disagreed whereas 4 percent of the principals were undecided on the effect of attitude, perceived norms, self-efficacy, and several beliefs that made students fail to adhere to COVID-19 which led to most of them dropping out of school. Majority of the principals, 60 percent concurred with the assertion that COVID-19 Protocols hiked the cost for schooling increasing drop out cases. On the contrary, 4 percent of the principals disagreed with the statement, a similar percentage of 4 percent of the principals strongly disagreed with the statement while 8 percent were neutral on whether attitude, perceived norms, self-efficacy, and several beliefs made students fail to adhere to COVID-19 which led to most of them dropping out of school. Cumulatively, 76 percent of the principals agreed with the assertion that the COVID-19 pandemic protocols affected the education and amplified school dropout school especially the aspect of social distance. On the contrary, 12 percent of the principals disagreed with the statement, 14 percent of the principals strongly disagreed with the statement whereas 8 of the principals' percent were undecided on the statement that attitude, perceived norms, self-efficacy, and several beliefs made students fail to adhere to COVID-19 which led to most of them dropping out of school. These results are consistent with research by Wodon(2020) that the likely hike in cost of schooling during COVID-19 period was likely to exacerbate drop out cases in schools. These results are in line with Cage & McManemy (2022) who argued that students experienced burnt Out which led to and dropping out of schools during the COVID- 19 Pandemic. Additionally, these findings concur with Shuja et al. (2022) who observed that lockdown measures put in place to curb the spread of the pandemic caused financial pressures on poor parents who could no longer send their children to schools hence hiking drop out cases. The correlation analysis further confirmed a strong positive relationship between COVID-19 protocols and dropout rates (teachers: $r=0.640$, $p<0.05$; principals: $r=0.624$, $p<0.05$).

5.3 Household Income and Student's Dropout Rate

The second objective for this study was to determine the influence of household income on student's dropout rate in public secondary schools in Lower Yatta Sub- County, Kitui County. Table 4.11 in chapter four revealed that by 45.3 percent and 28 percent of the

teachers strongly agreed and agreed, respectively, with the statement that COVID-19 made most students drop out of school because their parents had low income such that they were unable to afford basic needs. On average, 73.3 percent of the teachers agreed with the statement that COVID-19 made most students drop out of school because their parents had low income such that they were unable to afford basic needs that. On the contrary, 13.3 percent of the teachers strongly disagreed with the statement while 4 percent of the teachers were neutral on the same. Families struggling to provide essentials like food, clothing, or school-related expenses were more likely to withdraw their children from school. Moreover, it was clear that poverty and reduced household income during the COVID-19 period had a profound effect on students' retention in school, making financial vulnerability a major determinant of school dropout in the area. These findings are in consistent with research by Maina (2021) in his study on the influence of household income level on secondary school dropout in Kenya that the level of household income influence secondary school dropout.

The assertion that COVID-19 made most students drop out of school to look for income-generating activities and raising income for the family was supported by majority of teachers whereby, 36.7 percent of teachers strongly agreed with the statement while 32.7 percent of teachers agreed with the statement adding up to an average of 69.4 percent of teachers who supported the claim. Nevertheless, 11.3 percent of the teachers disagreed with the assertion and 11.3 percent of the teachers strongly disagreed with the statement whereas 8 percent were undecided on the same. These findings suggest that a significant majority of teachers (69.4%) believed COVID-19 contributed to student dropouts as learners turned to income-generating activities to support their families while a minority perceived other factors as equally or more influential. This highlights the economic strain households faced during the pandemic, forcing students to prioritize financial survival over education. It was also established that majority of the teachers, 52.8 percent strongly agreed with the statement while 44.8 percent of teachers agreed with the statement that the COVID-19 protocols caused many parents/caregivers lose their jobs and source of livelihood hence making it difficult to source income to sustain the education of their children. On average 97.6 percent of the teachers agreed with the statement that COVID-

19 protocols caused many parents/caregivers lose their jobs and source of livelihood hence making it difficult to source income to sustain the education of their children. Nevertheless, 0.6 percent of the teachers disagreed with the statement and 1.2 percent of the teachers strongly disagreed with the statement whereas only 0.6 percent of the teachers were undecided. These results highlight the strong link between poverty and school retention, where financial constraints forced families to prioritize survival over education. Moreover, it is evident that economic pressure during the pandemic forced many students into child labor or other forms of work, reducing school attendance and increasing dropout rates. These results agree with those of Nuwematsiko et al. (2022) who asserted that during COVID-19 period, some children were exposed to child labor either to provide extra income to the family, consequentially, increasing school dropout.

The responses from teachers on the influence of household income on student's dropout rate aligned with those of the principals. The results as presented in Table 4.12 revealed that the greatest percentage of principals, constituting 84 percent agreed on the statement that COVID- 19 caused income shortfall among households making most students drop out of school because their parents could not sustain their education as revealed by 60 percent of the principals who strongly agreed with the statement and 24 percent of the principals who agreed with the statement. The results further revealed that, 12 percent of the principals disagreed with the assertion with none of the principals strongly agreeing with the statement. In addition, 4 percent of the principals never indicated whether COVID-19 caused income shortfall among households making most students drop out of school. Further, 48 percent of principals strongly agreed that COVID-19 made most students drop out of school to look for income-generating activities and raise income for the family while 24 percent of the principals agreed with the statement. A significant proportion of principals 72 percent also agreed that students themselves dropped out to engage in income-generating activities to support their households, with nearly half (48 percent) strongly supporting this view. However, a minority expressed contrary opinions, with 12 percent disagreeing, 8 percent strongly disagreeing, and another 8 percent remaining undecided. These responses from the principals strongly mirrored those of the teachers, underscoring the significant role of household income in student dropout during COVID-19. Beyond

parental inability to fund education, the results also revealed that students themselves were directly affected. Nearly three-quarters (72%) of principals confirmed that students dropped out to engage in income-generating activities to support their families, with close to half (48%) strongly endorsing this view. This points to the reality that financial hardship not only restricted parental support but also compelled students to assume economic responsibilities. The results were in line with Kundu et al. (2022) who stated income shortfall caused by COVID-19 pandemic among the cause of students drop out.

The analysis also reveals that majority of the principals agreed with the statement that the COVID-19 protocols caused many parents/caregivers lose their jobs and source of livelihood hence making it difficult to source income to sustain the education of their children as indicated by 64 percent of the principals who strongly agreed with the statement and 28 percent of the principals who agreed that COVID-19 protocols caused many parents/caregivers lose their jobs and source of livelihood. This indicated that 92 percent of the principals agreed with the statement that COVID-19 protocols caused many parents/caregivers lose their jobs and source of livelihood hence making it difficult to source income to sustain the education of their children. 4 percent of the principals disagreed with the statement, similar 4 percent strongly disagreed with the statement whereas none was undecided on whether COVID-19 protocols caused many parents/caregivers lose their jobs and source of livelihood hence making it difficult to source income to sustain the education of their children. Based on results in Table 4.11 and 4.12 respectively, it is clear that the household income during COVID-19 pandemic period influenced students drop out rate in public secondary schools in Lower-Yatta Sub-county, Kitui county. These findings are consistent with the teachers' responses (Table 4.11), which similarly emphasized household income limitations as a key factor contributing to student dropouts. The findings indicate that the economic challenges triggered by COVID-19 such as job losses, reduced household income, and the pressure on students to engage in income-generating activities played a direct role in increasing dropout rates in public secondary schools. This shows that the pandemic not only interrupted the learning process but also heightened financial hardships, thereby limiting access to education for many families. This is in line with Hassan et al. (2024) that Lower levels of

household income were linked to higher rates of students leaving school before completing their education.

The findings from both teachers and principals consistently indicate that household income during the COVID-19 pandemic had a significant influence on students' dropout rates in public secondary schools in Lower Yatta Sub-county, Kitui County. The study established that there is a statistically significant association between household income and student's dropout rate in public secondary schools in Lower Yatta Sub- County. This is evidenced by the Pearson's Product Correlation Co-efficient for teachers and principals indicated by positive relationship with $r(150) = 0.771, p < 0.05$ and $r(25) = 0.678, p < 0.05$ respectively between COVID-19 protocols and students' dropout rate.

5.4 Peer Pressure and Students' Dropout Rate During COVID-19

The third objective of this study sought to establish the influence of peer pressure on students' dropout rate during COVID-19 pandemic times in public secondary schools in Lower Yatta Sub- County, Kitui County. The results as revealed in Table 4.15 indicates that 64.6 percent and 16 percent of the teachers strongly and agreed respectively that peer pressure during the COVID-19 pandemic caused dropping out of school by many students. This shows majority of the teachers constituting 80.6 percent of the teachers concurred with the statement that peer pressure during the COVID-19 pandemic caused dropping out of school by many students. Conversely, 6.7 percent of the teachers disagreed with the statement, a similar 6.7 of the teachers strongly disagreed whereas 4 percent of the teachers were undecided. The results indicate that peer pressure played a significant role in student dropouts during the COVID-19 pandemic in public secondary schools in Lower Yatta Sub-County. With a combined 80.6% of teachers agreeing or strongly agreeing, there is strong agreement among educators that peer- related influences pushed many students out of school during this period. The findings were similar to research by Tonkei (2008) in which the study identified peer pressure among the factors responsible for girls' dropout.

Additionally, most teachers agreed with the statement that the peer influence occasioned by lack of sex education, idleness, media influence during the COVID-19 times caused

rapid increase in adolescent pregnancies resulting in the dropping out of girls as revealed by 51.3 percent of the teachers who strongly agreed and 20.7 percent of the teachers who agreed with the statement. This means that on average, 71.3 percent of the teachers agreed with the statement. Conversely, 10 percent of the teachers disagreed with the statement, a similar 10 percent of the teachers strongly disagreed with the statement whereas 8 percent were undecided. This clearly shows that restrictions and the shift to online learning must have created new avenues for peer influence among the students. The findings indicate that peer pressure played a significant role in driving student dropouts during the COVID-19 period, manifesting through various channels such as general peer influence, heightened cases of adolescent pregnancies (particularly among girls), and harmful online peer interactions. The consistently high levels of teacher agreement across these aspects (ranging from 71% to 81%) underscore a shared perception that peer-related factors, amplified by the pandemic context, posed a major challenge to student retention. The findings contrast with Sharma et al. (2021) whose UNICEF-sponsored study involving 130,000 children and adolescents across 22 countries, including Italy, revealed some positive outcomes of the pandemic restrictions such as reduced exposure to certain school-related risks for instance, bullying. Whereas, in Kenya, limited digital access, weak supervision, and economic hardships heightened risks such as dropout and early pregnancy. In higher-income contexts like Italy, stronger digital infrastructure and household support offered protection despite challenges of isolation. These contrasts underscore the role of socio-economic and cultural contexts in shaping adolescents' experiences during the pandemic. Moreover, this suggests that the pandemic's impact on adolescents was complex: while it increased risks like teenage pregnancy in some contexts, it also reduced exposure to other social risks in different settings.

The statement that the social environment of students occasioned by restrictions during COVID-19 caused students to shift to online studies exposing them to bad company that lowered morale to study exacerbating drop out cases was supported by 52.7 percent of the teachers who strongly agreed with the statement and 28 percent of the teachers who agreed with the statement. This signifies that 80.7 percent of the teachers agreed with the statement that the social environment of students occasioned by restrictions during COVID-19 caused

students to shift to online studies exposing them to bad company that lowered morale to study exacerbating drop out cases. However, 10 percent of the teachers disagreed with the statement, 6.7 percent of the teachers strongly agreed with the statement while 10 percent of the teachers were neutral on the same. These findings imply that COVID-19 restrictions had adverse social effects on students, particularly through negative peer influence and reduced study morale, which contributed significantly to dropout rates.

In line with the teachers' responses, Table 4.16 presented principals responses with regard to influence of peer pressure during the COVID-19 pandemic and students drop out of school. The results revealed that 60 percent of the principals strongly concurred with the statement while 16 percent of the principals agreed with the statement. This shows that majority of the principals constituting 76 percent agreed with the statement that peer pressure during the COVID-19 pandemic influenced students drop out of school. Conversely, 12 percent of the principals disagreed with the statement, 8 percent of the principals strongly disagreed with the statement whereas only 4 percent of the principals were unsure on the believe that peer pressure during the COVID-19 pandemic caused dropping out of school by many students. These results reflect how peer pressure and social contexts play a crucial role in adolescents' school persistence, particularly during disruptive events like the pandemic. Furthermore, the findings from both teachers and principals highlight that the social environment shaped by COVID-19 restrictions had a significant impact on student engagement and dropout rates. The study by Di Sano et al. (2023) provides supporting evidence by showing that adolescents with pre- pandemic vulnerabilities (low socio-economic status, weak family support, and poor social-emotional skills) faced intensified mental health challenges during COVID-19. Such vulnerabilities made adolescents more susceptible to negative peer influences and disengagement from education.

Similarly, the statement that peer influence occasioned by lack of sex education, idleness, media influence during the COVID-19 times caused rapid increase in adolescent pregnancies resulting in the dropping out of girls' was supported by 32 percent of the principals who strongly agreed with the statement and 24 percent of the principals who

agreed with the statement. This shows that more than 50 percent of the principals (56 percent) concurred with the statement. Conversely, 16 percent of the principals disagreed with the statement while 12 percent of the principals strongly opposed the statement. Only, 12 percent of the principals were undecided on the same. This means that more than half of the principals (56%) agreed that peer influence, lack of sex education, idleness, and media exposure during COVID-19 contributed to increased adolescent pregnancies leading to girls' dropout, while 28% disagreed and 12% remained undecided. The statement that the social environment of students occasioned by restrictions during COVID-19 caused students to shift to online studies exposing them to bad company that lowered morale to study exacerbating drop out cases was supported by 48 percent of the principals who strongly agreed with the statement and 24 percent of the principals who agreed with the statement. This signifies that majority, 72 percent of the principals concurred with the statement. On the contrary, 4 percent of the principals disagreed with the statement, 4 percent of the principals strongly disagreed with the statement and 8 percent of the principals were unsure of the statement that restrictions during COVID-19 caused students to shift to online studies exposing them to bad company that lowered morale to study exacerbating drop out cases. The principals' responses highlight three interrelated pathways through which peer-related dynamics during COVID-19 contributed to dropout: general peer pressure, increased adolescent pregnancies among girls and negative peer influence facilitated by online exposure. The strong agreement across these dimensions emphasizes that principals, much like teachers, perceived peer pressure as a substantial and multifaceted barrier to student retention during the pandemic. These results are in line with the results of Aruna (2022) who attributed the rapid increase in adolescent pregnancies during the lockdown period to peer pressure. This could have been so as a result of the critical stage of life of teenagers who felt lonely and bored during the lockdown while experiencing bodily changes hence finding it favorable to engage in experimental sexual activities.

The correlation analysis further confirmed by portraying a positive Correlation Co-efficient for teachers portrayed a strong positive relationship $r(150) = 0.711, p < 0.05$ between peer pressure and students' dropout rate during COVID-19 pandemic times in public secondary

schools. The same results were observed from the principals' opinions which indicated a strong positive relationship $r(25) = 0.601, p < 0.05$ between peer pressure and students' dropout rate during COVID-19 pandemic times. The results suggest that peer pressure significantly influenced students' dropout rate during COVID-19 pandemic times.

5.5 Parental Level of Education and Student's Dropout Rate

The last objective of this study was to establish the influence of parental level of education on students' dropout rate during COVID-19 pandemic times in public secondary schools in Lower Yatta Sub-County, Kitui County. The findings in chapter four as revealed in Table 4.19 established that 47.3 percent of the teachers strongly agreed and 34.7 percent agreed respectively, with the statement that most non-educated parents had difficulties in facilitating learning of their children from home during COVID -19. This translates to 82 percent of the teachers who affirmed the statement. However, 2.7 percent of the teachers disagreed with the statement, 6.7 percent of the teachers strongly disagreed with the statement whereas 2.7 percent were undecided on the same. It is clear from the results that low parental education was a major barrier to student retention during COVID-19, as it limited parents' ability to provide academic support, supervision, and motivation. This, combined with the disruptions caused by the pandemic, made students from less-educated households more vulnerable to dropping out. Similar results were revealed by Shahidul, & Karim (2015) who noted that parental education was the most consistent determinant of student's education. Similarly, Mutua (2014) agrees with the findings of the study in his conclusion that parental level of education is closely related to student's retention in schools. Similarly, most of the teachers constituting 83.3 percent agreed with the statement that the education level of parents determined how well parents could guide their children academically during COVID-19 period consequently influencing the dropout of students. This was supported by 46 percent of the teachers who strongly agreed and 37.3 percent who agreed with the statement. Conversely, 7.3 percent of the teachers disagreed with the statement, 7.3 percent of the teachers strongly disagreed whereas 2 percent were neutral of the same. It is worth noting that 54 percent and 31.3 percent of the teachers strongly agreed and agreed respectively, with the statement that the parents with a low level of education hardly motivated their children to enhance their completion by engaging private teachers,

or ensuring assignments for their children were done hence leading to some dropping out. This signifies that 85.3 percent of the teachers affirmed the statement. However, 4.7 percent of the teachers disagreed and another 4.7 percent strongly disagreed with the statement. Moreover, 5.3 were unsure of the same. The findings clearly demonstrate that teachers overwhelmingly perceive parental education level as a key determinant of student retention during the COVID-19 period. Both the empirical evidence and literature support the conclusion that parental education is a crucial factor influencing student dropout, especially during disruptive periods like the COVID-19 pandemic when parental involvement in learning became more critical. For instance, findings by Ainsworth et al. (2015) that higher parental education is associated with improved school access, attendance, and retention corresponds to the teachers' perception. Similarly, Juneja (2001) and Pryor & Ampiah (2003) also emphasize that parents with limited education often lack the ability to support their children academically or recognize the long-term benefits of education.

The results for the principals presented in Table 4.20 agreed with the response by the teachers on the effect of Parental Level of Education on Student's Dropout Rate. The responses revealed that majority constituting 72 percent of non-educated parents had difficulties in facilitating learning of their children from home during COVID -19. This was exemplified by 48 percent of the principals who strongly agreed with the statement and 24 percent of the principals who agreed with the statement. Conversely, 12 percent of the principals disagreed with the statement while 8 percent of the principals strongly disagreed with the assertion and only 8 percent were neutral that non-educated parents had difficulties in facilitating learning of their children from home during COVID -19. The means that parental education level played a critical role in shaping students' academic continuity during COVID-19, with non-educated parents being less equipped to assist, thereby increasing the risk of student disengagement and dropout.

Comparably, 40 percent of the principals strongly agreed with the statement and 32 percent of the principals agreed with the statement that the education level of parents determined how well parents could guide their children academically during COVID-19 period. This

implied that 72 percent of the principals agreed that education level of parents determined how well parents could guide their children academically during COVID-19 period. On the other hand, a very small percentage constituting 8 percent of the principals disagreed with the statement, 4 percent strongly disagreed with the statement while 16 percent were unsure that education level of parents determined how well parents could guide their children academically during COVID-19 period. These findings suggest that the majority of principals (72%) recognized parental education level as a key factor influencing how effectively parents guided their children academically during the COVID-19 period however fewer principals still questioned the extent of this influence. These findings resonate with Kizito (2021), who established that parents with limited education in Uganda struggled to facilitate distance and home schooling when schools were closed. Although Kizito's study included a broader range of stakeholders; students, lecturers, administrators, and community members, both studies highlight a consistent challenge: parents with lower education levels were inadequately prepared to support children's learning at home during the pandemic. The current study adds further weight to this evidence by specifically focusing on principals' perspectives, thereby reinforcing the link between parental education and children's academic continuity in crisis contexts.

Moreover, a large number of principals (80 percent) were in conformity that the parents with a low level of education hardly motivated their children to enhance their completion by engaging private teachers, or ensuring assignments for their children were done hence leading to some dropping out. This statement was supported by 52 percent of the principals who strongly agreed with the statement and 28 percent of the principals who agreed with the statement. Only a small proportion of the principals, 8 percent strongly disagreed with the statement and 8 percent disagreed with the statement whereas 4 percent of the principals were unsure on whether parents with low level of education hardly motivated their children to enhance their completion.

The findings strongly suggest that principals perceived parental education as a key factor influencing students' dropout during COVID-19. Low parental education was linked to difficulties in facilitating learning at home, inadequate academic guidance, and lack of

motivation or support for children, all of which increased the likelihood of dropout. This was in line with Ainsworth et al. (2015) that a higher parental (household head) level of education is associated with increased access to education, higher attendance rates, and lower dropout rates

The results as depicted in Table 4.19 and 4.20 indicates that students from educated parents were unlikely to dropout out of school during COVID-19 pandemic times. These results are similar to the results of Conto et al. (2020) who pointed out that educational offer creates contents that instruct parents and caregivers on the use and appropriation of remote education tools for preschool and elementary school children and thus guarantee the continuity of their studies at a distance. Several reasons are put forward for the link between parental education and retention in school. From the teachers' opinions, it was established that there is a statistically significant association between parental level of education and students' dropout rate during COVID-19 pandemic times as established by the results of the Pearson's Product Correlation Co-efficient for teachers and principals indicated by positive relationship with $r(150) = 0.654, p < 0.05$ and $r(25) = 0.721, p < 0.05$ respectively.

CHAPTER SIX

6.0 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Introduction

This chapter consists of conclusions of the study and recommendations of the study based on the research findings and suggestions for further research.

6.2 Conclusions of the study

The researcher concluded the following based on the research findings:

6.2.1 COVID-19 Protocols and Students Drop out Rate

The results of this study conclude that the COVID-19 protocols significantly influenced students' dropout rate in public secondary schools'. School dropout rates therefore continue to be a significant concern as the phenomena not only affects individuals but families and society as a whole. The study therefore concludes that many schools were affected by school dropout as a result of COVID-19 protocols during the pandemic.

6.2.2 Household Income and Student's Dropout Rate

On household income, the study concluded that there was a statistically significant association between household income and student's dropout rate in public secondary schools in lower Yatta Sub-County. It was concluded that the COVID-19 pandemic caused many parents/caregivers lose their jobs and source of livelihood hence making it difficult to sustain the education of their children. As a result, some students stopped learning to look for money so as to assist their parents in meeting their daily needs. This led to high rate of students drop out.

6.2.3 Peer Pressure and Students' Dropout Rate During COVID-19

On the influence of peer pressure on students' dropout rate during COVID-19 pandemic times, this study concluded that there is a strong positive relationship between peer pressure and students' dropout rate during COVID-19 pandemic times in public secondary schools. The study also concluded that the social environment of students occasioned by restrictions

during COVID-19 caused students to shift to online studies exposing them to bad company that lowered morale to study exacerbating drop out cases.

6.2.4 Parental Level of Education and Student's Dropout Rate

On parental level of education, the study concluded that there is a statistically significant association between parental level of education and students' dropout rate during COVID-19 pandemic times in public secondary. Further, the study concluded that, parents with a low level of education hardly motivate their children to enhance their completion by engaging private teachers, or ensuring assignments for their children were done hence leading to some dropping out.

6.3 Recommendations of the study

Based on the findings and conclusions of this study, the researcher made the following recommendations as per the study objectives:

6.3.1 Covid-19 Protocols and Students Drop Out Rate

- i. The parents should have motivated their children who dropped out of school due to COVID-19 protocols to go back to school.
- ii. The parents should have improvised materials like homemade liquid soaps to wash their hand instead of expensive sanitizers.
- iii. The Ministry of Education should develop and institutionalize alternative learning systems (e.g., community-based learning centers, radio, TV, and affordable online platforms) to ensure learning continuity during emergencies such as pandemics.
- iv. Clear guidelines should be established to minimize prolonged school closures, which were shown to significantly exacerbate dropout rates.

6.3.2 Household Income and Student's Dropout Rate

- i. Parents should encourage their children not to be involved in casual work for money but instead go back to school.
- ii. The Community should be sensitized through chiefs barazas not to employ children who are supposed to be in school.

- iii. Special reintegration policies should be formulated to support students who dropped out due to child labor or income-seeking activities during crises.

6.3.2 Peer Pressure and Students' Dropout Rate During COVID-19

- i. The parents should be careful on the company for their children so that they are not negatively influenced.
- ii. The schools should have counselling department that educate the students on the influence of peer pressure on their character and academic performance.
- iii. The parents should be keen on any behavioral changes taking place in their children and address the challenge before it is too late.

6.3.4 Parental Level of Education and Student's Dropout Rate

- i. The parents should encourage their children to remain in school and acquire good grades which will translate into good careers and income.
- ii. Parents should pay school fees early so as to maintain their children in school.

6.4 Suggestions for Further Research

This study investigated the socio-economic determinants of students' dropout rate during COVID-19 pandemic times in public secondary schools in Lower Yatta-Sub County, Kitui County, Kenya. Further research can be done on the following:

- i. A similar study can be done in other counties to establish the socio-economic determinants of students' dropout rate during COVID-19 pandemic times in public secondary schools.
- ii. A study can be done on the influence of COVID-19 pandemic on household income.
- iii. A study can be done on the influence of COVID-19 Lockdown on teenage Pregnancy.
- iv. A study should be done on the influence of remote-learning during the COVID-19 on students' performance.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX I: LETTER OF INTRODUCTION

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To the Principal

Dear Sir/Madam

RE: PERMISSION TO COLLECT RESEARCH DATA

I am undertaking a Master of Education programme at the South Eastern Kenya University. My area of specialization is Educational Administration. I am currently undertaking research on “Socio-economic determinants of students’ dropout rate during COVID-19 pandemic times in public secondary schools in lower Yatta-sub County, Kitui County, Kenya”. Your school has been sampled to participate in the study. This letter is to seek your participation in the study and your teachers. The collected data was used for academic purposes only.

Thank for your cooperation.

Yours faithfully,

Joyce Musamu E35/MAC/10041/2018

APPENDIX II: PRINCIPALS' QUESTIONNAIRE

Kindly read the questions given below and respond by ticking ((√) where appropriate. Please do not indicate your name. The study is for pure academic purpose and all information provided was treated with utmost confidentiality.

SECTION A: PERSONAL INFORMATION

- 1. Kindly indicate your gender
Male [] Female []

- 2. Kindly indicate your age
25-30 years [] 31-40 years [] 41-50 years [] above 51 years []

- 3. Please indicate your highest academic qualification
Doctorate[] Masters[] Bachelor's Degree[] /PGDE[] Diploma []

- 4. For how long have you been a principal in your teaching career?
Less than 2 years [] 3-4 years [] Over 4 years []

- 5. How did your experience help you in controlling or minimizing dropout in your school during Covid-19 period?

SECTION B: COVID-19 PROTOCOLS AND STUDENTS DROP OUT RATE

- 6. Are there students who dropped out of school during COVID-19 period?
If yes, indicate the figures.....

- 7. Do you think COVID-19 protocols was correlated to students drop out in the school?
(i) Influential (ii) Moderately –influential (iii) Not- Influential

- 8. How did COVID-19 protocols influence drop out in your school?
.....
.....

9. Do you think the government, principals and teachers had a role to play in minimizing students drop out during COVID-19 times?

Yes [] No []

If yes, explain how

.....

10. Using a scale of 1-5, where 1= strongly disagree; 2=disagree; 3=Undecided; 4=agree; 5=strongly agree; Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements on adherence to COVID-19 protocols.

Statements	1	2	3	4	5
	SD	D	N	A	SA
School closures exacerbated students dropping out in your school					
Attitude, perceived norms, self-efficacy, and several beliefs made students fail to adhere to COVID-19 which led to most of them dropping out of school					
COVID-19 Protocols hiked the cost of schooling increasing drop out cases.					
The COVID-19 pandemic protocols affected the education and amplified school dropout in your school especially the social distance					

SECTION C: HOUSEHOLD INCOME AND STUDENTS DROP OUT RATE

11. Do you think low family income influenced dropout of students in your school in the times of COVID-19?

Yes [] No []

If yes explain how

.....

12. Using a scale of 1-5, where 1= strongly disagree; 2=disagree; 3=Undecided; 4=agree; 5=strongly agree; Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements on the household income.

Statements	1	2	3	4	5
	SD	D	N	A	SA
COVID-19 caused income shortfall among households making most students drop out of school because their parents could not sustain their education					
COVID-19 made most students drop out of school to look for income-generating activities and raising income for the family					
COVID-19 caused many parents/caregivers lose their jobs and source of livelihood hence making it difficult to source income to sustain the education of their children					

SECTION D: PEER PRESSURE AND STUDENST DROP OUT RATE

13. How did peer pressure influence students drop out in your school?

14. Do you think peer pressure was correlated to students drop out in your school?

If yes, explain.....

15. Using a scale of 1-5, where 1= strongly disagree; 2=disagree; 3=Undecided; 4=agree; 5=strongly agree; Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements on peer pressure.

Statements	1	2	3	4	5
	SD	D	N	A	SA
Peer pressure during the COVID-19 pandemic caused dropping out of school by many students					
Peer influence occasioned by lack of sex education, idleness, media influence during the COVID-19 times caused rapid increase in adolescent pregnancies resulting in the dropping out of girls'					
The Social environment of students occasioned by restrictions during COVID- 19 caused students to shift to online studies exposing them to bad company that lowered morale to study exacerbating drop out cases					

SECTION E: PARENTAL LEVEL OF EDUCATION AND STUDENTS DROP OUT RATE

16. Do you think parental level of education was correlated to students' dropout in your school?

Yes No

If yes explain.....

17. Have you had time to interact directly interact with parents or guardians in your school during and after COVID- 19 pandemic?

Yes No

If yes explain.....

18. Using a scale of 1-5, where 1= strongly disagree; 2=disagree; 3=Undecided; 4=agree; 5=strongly agree; Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements on parental level of education.

Statements	1	2	3	4	5
	SD	D	N	A	SA
Most non-educated parents had difficulties in facilitating learning of their children from home during COVID -19					
The education level of parents determined how well parents could guide their children academically during COVID-19 period consequently influencing the dropout of students					
Parents with a low level of education hardly motivated their children to enhance their completion by engaging private teachers, or ensuring assignments for their children were done hence leading to some dropping out					

THE END

THANK YOU FOR YOUR COOPERATION

APPENDIX III: QUESTIONNAIRE FOR TEACHERS

Kindly read the questions given below and respond by ticking ((√) where appropriate. Please do not indicate your name. The study is for pure academic purpose and all information provided was treated with utmost confidentiality.

SECTION A: PERSONAL INFORMATION

1. Kindly indicate your gender Male [] Female []
2. Kindly indicate your age
25-30 years [] 31-40 years [] 41-50 years [] above 51 years []
3. Please indicate your highest academic qualification
Doctorate [] Masters [] Bachelor’s Degree [] PGDE [] Diploma []
4. How long have you taught in this school (please tick as appropriate)?
 Less than one (1) year []
 Between 1 and 5 years []
 Between 6 and 10 years []
5. Kindly indicate the level in which you head
Form 1 [] Form 4 []
6. How does did your experience help you in ensuring no school dropout in your class as a result of COVID-19?.....
.....
.....

SECTION B: COVID-19 PROTOCOLS AND STUDENTS DROP OUT RATE

19. Are there students who dropped out from your class during COVID-19 period?
If yes, indicate the figures.....
.....
20. Do you think COVID-19 protocols were correlated to students drop out in your class?
(i) Influential (ii) Moderately –influential (iii) Not- Influential

21. How did COVID-19 protocols influence drop out in your class?

.....

22. Do you think the government, principals and teachers had a role to play in minimizing students drop out during COVID-19 times?

Yes [] No []

If yes, explain.....

23. Using a scale of 1-5, where 1= strongly disagree; 2=disagree; 3=Undecided; 4=agree; 5=strongly agree; Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements on adherence to COVID-19 protocols.

Statements	1	2	3	4	5
	SD	D	N	A	SA
School closures exacerbated students dropping out in your school					
Attitude, perceived norms, self-efficacy, and several beliefs made students fail to adhere to COVID-19 which led to most of them dropping out of school					
The COVID-19 pandemic protocols affected the education and amplified school dropout in your school					

SECTION C: HOUSEHOLD INCOME AND STUDENTS DROP OUT RATE

24. Do you think low family income influenced dropout of students in your class in the times of Covid-19?

Yes [] No []

If yes explain.....

25. Using a scale of 1-5, where 1= strongly disagree; 2=disagree; 3=Undecided; 4=agree; 5=strongly agree; Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements on the household income.

Statements	1	2	3	4	5
	SD	D	N	A	SA
COVID-19 made most students drop out of school because their parents had low income such that they are unable to afford basic needs					
COVID-19 made most students drop out of school to look for income-generating activities and raising income for the family					
COVID-19 protocols caused many parents/caregivers lose their jobs and source of livelihood hence making it difficult to source income to sustain the education of their children					

SECTION D: PEER PRESSURE AND STUDENTS DROP OUT RATE

26. Using a scale of 1-5, where 1= strongly disagree; 2=disagree; 3=Undecided; 4=agree; 5=strongly agree; Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements on peer pressure.

Statements	1	2	3	4	5
	SD	D	N	A	SA
Peer pressure during the COVID-19 pandemic caused dropping out of school by many students					
Peer influence occasioned by lack of sex education, idleness, media influence during the COVID-19 times caused rapid increase in adolescent pregnancies resulting in the dropping out of girls'					
The Social environment of students occasioned by restrictions during COVID- 19 caused students to shift to online studies exposing them to bad company that lowered morale to study exacerbating drop out cases					

SECTION E: PARENTAL LEVEL OF EDUCATION AND STUDETS DROP OUT RATE

27. Do you think parental level of education was correlated to students' dropout in your class?

Yes [] No []

If yes explain.....

28. Have you had moments to directly interact with parents' or guardians' of students?

Yes [] No []

If yes explain.....

29. Using a scale of 1-5, where 1= strongly disagree; 2=disagree; 3=Undecided; 4=agree; 5=strongly agree; Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements on parental level of education.

Statements	1	2	3	4	5
	SD	D	N	A	SA
Most non-educated parents had difficulties in facilitating learning of their children from home during COVID -19					
The education level of parents determined how well parents could guide their children academically during COVID-19 period consequently influencing the dropout of students					
Parents with a low level of education hardly motivated their children to enhance their completion by engaging private teachers, or ensuring assignments for their children were done hence leading to some dropping out					

THE END

THANK YOU FOR YOUR COOPERATION

APPENDIX IV: PERMISSION TO PROCEED FOR DATA COLLECTION

APPENDIX VI: PERMISSION TO PROCEED FOR DATA COLLECTION



**SOUTH EASTERN KENYA UNIVERSITY
OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR
BOARD OF POST GRADUATE STUDIES**

P.O. BOX 170-90200
KITUI, KENYA
Email: info@seku.ac.ke

TEL: 020-4213859 (KITUI)
Email: directorbps@seku.ac.ke

Our Ref: E412/MAC/20041/2018

DATE: 19th December, 2024

Joyce Muzamu Joyce Kiwvi
Email: muzamujoyce@gmail.com
Tel No: 0704880669

Dear Ms. Muzamu,

RE: PERMISSION TO PROCEED FOR DATA COLLECTION

This is to acknowledge receipt of your Master of Education in Educational Administration Proposal document entitled: *"Socio-Economic Determinants of Students Dropout Rate During Covid-19 Pandemic Times in Public Secondary Schools in Lower Yatta-Sub County, Kitui County, Kenya."*

Following a successful presentation of your Masters Proposal, the School of Education Board of Examination in conjunction with the Directorate, Board of Postgraduate Studies (BPS) have approved that you proceed to research data collection in accordance with your approved proposal.

During the research work, you will be supervised by Dr. Rose Mwanza and Dr. Janet Mulwa. You should ensure that you liaise with the supervisors at all times. In addition, you are required to fill in a Progress Report (SEKU/ARSA/BPS/F-02) & (SEKU/ARSA/BPS/F-14) which can be downloaded from the University Website.

The Board of Postgraduate Studies wishes you well and successful research data collection, analysis and project report writing.

Prof. Eliud Muli
Director, Board of Postgraduate Studies

Copy to: Deputy Vice Chancellor, Academic, Research and Innovation (Note on File)
Dean, School of Education
Chairman, Department of Educational Administration & Planning
Dr. Rose Mwanza
Dr. Janet Mulwa

ADD TO GREEN



ISO 9001: 2015 CERTIFIED



TRANSFORMING LIVES

APPENDIX V: RESEARCH PERMIT

 <p>REPUBLIC OF KENYA</p>	 <p>NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & INNOVATION</p>
<p>Ref No: 200680</p>	<p>Date of Issue: 15/January/2025</p>
<p>RESEARCH LICENSE</p>	
	
<p>This is to Certify that Ms. JOYCE KIVOVI of South Eastern Kenya University, has been licensed to conduct research as per the provision of the Science, Technology and Innovation Act, 2013 (Rev.2014) in Kitui on the topic: SOCIO-ECONOMIC DETERMINANTS OF STUDENTS DROPOUT RATE DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC TIMES IN PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN LOWER YATTA-SUB COUNTY, KITUI COUNTY, KENYA. for the period ending : 15/January/2026.</p>	
<p>License No: NACOSTI/P/25/415039</p>	
<p>Applicant Identification Number</p>	 <p>Director General NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & INNOVATION</p>
<p>Verification QR Code</p>	
	
<p>NOTE: This is a computer generated License. To verify the authenticity of this document, Scan the QR Code using QR scanner application.</p>	
<p>See overleaf for conditions</p>	

**APPENDIX VI: RESEARCH AUTHORIZATION FROM DEPUTY COUNTY
COMMISSIONER**



**OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
MINISTRY OF INTERIOR AND NATIONAL ADMINISTRATION**

E-mail: declowervatta@gmail.com

DEPUTY COUNTY COMMISSIONER
LOWER YATTA SUB COUNTY
P.O BOX 385-90200
KITUI

When replying please quote:
Ref: LYTA/12/VOL1/26

DATE

24th January, 2025

Ms. Joyce Musamu
ADM NO. E412/MAC/20041/2018
South Eastern Kenya University
P. O. Box 170 - 90200
KITUI

RE: RESEARCH AUTHORIZATION

Following your application for authority to collect data on Socio economic determinants of students drop out rate during COVID-19 pandemic times in public secondary schools in Lower Yatta Sub County, I am pleased to inform you that permission has been granted to undertake the data collection in Lower Yatta Sub County.

You are advised to liaise with Sub County Director of Education before embarking on the exercise.


P.P. 
MUTUA MBELLA
DEPUTY COUNTY COMMISSIONER
LOWER YATTA SUB COUNTY
KITUI



**APPENDIX VII: RESEARCH AUTHORIZATION FROM COUNTY
EDUCATION OFFICE**

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION
State Department for Basic Education

Telegrams *EDUCATION*
Kitui
Telephone: Kitui 22759
Fax :04444-22103
E-Mail :
cde.kitui@gmail.com



REPUBLIC OF KENYA

COUNTY EDUCATION OFFICE
KITUI COUNTY
P.O BOX 1557-90200
KITUI

When replying please quote;

Ref. No: KTIC/ED/RES/VOL. I/22/199 Date: 21st January, 2025


M/S Joyce Kivovi
South Eastern Kenya University
P.O. Box 170-90200
KITUI

RE: RESEARCH AUTHORIZATION

Following your application for authority to conduct research on *"Socio-Economic Determinants of Students Dropout Rate during COVID-19 Pandemic Times in Public Secondary Schools in Lower Yatta-Sub County in Kitui County"*, I am pleased to inform you that permission has been granted to you to undertake research in Kitui County for the period ending **15th January 2026**.

You are advised to liaise with the respective Sub County Directors of Education before embarking on the exercise and a copy of the research report should be forwarded to this office.

Kindly note that informed consent must be sought whenever photos, specimens, or videos of learners are to be taken.


FOR: COUNTY DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION
KITUI
P. O. Box 1557- 90200,
KITUI

SILVESTER KIILU
FOR: COUNTY DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION
KITUI COUNTY

APPENDIX VIII: INRODUCTORY LETTER FOR SUB COUNTY EDUCATION OFFICE

APPENDIX XI: Introductory Letter to Sub County Education Office



**MINISTRY OF EDUCATION
State Department for Basic Education**

Tel: 0722 440 806
E-mail: decbaseryatta@gmail.com

When replying please quote:
REF NO:ED/LW/YT/SSG/09/VOL1/23

SUB COUNTY EDUCATION OFFICE
LOWER YATTA
P.O. BOX 995-90200
KITUL.

DATE: 22/01/2025

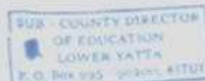
ALL PRINCIPALS
PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS
LOWER YATTA SUB COUNTY.

RE: INTRODUCTION LETTER;
JOYCE MUSAMU - SEKU

The above mentioned is a post graduate student at SEKU University. She has authority from this office to collect data from your school for research purposes.

Kindly accord her any necessary assistance.


NGONJO JOSEPH
SUB COUNTY DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION
LOWER YATTA SUB COUNTY.



**APPENDIX IX: PERMISSION TO COLLECT DATA FROM SUB COUNTY
EDUCATION OFFICE**



**MINISTRY OF EDUCATION
State Department for Basic Education**

Tel: 0722 440 806
E-mail: deolowervatta@gmail.com

When replying please quote:
REF NO: ED/LW/(YT)SSG/09/VOL1/24

SUB COUNTY EDUCATION OFFICE
LOWER YATTA
P.O. BOX 995-90200
KITUL.

DATE: 22/01/2025

JOYCE MUSAMU - SEKU

RE: PERMISSION TO COLLECT DATA

Following your request for permission to collect data for research purpose in our public secondary schools, am pleased to inform you that the permission is hereby granted. You are however expected to liaise with the principals so that you don't interfere with the T/L Activities and other school routine programme.

Attached is an introduction letter which you should present to the school principal upon arrival to the school.

**NGONJO JOSEPH
SUB COUNTY DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION
LOWER YATTA SUB COUNTY.**

SUB - COUNTY DIRECTOR
OF EDUCATION
LOWER YATTA
P. O. Box 995 - 90200, KITUL