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**Influence of Selected Psychosocial Factors on Parents and Learners' Mental Wellbeing During the Long School Holiday Due to Corona Virus (Covid-19): A Perception Parents and Learners in Uasin Gishu County, Kenya**

**Dr. Bundotich Sarah**



## **Influence of Selected Psychosocial Factors on Parents and Learners' Mental Wellbeing During the Long School Holiday Due to Corona Virus (Covid-19): A Perception Parents and Learners in Uasin Gishu County, Kenya**

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### **Abstract**

**Purpose:** The aim of study was to establish whether there was any influence of Selected Psychosocial Factors on Parents and Learners Mental Wellbeing during the long school holiday Due to Corona Virus (COVID-19). School seemed to plays an important role in protecting children from various psychosocial harm and the sudden closure worried parents.

**Methodology:** The study adopted an explanatory survey design and a mixed method approach. Sampling techniques included purposive and stratified sampling methods. The target populations were all learners in the county aged between 10-19 years old totaling up to 278,791 and 1080 parents. Data collection instruments were sets of questionnaire and focus group discussion.

**Findings:** After computing data statistically, the findings of the study were ( $r = 0.592, p < 0.05$ ) physical aspects; ( $r=0.596, p<0.05$ ) social aspects and ( $r=0.685, \rho<0.05$ ) psychological aspect and observed positive and significant effect on the relationship between selected psychosocial factors on parents and learner's mental wellbeing during the long school holiday due to (COVID-19).

**Conclusion:** The study concluded that the sudden closure of schools strained parents and learners physically, socially and psychologically causing psychosocial distress. Therefore, parents and learners need to nurture resilience to recover quickly from difficulties. The physical, social and emotional security of children needs to be prioritized by all parents.

**Unique contribution to theory, practice and policy:** The study recommends that parents and learners need to nurture resilience which is the capacity to recover quickly or spring back into normal from difficulties. This means as the Ministry of Health update the public on the status of COVID -19, there is need to have psychologists to offer advice to the public on how to cope and manage the situation mentally and socially as a way of building resilience.

**Key words:** *Corona virus disease, Psychosocial, mental wellbeing, resilience.*

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

Corona Virus Disease (COVID-19) was first China, in December 2019. The World Health Organization (WHO) its Public Health emergency on 30<sup>th</sup> January, 2020 and a Pandemic on March 11<sup>th</sup> 2020. The first case of COVID-19 in Kenya was confirmed on 13<sup>th</sup> March 2020. This prompted the immediate closure of all learning institutions starting 16<sup>th</sup> March 2020 to curb the spread hence more than 18 million Kenyan learners were to remain in their homes. Coronavirus COVID-19) is an infectious disease caused by a newly discovered corona virus. This new group of viruses was named corona virus (corona denoting the crown-like appearance of the surface projections) and was later officially accepted as a new genus of viruses. The virus spreads primarily through droplets of saliva or discharge from the nose when an infected person coughs or sneezes, as a result, it is important that people practice respiratory etiquette like coughing into a flexed elbow (Tyrrell et al., 1975). It is a respiratory disease thus older adults and people who have severe underlying medical conditions like heart or lung disease or diabetes being at higher risk of infection because of their compromised immune system (World Health Organization, 2020). Corona Virus Disease (COVID-19) was first detected in Wuhan, China, in December 2019. The World Health Organization (WHO) declared the outbreak Public Health emergency of internal concern on 30<sup>th</sup> January, 2020 and a Pandemic on March 11<sup>th</sup> 2020 based on its effects fast spread across the world. Its spread has continued to cause adverse impacts on individual citizens and national economies following measures like lockdowns, travel bans and curfews among others as measures embraced by nations to curb its spread and fatalities. WHO response was to stop human-to-human transmission of the virus and caring of the patients.

The first case of COVID-19 in Kenya was confirmed on 13<sup>th</sup> March 2020 (Republic of Kenya, 2020) Based on this and the WHO response guidelines on the control of the virus, all learning institutions were closed starting 16<sup>th</sup> March 2020 to curb the spread to these institutions. The closure of learning institutions disrupted learning in for more than 1.5 billion learners globally including more than 18 million Kenyan learners (Republic of Kenya, 2020). The constitution of Kenya 2010, article 53(1) states the right to free and compulsory basic education to every child. The government through the Ministry of Education (MoE) has continued to heavily invest over 6% of the GDP to education sector. The aim is to ensure capable, literate and motivated citizenry for socio-economic growth and development in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. The government decision to close all learning institution by mid-March 2020 was meant to contain the spread of the COVID-19 virus (Republic of Kenya, 2020). The breakout of the disease did not only lead to sudden closure of all learning institutions thus interrupting with learning but has also caused a lot of uncertainty on when learning will resume. This implies both learners and parents were caught unaware. The unpreparedness was economically, socially and psychologically. The shock on them was because traditionally, schooling schedules have long been based more on cultural patterns than on efficient education strategies. The holidays have been pegged in some places not because they work for education strategists, but because of the needs of society. In Britain and the US, the school calendar is rooted in agriculture, as historically children were needed to help with planting and harvesting crops (The telegraph, 2020).

In Kenya, the MoE has always had the long school holiday kicked off with learners taking a break to pave way for the national examinations between late October and early January of the following

year. These include Kenya certificate of primary education (KCPE) and Kenya certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE) respectively. This long holiday is usually captured in the Ministry of Education Calendar of events as well as other important school events. Therefore, parents are aware of it and this allows them to prepare early in advance both psychologically and financially to the period. In the current study, psychosocial factors refer to the physical, social and mental issues that surround the learners stay at home during the unusually long holiday prompted by the break out (COVID-19) in Kenya and the globe at large. Further, mental wellbeing meant how parents and learners felt with the sudden closure of schools more importantly with the extended long holiday that they were never prepared for. Also, how well they are coping with day-to-day life. The objective of this study was to establish the influence of Selected Psychosocial Factors on Parents and Learners Mental Wellbeing during the long school holiday Due to Corona Virus (COVID-19): A Perception Parents and learners in Uasin Gishu County, Kenya.

### **1.1 Statement of the problem**

Children are vulnerable to a range of psychosocial harm and school plays an important role in protecting them from the same. Even with the pre-planned school calendar among school holidays, parents still find it a better option to have their children remain in school than be home. Many parents of school-going children are worried that the long vacations mean unlimited free and unsupervised time increasing the risk of truancy among their children (Standard on Sunday Team, 2013 ). Research has been done on implications of school holiday tuition on academic performance (Getange & Obar, 2016). Not much is known to the researcher on the impact of psychological stress as a result of sudden and extreme changes on the daily routines of learners and parents given the unforeseen and indefinite closure of schools due to rising COVID-19 reported cases in Kenya. Thus, the investigation on. Influence of Selected Psychosocial Factors on Parents and Learners Mental Wellbeing during the long school holiday Due to Corona Virus (COVID-19): A Perception Parents and learners in Uasin Gishu County, Kenya.

### **1.3 Purpose of the study**

The aim of the study was to establish the Influence of Selected Psychosocial Factors on Parents and Learners Mental Wellbeing during the long school holiday Due to Corona Virus (COVID-19): A Perception Parents and learners in Uasin Gishu, Kenya.

## **2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW**

Key among global response to the COVID-19 pandemic was closure of schools. This meant children had to remain at home under the care of parents, guardians or caretakers in many countries. As a result, many parents have had to squeeze between jobs or work-related tasks and the additional responsibility for home schooling of their children. Further, school closure meant the cancellations or postponement of examinations which are likely to come with detrimental consequences for children's education (Burgess & Sievertsen, 2020). Children are also likely to suffer from social isolation of children from their friends and teachers, reduced social interactions and activities with increased amounts of time socially isolated and sedentary (Ke & Ford-Jones, 2015) which may cause a psychological stress on them due to feelings of loneliness as a result of reduced social interaction and sedentary life. The closure of schools, cancellation or postponement of exams and social isolation are likely to have far reaching effects on children during this

pandemic season. In fact, the sudden and extreme changes to their usual daily routines and concerns about their own and their family's health have had a direct effect on the level of stress faced by children (Moroni, Cheti & Tominey, 2020)

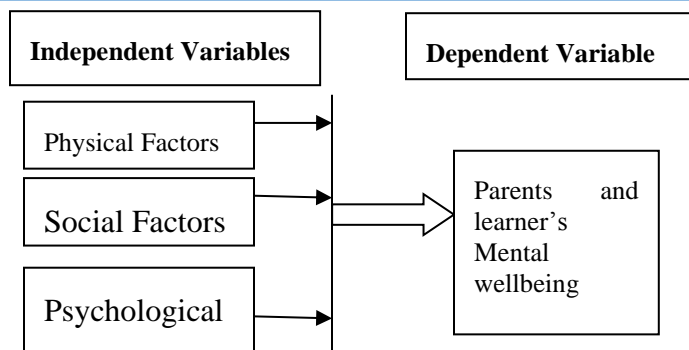
Closure of school is likely to expose many learners to various vulnerabilities and risks. The COVID-19 pandemic creates a stressful environment for families because parents and guardians have been a worried lot concerning the health of family as well security of their children at home since a large number of them have to go out to work. This is in spite of the directive by the Ministry for Health Cabinet Secretary (CS Kagwe) in one of his statements urging Kenyans to stay at home to prevent the spread of the disease. According to Too (2020, May 2) he emphasized that because people are not going to their jobs, no party, and no bar, where are they going? They need to stay at home. These guidelines are in line with those by the World Health Organizations (WHO)(. These directives were good in containing the spread of the virus but for working parents it translated to miss work in order to take care of their children. This resulted in wage loss and definitely negatively impacting on productivity. In of the absence of alternative options on who to leave the children under their care, some working parents often leave children alone when schools close and this can lead to risky behaviour, including increased influence of peer pressure and substance abuse (UNESCO, 2020).

Schools are hubs of social activity and human interaction. When schools close, many children and youth miss out of on social contact that is essential to learning and development (UNESCO, 2020). It is also important to note that the social isolation and the exhortation to 'stay at home' has major implications for those children already living in the same household with someone who is abusive; unfortunately, domestic violence rates are rising fast (Cunningham, McGrath, Ferguson, 1987). It is very disturbing that various forms abuse and violence against children and adolescents are practiced in the family context where ideally it should be a place to offer warm, care and comfort for these individuals. There are two major forms of abuse and violence against children and adolescents that stand out mainly distinguished by a series of characteristics. First is the intra-family abuse and violence. This corresponds to any action or omission that impairs a child or adolescent's well-being in terms of physical or psychological integrity or freedom and right for development. It can be committed at home or at another place by a family member including persons who assume a parental function without blood bonds and a relation of power towards the other person. Intra-family abuse and violence can manifest itself in a variety of forms which include physical aggression like beating, sexual abuse, psychological abuse, neglect, abandonment and maltreatment, among others. The violence may be executed by a close family member like a father or mother, or relative to the child in form of both real and threatened as long as they seem powerful than the victim. This power may be physical or psychological or based on age, hierarchy or gender (Brasil, 2008). Second is the domestic abuse and violence which includes other group members, without a parental function who live together in the domestic space, including employees, people who sporadically live at a family's home and aggregates (Algeri & Souza, 2006). This implies with the heightened levels of stress and pressure on parents due to sudden closure of school, children are likely experience either or both of this violence. This will have negative effects on the children emotional state and by extension mental wellbeing.



The COVID-19 pandemic is first and foremost a health crisis. Many countries have (rightly) decided to close schools, colleges and universities. The severe short-term disruption is felt by many families around the world as this has increased stress and burden on parents. Stress is likely to increase when a person is living in a family situation with increased pressures. Social stresses, due to inadequate finances or other such problems in a family may further increase tensions. Parents in particular are worried about the health of family, pressures of having to go out to work and leave the children under the care of caregivers. These caregivers range from older siblings to the children to employees. Other stresses among parents involve having to arrange work from home, potential unemployment and lost income. All these are a chain of negative consequences of living through a pandemic. The closure of schools on the other hand implied social isolation of children from their friends and teachers. A likely outcome of the COVID-19 pandemic is that psychological issues in children will increase if the home environment is stressful. However, if positive interactions between parents and children are nurtured particularly during a stressful period, like the pandemic period, psychological disorders in children and young people decreases (Moroni et al., 2019).

Food security is a concern among many households and especially parents during long school holidays because it means additional cost on their usual budgets. Research has indicated that in a situation where food insecurity is in existence then the impact will be mentally and socially negative on both parents and children. Food insecurity is likely to cause poor physical health and reduced physical activities among its victims. According to Ke and Ford-Jones (2015) poor physical health and depression among young people as well as under nutrition and poor mental health among adults are all linked to lack of food in the household. This means proper nutrition is essential for physical and mental wellness. The conceptual framework Figure 1.0 presents the interaction between the independent variable and the dependent variable. The West Africa Ebola crisis of 2014-15 killed more than 11,000 people. The disease caused massive economic and social disruptions. For instance, it left tens of thousands of children orphaned. In Sierra Leone, schools were closed for eight months, resulting in a lost year of learning. A Parent lamented that children had forgotten everything they learned at school before Ebola in one of the focus groups. Further, Ebola orphans, survivors, and even children wrongly suspected of having Ebola continue to suffer from stigma and isolation after schools resumed. One boy recounted being shunned by his friends after being briefly hospitalized for asthma. The crisis also led to a spike in teenage pregnancies. In an effort to support children traumatized by the Ebola crisis, teachers were trained to offer psychosocial support to their learner besides accelerated syllabus coverage (Powers & Azzi-Huck, 2016). These implies that the long school holidays due to Ebola disease had both negative social and psychological impacts on learners and parent. Figure 1 present independent and dependent.



**Figure 1: Conceptual Frame Work**

Source: (Survey, 2020)

### 3.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 Study Area

The study was undertaken in Uasin Gishu County. The county deemed suitable for the study because it has undergone rapid economic and development since independence and this has caused rapid population growth with the total population standing at 1,163,186. Out of this, there were 580,269 males and 582, 889 females respectively. Further, age group between 10 - 19 years was 278,791 which is of the primary and secondary school going age according to 2019 Population and Housing Census results (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, 2019).The population development of Uasin Gishu according to the 2019 Population and Housing Census results ( Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, 2019). Table 1 present the population in Uasin Gishu County, Kenya.

**Table 1: The population development of Uasin Gishu County**

Name	Status	Population	Population	Population	Population	Population
		Census	Census	Census	Census	Census
		24/08/1979	24/08/1989	24/08/1999	24/08/2009	24/08/2019
Uasin Gishu	County	300,766	445,530	622,705	894,179	1,163,186

Area: 3,392 km<sup>2</sup> – Density: 342.9/km<sup>2</sup> [2019] – Change: +2.67%/year [2009 → 2019]

Source: *Population and Housing Census Results 2019*

The rapid population growth shown in the data about Uasin Gishu county can be associated with the developed infrastructure in terms of road networks and a railway line with 8 railway stations. In addition, there is an inland container depot. The Eldoret International Airport and an airstrip are also located in Uasin Gishu easily making it the region’s service hub. These have facilitated three main economic activities in the County namely mixed farming (food crops and livestock for domestic and commercial purposes, poultry farming and formal or casual employment. The county’s education facilities are fairly developed with public universities namely, Moi University and University of Eldoret. It also has campuses of Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology, Kisii University, Laikipia University among others. There are also several private universities campuses like: Catholic University of East and Central Africa, Mt. Kenya University Bugema University in Uganda, East African University-Baraton, Nazerine University and so on.

The county is also host to is also a National Polytechnic, a Technical Training Institute and several private commercial colleges. In terms of basic education, there are 576 ECD centers, 622 primary schools and 207 secondary schools. Given that the County has only 207 secondary schools, with Eldoret East district having (56), Eldoret West district (87) and Wareng district (64) secondary schools (Ministry of Education, 2013). These indicate that more investment will be required in this subsector to cater for the projected increase in student population. The county is also cosmopolitan hosting several communities. There are several industries and firms within its town centre and the outskirts (Uasin Gishu County Integrated Development Plan, (2013-2018).

### **3.2 Research Paradigm and Design**

Ontological and related epistemological positions inform a given research paradigm. This study adopted pragmatism philosophical stance hence positivist position (Rallis & Rossman, 2003). The study adopted an explanatory survey design and a mixed method approach since it combined both quantitative and qualitative methods to investigate the perception of parents and children on long school holiday due to COVID-19. The approach helped the researcher answer questions that could not be answered using only qualitative or qualitative methods alone. The research design deemed appropriate because it allowed use of probability sampling which in turn minimized biasness and enhanced reliability of the data that was collected (Hair, Black, Babin & Anderson, 2006)

### **3.4 Target Population**

The study targeted all learners aged between 10-19 years old in the county totaling up to 278,791.) (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, 2019). The study also targeted 1080 parents from 540 households according to Kenya Integrated House Hold Budget Survey (KIHBS) (2018). Being an explanatory survey study, a large sample was desired as a sample of 500 and above is always considered the best (Hair, et al., 2006). Parents, children and adolescents were targeted since they were the ones who had just been affected by the sudden and unplanned closure of schools by the government as a mitigation measure for the spread of COVID -19 given that the study was done May, 2020 barely a month after the government's closure of learning institutions nationwide. The effects of school closure were still fresh in memories of these participants than other old group of students who were in better position to manage themselves out of college or university.

### **3.5 Sample Size and Sampling Procedure**

The study utilized various sampling techniques. These were employed for the various target population groups as follows: Parents and learners. The study used Krejcie and Morgan (1970) table to determine the sample size. As a result, 384 learners and 285 parents were selected respectively. Stratified random sampling was used to select participants from the three social status categories. Namely: high, middle and low economic status. The study obtained a representative sample from the three economic statuses using stratified simple random sampling. This is a process in which certain sub-groups or strata are selected from the sample in the same proportion as they exist in the population (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2009). Stratified sampling method was useful in this research because it gave a blend of randomization and categorization, thereby enabling both qualitative and quantitative method of data collection to be employed in this research. Moreover, the grouping of the population into relevant strata meant that the samples were more representative



as it ensured that each of the strata was represented proportionally within the sample (Saunders et al., 2003).

### **3.6 Research Instruments**

The study was done in all the six sub-counties in Uasin Gishu County namely: Turbo, Kesses, Moiben, Kapseret, Ainabkoi and Soy. The research participants for the study were parents and learners aged 10-19 years old in the County. The stratified simple random sampling was used to select a total of 669 participants in the study. Data was collected from the parents and learners using sets of questionnaires. To test for reliability and validity of these instruments, the researcher reviewed literature in areas relevant to the study. Further, expert's consultation and approval were done to ascertain for the validity of the instruments. In addition, a pilot study with at least 10% of the study sample in a similar targeted population groups in Nandi County was carried out to pre-test the reliability of the instruments. According to Saunders et al. (2003) questionnaire works best with standardized questions where all respondents interpreted the same way. Further, they enabled the research to examine and explain relationships between variables which cannot be directly investigated such as views, perceptions and feeling. This is especially important when cause and effect relationships are of interest to the study. In developing the sets of questionnaires, clarity, content relevance, reliability, validity, simplicity and avoidance of threatening items were considered. Likert type of questions were adapted and constructed based on the research variables. Thereafter, the sets of questionnaire were administered by drop and pick method by visiting households for respondents to fill on request while those who not fill instantly, they were given two days upon which follow-up through telephone calls were made so as to remind them, Scholars advocate for a multi-method approach on data collection to enrich the data (Saunders et al., 2003). It is in view of this, that the study also employed focus group discussions among parents to explore their opinions and attitudes with regard to long school holiday. Focused group discussion and participant observation were used in the gathering of data which allowed the study to bridge the gap that exist when one relies only on published accounts (Saunders et al., 2003).

### **3.7 Data Analysis and Presentation**

For quantitative data, questionnaire data was cross-examined and coded to allow entry into the computer using Statistical Programme for Social Sciences (SPSS 17.0) package. To ensure uniformity in coding a master codebook was designed. All statistics were then done by invoking the relevant commands at the prompt. The obtained scores in terms of descriptive statistics such minimum, maximum, means, frequencies, and standard deviations and correlation were computed and tabulated for analysis of data. The Pearson Product Moment Correlation was used to establish the relationship between the independent and the dependent variables. These computed statistics allowed for the description of data in numerical terms as well as reduction and summary data.

#### 4.0 FINDINGS AND PRESENTATION

The researcher used the analyzed data to determine the level of significance of differences of selected psychosocial factors on parents and learner’s mental wellbeing during the long school holidays due to COVID-19.

##### 4.1 Response Rate

A total of 340 from 384 translating to 88.5% response rate of adolescent’s questionnaire were filled and returned. Further, 200 out of 285 parents’ questionnaire were filled and returned thus translating to 70% response rate. These high response rates can be attributed to respondent’s willingness to support the study aimed at resolving the psychosocial problems bedeviling adolescents and parents during the long school holidays.

##### 4.2 Descriptive Findings

The following Tables 2 and 3 are the demographics of the study.

**Table 2: Gender of the Respondents**

Gender	Freq	Percent	Freq	Percent
	L	L	P	P
Male	228	67	109	54.5
Female	112	33	91	45.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>340</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Survey Data (2020)

Key: L= Learner P= Parent

As per the study results there were more male learners (n=228, 67%) and parents (n=109,54%) than females (n=112,33%) as well as (n=91,45.5) respectively who participated in the study. This implies male participants were more supportive during this study than their female counterparts. Further, culturally, males are more engaged in outdoor activities than females this can be the reason why they were readily found during the study.

**Table 3: Marital and Employment Status of Parents**

Marital Status	Freq	Percent	Employment Status	Freq	Percent
Single	48	24.1	Self	108	53.8
Married	134	67.1	Employed	56	28
Widowed	12	8.8	Unemployed	36	18.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Survey Data (2020)

The results as per the study indicate that a majority of parents (n=134, 67.1%) are married. Those that were single parents were (n=48, 24.1%) while the widowed were (n=12, 8.8%). This implies that marital status in itself can be a predisposing factor in addressing psychosocial problems related to long school holidays among learners. Also, results show that a majority (n=164 ,81.8%) are self-employed and employed. This implies these parents have to leave their children at home under the care of their older siblings or with caretakers and go out to fend for them. This scenario may

compromise the security of their children's security while home during the long school holiday due to COVID-19.

Table 4 presents a summary of parents and learners information concerning long school holidays due to COVID-19.

**Table 4: Summary of Parents and Learners Information Concerning Long School Holidays Due to COVID-19**

Item Description	R	1		2		3		4		5		M	SD
		f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%		
Children are happy being home during this long holiday	L	24	7.1	57	16.6	102	30.0	122	35.9	35	10.3	3.3	1.1
	P					21	10.5	29	14.3	150	75.0	4.8	0.4
Have friends who care about them with outstanding morals	L	16	4.7	66	19.4	101	29.7	118	34.7	39	11.5	3.3	1.1
	P	29	14.5	29	14.5			42	21.0	100	50.0	3.8	1.6
My child is fully supported in doing home studies	L	104	30.6	95	27.9	74	21.8	28	8.2	39	11.5	3.0	1.1
	P	121	60.5	29	14.5	29	14.5	21	10.5			4.6	0.8
I feel satisfied and not worried with my child being at school because their security is always guaranteed	L	9	2.6	35	10.3	74	21.8	104	30.6	118	34.0	2.6	1.5
	P					20	10.0	29	14.5	151	75.5	4.2	0.9
I think home is a safe place for my child because they fully secure while at home	L			37	10.9	75	22.1	116	34.1	112	32.9	3.3	1.3
	P	123	61.5	71	35.5	6	3.0					3.2	0.8
My child has never abuse substance or drugs	L	148	43.5	115	33.8	40	11.8	27	7.9	10	2.9	3.0	2.0
	P	26	13.0	29	14.5	90	45.0	55	27.5			4.6	1.1
I leave my child under the care of older sibling or Caretakers or relatives	L							115	33.8	126	37.1	2.2	1.8
	P	10	5.0	10	5.0	13	6.5	57	28.5	100	50.0	3.6	1.1
I spend lots of time with my child imparting skills and values	L	167	49.1	126	37.1	43	12.6	4	1.2			2.6	1.5
	P	104	52.0	72	36.0	24	12.0					3.8	1.1
My child is fully provided with basic needs while at home (food, health, clothing, shelter (e. t. c.))	L	105	30.9	78	22.9	65	19.1	29				2.2	1.3
	P	130	38.2	86	25.3	70	20.6	33	9.7	21	6.2	4.2	0.8
While at home my child exposed to healthy contents on media and social media	L	122	35.9	118	34.7	100	29.4					2.2	1.0
	P	100	50.0	92	46.0	8	4.0					3.6	1.5
There are cultural practices that put the life of my child at risk	L	26	7.6	55	16.2	35	10.3	102	30.0	122	35.9	3.3	1.2
	P	15	7.5	17	8.5	20	10.0	67	33.5	81	40.5	4.8	1.2

Source: Survey Data (2020)

The questions were presented in Likert scale format with scale range between 1 and 5 as given below:

Key: 1 = Strongly Disagree (SD), 2 = Disagree, 3 = Undecided (UD), 4 = Agree (A), 5 = Strongly Agree

Key: L= Learner, P= Parent, R= Responses

The study sought to establish parents and learner's perception on long school holidays due to corona among and the findings varied as shown in Table 4. On whether the children felt happy while at home, a majority of learners (n=157, 89.5%) were initially happy thinking that it was just a short break. This opinion was supported by a majority of parent (n=179, 89.5%) who agreed that their children were happier while at home than school. On the other hand (n=102, 30%) were undecided. To establish whether the children thought they were in company of good friends with unquestionable character (n=171, 59%) a majority agreed and this was the same with parents where (n=142, 17%) agreed that their children's friends were of good character while (n=58, 29%) of them disagreed with this position. Whether children got supported from relevant others while doing their home studies had majority (n=199, 58.5%) deny this stand. Further, a majority to parents (n=150, 75%) disagree with the opinion of supporting their children in their home studies. It is a difficult role as parents find themselves in uncharted waters of being home-school tutors for their children, while trying to work from home. The result has been frustration among a number of parents and in others a new found appreciation of the role teachers play (Standard on Sunday Team, 2013). Findings on whether learners and parents were satisfied with school security indicate that a majority of learners (n=222, 64.7%) agreed with this opinion. Further, parents supported by a majority (n=180, 90%) that they were satisfied with the security of their children at school given that teachers and school administration give the security of the learners utmost priority. Research findings on the thoughts of parents and learners on home safety indicated that neither the children nor parents trusted home as a safe place. A majority of learners (n=228, 67%) indicated that home was safe for them. On the contrary, a majority of parents (n=194, 96.5%) were of the opinion that home was not safe enough for their children given that they (parent) were away finding for them during the hard-economic times cause by the COVID-19 pandemic. In turn older sibling and caretaker were in charge of the children's welfare as indicated by the findings on Table 4. Given that parents were away from their children during the better part of the day this denied the children the opportunity to learn the important life skills and values from their parent as indicated by the majority of learners and parents (n=293, 86.2%; n=176, 88%) respectively. On whether learners are exposed to healthy contents on media and social media both findings indicate that a majority of learners (n=240, 70.6%) and parents (n=192, 96%) disagreed. Further, on the issues of risk related cultural practices, a majority of both learners (n=224, 65.9%) and parents (n=148, 74%) agreed that there were such practices.

### 4.3 Inferential Findings

#### 4.3.1 Correlation Findings

In order to establish the actual strength of the relationship between variables Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient was tested and presented on Table 5 below.

**Table 5: Correlations Between Psychosocial Factors and Long School Holidays**

Psychosocial factors	Pearson Correlation	Physical	Social	Psychological
Physical	Pearson Correlation	1		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.592**	1	
Social	Pearson Correlation	.596**	.598**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	
Psychological	Pearson Correlation	.685**	.584**	.631**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000

\*\*Correlation is Significant at the 0.05 Level (2-tailed)

Source: Survey Data (2020)

Pearson's product moment correlation coefficient was tested in order to check the actual strength of the relationship between variables. Correlation Analysis indicates a significant relationship between psychosocial effects, learners and parents' perception. Psychosocial effects exhibited significant positive relationship with physical aspects ( $r=0.592$ ,  $p<0.05$ ), results indicate a significant positive relationship between parents and learner's perception on psychosocial effects of long school holidays. Psychosocial physical aspects in this study include basic needs that learners need to be provided with while at home. These include food, clothing, shelter and safe drinking water among others. Correlations results on psychosocial effects exhibited significant positive relationship with social aspects ( $r=0.596$ ,  $p<0.05$ ), this correlation analysis results indicates a significant positive relationship between parents and learner's perception and psychosocial effects of long school holidays. In the study social aspects include the social interactions, exposure to media and social media as well as security concerns of children while at home. Psychosocial effects indicated a substantive significantly positive relationship with psychological aspects ( $r=0.685$ ,  $p<0.05$ ), the results exhibit a substantive significantly positive relationship between parents and learner's perception on psychosocial effects of long school holidays. In the current study psychological aspects include fear and anxiety related to the COVID-19 virus, loneliness due containments measures put by the government like curfews, wearing of masks, uncertainty about when school will resume among others.



## 5.0 DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 5.1 Discussion

The objective of the study was to Influence of Selected Psychosocial Factors on Parents and Learners Mental Wellbeing during the long school holiday Due to Corona Virus (COVID-19): A Perception Parents and learners in Uasin Gishu County Kenya. The null hypothesis –  $H_{01}$ . There exist no significant relationship between parents and learner's perceptions and psychosocial impacts of long school holidays on their personal wellbeing. The findings of the study accepted the null hypothesis with physical aspects ( $r = 0.592, p < 0.05$ ); social aspects ( $r=0.596, p<0.05$ ) and psychological aspect ( $r=0.685, p<0.05$ ) and observed positive and significant effect on the relationship between parents and learner's perception on psychosocial impacts on of long school holidays on their personal wellbeing due to COVID-19 as shown in correlation Table 4.5 above. The result signified that the psychosocial aspects as a result of long school holidays have a significant impact on the wellbeing of parents and learners.

#### 5.1.1 Physical aspect

The study findings on physical aspect ( $r = 0.592, p < 0.05$ ) indicated a positive moderate correlation between selected psychosocial factors and the mental wellbeing of parents and learners during the long school holiday due to COVID 19. Table 3 response on whether learners and parents were happy with the closure of school indicates that a majority of them were excited probably because they thought it will be just for a short period. However, with the spread of the virus, schools are going to remain closed for a long period of time and the reality has started to down on parents and learners alike. The study established the reason why parents and learners were unhappy with the closure of school was that some relied on free or discounted meals provided at schools. As a result, many learners who used to rely on free or discounted meals provided at schools for food and healthy nutrition will end up lacking these provisions. UNESCO (2020) confirmed that when schools close, nutrition is compromised. The implication is that parents are going to dig deeper into their already strained pockets to provide basic necessities to their children. These include food, clothing and even personal effects like sanitary towels which the government had put in place a mechanism of supplying them to girls from low income backgrounds. Since the break out of the pandemic world economies have suffered negatively and Kenya's is not an exception. This means many parents are struggling to put food on the table late alone sanitary provisions. The study established that school closure has stopped the provision of school meals and sanitary towels which children from disadvantaged families rely on significantly. This scenario has increased the risks of under-aged young girls engaging in commercial sex in order to gain access to food and sanitary towels needs (Penelope et al., 2015 . In fact, the situation is so dare that some families have nothing to eat completely. One of parents in a focus group discussion reported that:

*The food we bought just at the announcement of the first case of COVID-19 by the Health Cabinet Secretary in the country didn't last and we didn't have enough money to get more. As a result, the children in my household are not eating enough because we just cannot afford enough food.*

This finding is supported by Food Foundation (2017) who observed that an estimated 1 in 5 young people aged under 15 years live in an environment of moderate to severe food in security. Worse still, the United Nations World Food Programme (2020) has warned that an estimated 265 million people could face acute food insecurity by the end of 2020, up from 135 million people before the crisis. Food insecurity has negative impacts in the family unit. The situation is linked with parents going without food so as the children can eat, poor physical health and reduced engagements on physical economic activities. Lack of food can also cause under-nutrition, poor mental wellbeing as well as compromised immune system among the victims. This finding is in line with Brooks, Webster, Smith et al. (2020)

### 5.1.2 Social aspects

Social aspects according to this study refer to the home environment, all social interactions, exposure to media and social media as well as security concerns of children while at home. The study findings observed was ( $r = 0.592, p < 0.05$ ) which translate to a positive significant relationship between psychosocial impact of long school holidays and the wellbeing of parents and learners. This implies that the school closure due to COVID-19 meant change of the social environment for learners from school to home. It meant the children were mainly going to be under the care of parents, caregivers, older siblings and in some cases relatives. This would in turn deny them the opportunity to play and interact with friends which is essential in mental development. This finding is confirmed by UNESCO (2020) who observed that schools are hubs of social activity and human interaction. When schools close, many children and youth miss out of on social contact that is essential to learning and development. When were asked whether they were satisfied with the security of their children at home, a majority of parents ( $n=194, 96.5$ ) indicated that they were not (Table: 3)? It implies that they were uncomfortable or did not trust the quality of care of the people they had left their children with who included, caregivers, older siblings and relatives. This means parents and especially mothers must leave the home to go out and fend for the family. This observation matches that of Maseno and Kilonzo (2011) who established that women constitute around 50 per cent of Kenya's total population, but just 30 per cent of the total formal employment sector and they earn less than men. The implication is that most Kenyan women are petty farmers and petty traders, and work more than eight hours per day in the fields (working 12 to 13 more hours than men per week) (Maseno & Kilonzo, 2011) besides being housewives and child-rearers. The study observed that the risks of unsecure home environment are numerous and may include: sexual abuse which has led to shocking numbers of teenage pregnancies as well as contracting of disease like HIV & AIDs, drug and substance abuse, unhealthy social media and screen viewing (SV) that the children are exposed to among other social risks. According to Amnesty International (2000), there is a reported pattern of abuse by men who target minors for sex in the hope (or belief) that they are less likely to have HIV/AIDS. The report also notes that young girls are targeted in the belief that one may be cleansed of the HIV/AIDS through sexual relations with a virgin. Hence, of 1.6 million people with HIV 61% are children aged between 0-14 years while 910,000 are women (UNAIDS,2018; Avert, 2018). The findings on sexual abuse are similar to those of (Morgan, Melendez-Terress, Bond, Hawkins, Murphy & Moore, 2019; Alsehaima & Alanazi, 2018; Power & Azzi-Huck, 2016). They all observed that long school holidays expose to teenage pregnancies and risks of contracting HIV among other sexual diseases. These validates the anxiety and mental distress among a majority of parents in the sample

concerning the insecurity that children were exposed to while at home due COVID-19. The change also meant the learners were going to be away from their friends hence social isolation and loneliness as well as indulgence in SV which is likely to cause physical inactivity and academic fall back when school resume. Therefore, parents need to come up with alternative structured activities to keep their children active and busy so as to enhance mental development. They also need to oversee their children academic studies to avoid complete forgetting of what they had learnt before the breakup of the disease as confirmed by (Power & Azzi-Huck, 2016).

### 5.1.3 Psychological Aspects

Psychosocial effects indicated a significant positive relationship with psychological aspects ( $r=0.685$ ,  $p<0.05$ ), the results exhibit a substantive significantly positive relationship between parents and learner's perception on psychosocial effects of long school holidays. In the current study psychological aspects include fear and anxiety related to the COVID-19 virus rising infections, loneliness due containments measures put by the government like curfews, wearing of masks, uncertainty about when school will resume among others. The study established the learners the sudden closure of schools eventually turned out to be one of the longest school holidays in Kenya's Education history. As a result, learners and parents have been exposed to numerous psychological challenges and problems. Based on Table 3 parents and learners a majority of parents reported that home environment was not as safe as school environment for their children given that they did not trust the caregivers since they were out most at work most of the day themselves. These findings were affirmed by Maseno and Kilonzo (2011) who observed that 30 per cent of the total formal employment sector was occupied by women and that most of the Kenyan women are petty farmers and petty traders, and work more than eight hours per day in the fields thus being away from their children. This in itself was a major source of mental stress to such parents. Further, COVID -19 Pandemic has caused suspension of most economic activities devastating people's means of livelihood. As a result, children have been forced to engage in income generating activities some being risky like young girls to engaging in commercial sex in order to gain access to sanitary towels and help their families survive the harsh economic times (Penelope et al., 2015). Further, the home confinement measure of containing the disease by the government has also exposed learners to a lot of screen viewing (SV) risks. They have become inactive due long hours of being in front of computers, mobile phones or TVs. Eventually not only causing physical unfitness but also psychological distress and aggression among other negative behaviour. These findings were confirmed as Alsehaima and Alanazi (2018) noted that too much time on SV and may cause feelings of isolation, distress and depression, boredom, fatigue, and increased levels of aggression due to violent contents among other risk behaviors. Fears and anxiety surrounding the disease in itself is a case of concern. My learners and parents are living in fear of being victims of the diseases or their relatives. There is also uncertainty as to when the disease will be curbed and normalcy returns among other uncertainties. Fears and anxieties are responsible for sleep disorders including nightmares, irritability among other emotional disorders. The similar findings were observed fear of asking about the epidemics and the health of relatives, poor sleep including nightmares, poor appetite, physical discomfort, agitation and inattention, clinginess, and separation problems were among the main psychological conditions that the disease caused.

## **5.2 Conclusion**

The study concluded that the disease has resulted to negative psychosocial impact among parents and learners alike since the sudden closure of schools in mid-March due to corona virus (COVID 19) disease. That the sample experience psychological stress associated with the pandemic mostly because the cause and treatment was still unknown yet the spread seemed very rapid. Based on these the study made recommendations.

## **5.3 Recommendation**

Therefore, parents and learners need to nurture resilience which is the capacity to recover quickly or spring back into normal from difficulties. This means as the Ministry of Health update the public on the status of COVID -19, there is need to have psychologists to offer advice to the public on how to cope and manage the situation mentally and socially as a way of building resilience. This is necessary because it seems the disease may take long to clear as experts predict. Parents need to help their children to develop the capacity or skill necessary to manage everything from little to big disappointments in life. It is also crucial for parent to know what their children watch on TV, mobile phones and computer while they are home to avoid harmful or improper contents from being viewed. In spite of hard economic times due to the pandemic, the physical, social and emotional security of their children cannot be changed with anything. It is of great importance that children are provided with basic needs and other life essentials to avoid exposure to income generating activities that might be risky to their lives now and in future like transactional sex. It is not enough to acknowledge that the school is a safer environment for their children but instead they need to put measures in place that will ensure home is even the safest place for their sons and daughter all the times. There is also need for parents to ensure that they have assigned household duties to their children during long holidays to enable them to be physically active and avoid scenarios where children have a lot of time for themselves which can be easily misused. The government on its part can put in place mechanisms for appropriately identification of vulnerable families for aids in terms of food and other essentials like sanitary towels while children are home for long holidays to avoid the distress that such families undergo in acquiring these needs. Further, Government Sponsored Calamities Response Units need to be set up at County levels so as to offer counseling support among other humanitarian support when calamities strike. Ministry of education should consider nurturing and implementation of stress management skills through curriculum coverage at primary and secondary levels. Further, teacher to be trained in psychosocial counseling skills so as to provide the same to learners especially those living in areas hit by calamities such as epidemics.

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