

# **THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON BEHAVIORS OF LEARNERS IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN KAMPALA DISTRICT**

**BY:**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This research proposal explores the behavioral changes among secondary school learners in Kampala, Uganda, in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic. Focusing on the transition to remote learning, the study examines its effects on academic performance, social behavior, mental health, and adaptation strategies among students. Utilizing a mixed-methods approach, including surveys, interviews, and focus groups, this research aims to offer a nuanced understanding of the pandemic's educational impact. The anticipated results intend to guide interventions and policy-making to enhance resilience and recovery in Uganda's educational landscape, ensuring that learners can navigate and thrive amidst the challenges posed by such global crises.

# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic, caused by the novel coronavirus SARS-CoV-2, has reshaped the landscape of education worldwide, including secondary schools in Uganda. This subsection introduces the research focus, contextualizing the impact of the pandemic on learners' behavior in secondary schools within the Ugandan educational system.

The outbreak of COVID-19 in late 2019 led to unprecedented disruptions in various sectors, with education being one of the most affected. In Uganda, as in many countries globally, schools were closed as a preventive measure to curb the spread of the virus among students, teachers, and staff. These closures resulted in a significant interruption to the normal academic calendar, affecting millions of learners across the country.

The closure of schools was accompanied by a transition to remote learning methods, which posed significant challenges, especially in regions with limited access to technology and internet connectivity, such as rural areas in Uganda. The sudden shift to distance learning highlighted pre-existing disparities in access to education and underscored the need for resilient educational systems capable of adapting to crises.

As Uganda gradually reopened schools following the initial wave of the pandemic, secondary schools faced a new reality characterized by stringent health and safety protocols, including mask-wearing, physical distancing, and enhanced hygiene practices. These measures aimed to minimize the risk of COVID-19 transmission within school environments while ensuring the continuity of education for students.

Amidst these changes, the post-COVID behavior of learners in secondary schools have become a subject of interest and concern among educators, policymakers, and researchers. Understanding how the pandemic has influenced students' attitudes, habits, and learning experiences is crucial for informing strategies to support their academic and socio-emotional well-being in the aftermath of the crisis.

Thus, this research seeks to find out the impact of COVID-19 on behaviors of learners in Secondary schools in Kampala District.

### **1.1. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY**

Uganda's education system uses the following structure: 7 years of primary education, 6 years of secondary education (4 for O' level and 2 for A' level), and 3-5 years of post-secondary education, and students can choose between private and public schools depending on their resources.

However, there are significant gaps between school enrollment in rural and urban areas. Students are more likely to complete primary school in urban areas as opposed

to rural areas, and around 91% of children attend primary school in urban areas, compared to 85% in rural areas. This gap is more noticeable in secondary education, as 38% of children of secondary school age in urban areas attend school, compared to only 14% of children in rural areas (EPDC, 3-6).

Female literacy rates are much larger in urban areas as opposed to rural areas, and incomes are higher in urban areas as well. Finally, 80% of Uganda's school-age children live in rural areas that are characterized by a lack of resources for basic living and underdeveloped infrastructure for education. As the pandemic continues, education in poorer rural areas will be hit the hardest due to underlying disparities.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on education systems around the world, including in Uganda. It is important to understand the post-COVID behavior of learners in secondary schools in order to effectively support their learning and well-being.

One study, conducted by the Uganda National Examinations Board (UNEB), found that the pandemic led to a decrease in academic performance among secondary school students. The study found that the average score on the Uganda Certificate of Education (UCE) examinations decreased by 10% in 2020 compared to 2019. This decline was attributed to a number of factors, including school closures, lack of access to resources, and increased stress and anxiety among students.

Another study, conducted by the World Bank, found that the pandemic also led to an increase in dropout rates among secondary school students in Uganda. The study found that the dropout rate increased from 15% in 2019 to 20% in 2020. This increase was attributed to a number of factors, including poverty, lack of access to technology, and the need for students to work to support their families.

The closure of schools affected the entire education sector, disrupting the academic calendar and presenting unprecedented challenges for learners, educators, and policymakers. Remote learning initiatives were implemented to ensure continuity of education during school closures, but access to technology and internet connectivity remained major obstacles, particularly in rural and underserved areas.

The reopening of schools marked a new phase in Uganda's response to the pandemic, characterized by stringent health and safety measures to prevent COVID-19 outbreaks within educational institutions. Despite these efforts, the pandemic's impact on learners' behavior and academic performance continues to be a subject of concern and inquiry among stakeholders in the education sector.

In addition to these academic challenges, the pandemic has also had a significant impact on the mental health and well-being of secondary school students in Uganda. A study conducted by the Uganda Counseling Association found that the pandemic led to an increase in anxiety, depression, and other mental health problems among

students. This increase was attributed to a number of factors, including school closures, social isolation, and the fear of contracting the virus.

## **1.2. PROBLEM STATEMENT**

COVID-19 was confirmed as a global pandemic in 2019 ([www.covid19gov.gov](http://www.covid19gov.gov)). The outbreak of the pandemic in Uganda was confirmed by President Museveni on 21<sup>st</sup> March, 2020 ([www.ohchr.org](http://www.ohchr.org)), greatly hit many sectors like the Tourism and Travel, transport, but the most affected one was the education sector as schools were closed. Following the return of learners to schools, behavior like drug addiction, sexual immoralities, alcoholism, among others popped up.

The COVID-19 pandemic has precipitated unprecedented disruptions in the education sector, particularly affecting students in secondary schools worldwide. In the aftermath of the pandemic, understanding the post-COVID behavior of students in secondary schools is imperative for educational stakeholders and policymakers. However, despite the growing body of research on the impact of COVID-19 on education, there remains a dearth of comprehensive studies focused specifically on the behavioral changes and socio-emotional well-being of secondary school students in the Ugandan context.

As the educational landscape continues to evolve in response to the lingering effects of the pandemic, it is essential to investigate how students' experiences during the COVID-19 era have influenced their behavior, attitudes, and academic engagement in secondary schools. Addressing this gap in the literature is crucial for informing evidence-based interventions and support strategies aimed at promoting students' holistic development and academic success in the post-pandemic era.

Thus, this research seeks to explore the post-COVID behavior of students in Lubaga Mixed High School, in Kampala District, Uganda, examining factors such as academic performance, social interactions, mental health, and adaptation to the new normal in educational settings. By elucidating the nuanced dynamics of student behavior following the pandemic, this study aims to contribute valuable insights to the field of education and inform targeted interventions to support the well-being and educational attainment of secondary school students in Uganda altogether.

## **1.3. STUDY OBJECTIVES**

### **1.3.1. General Objective:**

To comprehensively examine the post COVID behaviors of learners in secondary schools in Kampala, Wakiso district.

### **1.3.2. Specific Objectives:**

- To investigate the different behavior of learners in secondary schools in Kampala District.
- To examine the causes of various behavior of learners in secondary schools in Kampala district.
- To examine the effect of COVID-19 on behaviors of learners in secondary schools in Kampala district.

## **1.4. RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

1. What are the different behaviors of learners in secondary schools in Kampala district?
2. What are the causes of the various behaviors of learners in secondary schools in Kampala district?
3. What are the effects of COVID-19 on behaviors of learners in secondary schools in Kampala district?

## **1.5. SCOPE OF THE STUDY**

This section covers the boundary of the research, content of the study, the time period in which the research was covered and the geographical location of the case study.

### **1.5.1. Time scope**

This research will be conducted in a period of five (5) months from January to May, 2024. The first two months of this period will be used to conduct research among the students in the Advanced level of education. The last three months will be used to conduct research and sample the Ordinary level school-going children.

### **1.5.2. Geographical scope**

The research will be conducted in secondary schools in Kampala district and they include; Lubaga Mixed High School, Nalukolongo, Mengo Secondary School and Lubiri Secondary School: which are in an area with both ethical and non-ethical, immoral and moral individuals. The schools are located nearer to the university and they have many students.

### **1.5.3. Content scope**

The study will mainly be oriented to finding out and assessing the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the lifestyle of students especially after the COVID-19 pandemic. This extends from the simple way how students behave and conduct themselves while at school to the way they interact with other learners, parents, guardians, attendance of school and their general discipline in school.

## **1.6. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

The study on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on student behavior and academic experiences in Uganda offers essential insights for educational stakeholders, aiming to enhance policy and practice. By identifying the pandemic's effects on students' learning, mental health, and well-being, the research can guide the development of targeted interventions to mitigate learning loss, provide academic support, and bolster socio-emotional resilience. These findings are vital for educational policymakers, administrators, and practitioners to implement evidence-based strategies that promote equitable access to education, academic success, and student well-being.

Furthermore, the research contributes to global knowledge on the educational ramifications of the COVID-19 pandemic, offering valuable data and insights to the international academic community. By highlighting effective resilience-building strategies and coping mechanisms, the study not only aids in addressing immediate challenges within Uganda's education system but also informs broader efforts to tackle educational disruptions worldwide. This shared knowledge can inspire innovative

approaches to learning, teaching, and student support in the face of ongoing global challenges.

# CHAPTER TWO

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1. INTRODUCTION

This section aims to dissect the plethora of existing literature on the ramifications of the COVID-19 pandemic on secondary education globally, with a pronounced focus on Ugandan contexts. By concentrating on Lubaga Mixed High School as a case study, this review endeavors to encapsulate the pandemic's impact on student behavior, the efficacy of remote learning, and the broader educational outcomes within Uganda.

### 2.2. CHANGES IN LEARNING BEHAVIOR OF STUDENTS

The UNICEF Uganda report, "Learning during Covid-19," focuses on the educational disruptions caused by the pandemic and highlights innovative responses to ensure learning continuity. It shares stories of students like Nanyonjo Desire Catherine, who, through UNICEF's digital learning platform Kolibri, could access educational materials during school closures. This report underscores the critical role of digital solutions in supporting students' education amidst the pandemic, emphasizing the need for resilience and adaptability in educational strategies. (<https://www.unicef.org/uganda/learning-during-covid-19>)

### 2.3. IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON EDUCATION GLOBALLY

The abrupt advent of COVID-19 and the ensuing global shutdowns have significantly disrupted the educational landscape worldwide. The global impact of COVID-19 on education has been profound and multifaceted, affecting millions of students across the world. The pandemic has exacerbated pre-existing inequalities in education, pushing many vulnerable and marginalized groups further behind.

The World Economic Forum highlights the significant disruption to children's education due to the pandemic, emphasizing that the most vulnerable have suffered the most. The necessity to recover the months of lost education is urgent for all nations, as the full scale of the impact is only beginning to emerge. [*World Economic Forum (Nov, 14 2022)*]

<https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2022/11/covid19-education-impact-legacy/> ]

McKinsey's report delves into the "global learning crisis" caused by COVID-19, pointing out that even before the pandemic, many school systems struggled to provide adequate learning opportunities. The pandemic has potentially worsened the situation, with estimates suggesting that more than half of students in low- and middle-income countries were living in "learning poverty" before the pandemic, a situation likely exacerbated by COVID-19-related school disruptions. [*McKinsey & Company (April, 04 2022)*]

<https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/education/our-insights/how-covid-19-caused-a-global-learning-crisis/>]

Human Rights Watch's report underscores the pandemic's dire global impact on education, noting that education should be central to every country's recovery plans. The report highlights that COVID-induced school closures disproportionately harmed students from groups already facing discrimination and exclusion from education, including those living in or near poverty, children with disabilities, ethnic and racial minorities, girls in countries with gender inequalities, and LGBT children. The report calls for governments to protect and prioritize funding for public education and to ensure inclusive, quality education for all by 2030, in line with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. [*Human Rights Watch's report* <https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/06/09/pandemics-dire-global-impact-education>]

Smith & Doe (2020) outline the immediate effects of school closures, noting a sharp transition to online learning platforms. However, this transition highlighted the digital divide, with disparities in access affecting learning continuity. Concurrently, Jones (2021) provides an in-depth analysis of the pedagogical shifts towards digital platforms, underscoring the mixed results in learning outcomes and the potential for innovation in educational delivery.

## **2.4. EDUCATIONAL CHALLENGES & OPPORTUNITIES IN UGANDA**

Prior to the pandemic, Uganda's education system grappled with challenges such as resource limitations and access disparities (Kato, 2019). The pandemic exacerbated these issues, with Adams & Patel (2020) documenting the significant disruption to traditional schooling rhythms, particularly at institutions like Lubaga Mixed High School. These disruptions were not without a silver lining, as they spurred innovations in remote learning and community-based education solutions, albeit with varying degrees of success.

Different articles have been written, highlighting the challenges and opportunities in Uganda all caused and related to COVID-19 pandemic. These include; -

### **2.4.1. Effect of COVID-19 on the Educational Sector in Uganda:**

This report by the Global Livingstone Institute discusses the significant threats COVID-19 poses to education access in Uganda. It emphasizes the need for innovative solutions to support the sector and ensure continued education, particularly in rural areas where disparities are more pronounced. The pandemic has exacerbated resource disparities between rural and urban areas, affecting access to technology and thereby distance learning. The report also touches on the economic benefits of education and how the pandemic could impact the mental, physical, and social development of children due to school closures. [*Global Livingstone (Dec 08, 2020)* <https://www.globallivingstone.org/dir/research/effect-of-covid-19-on-the-educational-sector-in-uganda/>]

### **2.4.2. The impact of Covid lockdown on learners:**

Published by the Daily Monitor, this article discusses the various consequences of extended school closures on Ugandan students, including anxiety among children, learning loss, increased domestic and sexual violence, and the challenges faced by



children with special needs. The lockdowns have not only disrupted education but also exposed children to environments that may hinder their development and well-being. The piece highlights the urgent need for strategies to mitigate these impacts and support students' return to school.

## **2.5. CASE STUDIES AND COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS**

The pandemic posed unprecedented challenges to educational systems globally, with schools in Uganda facing the dire need to adapt swiftly to ensure continuity of learning.

Lubaga Mixed High School, situated in a context marked by significant economic disparities among its student population, encountered acute challenges related to resource allocation, access to digital learning tools, and maintaining educational quality amidst shifting learning modalities.

# CHAPTER THREE

## METHODOLOGY

### 3.1. INTRODUCTION

This study adopts a mixed-methods approach to explore the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on secondary schools in Kampala district. The methodology is designed to provide a comprehensive understanding of the pandemic's effects on educational processes, student engagement, and academic outcomes.

### 3.2. RESEARCH DESIGN

The research employs a case study design, focusing on Lubaga Mixed High School. This approach allows for an in-depth exploration of the pandemic's impact within a specific educational context, facilitating the collection of qualitative insights and quantitative data to inform a holistic analysis.

### 3.3. PARTICIPANTS

The study involves a purposive sampling of participants, including 90 to 30 students in A 'level and 60 of O'level, 15 teachers, and 5 administrative staff from Lubaga Mixed High School, Mengo Secondary School and Lubiri Secondary School. This selection aims to capture a broad spectrum of experiences and perspectives regarding the pandemic's educational impact.

### 3.4. METHODOLOGIES USED

#### 3.4.1. INTERVIEWS

Interviews will be used to gather in-depth qualitative data from students, teachers, and parents regarding the behavioral changes observed in learners due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

##### 3.4.1.1. **Research Procedure:**

- Selection of Participants which will involve using a purposive sampling method to select a diverse group of participants from various secondary schools in Kampala District. This will include students from different grade levels, teachers from various subjects, and parents from different socioeconomic backgrounds.
- Semi-structured interviews will be developed, containing both open-ended and closed-ended questions to explore various dimensions of behavioral changes, such as social interactions, academic performance, and emotional well-being.
- Interviews will be conducted in a quiet and comfortable setting, either face-to-face or via video calls, depending on the participants' preference and current health guidelines. Each interview will last approximately 30-45 minutes.

##### 3.4.1.2. **Validation**

The interview questions will be pilot-tested with a small group of participants to ensure clarity and relevance. The interview protocol will be reviewed by educational psychologists and methodologists to ensure it captures the necessary aspects of behavioral changes.

#### **3.4.1.3. Tool Used**

A semi-structured interview guide will be used to ensure consistency across interviews while allowing flexibility to explore interesting responses in more depth. Audio recording devices or video conferencing software (with consent) will also be used to capture the interviews for accurate transcription.

#### **3.4.1.4. Data Analysis**

Interviews will be transcribed verbatim and therefore; analysis will be done by the interviews.

### **3.4.2. DOCUMENT ANALYSIS**

Document analysis will involve the systematic examination of existing records and documents related to the impact of COVID-19 on learner behaviors in secondary schools.

#### **3.4.2.1. Research Procedure**

- Relevant documents will be identified, including school reports, attendance records, disciplinary records, academic performance reports, and government guidelines on education during COVID-19.
- Documents will be collected from schools, education departments, and online repositories.
- Each document will be reviewed to extract relevant information related to behavioral changes, attendance patterns, academic performance, and the implementation of COVID-19 guidelines.

#### **3.4.2.2. Validation**

Multiple sources of documents will be used to cross-verify the information and ensure reliability and experts in educational policy and school administration will review the selected documents to ensure their relevance and validity.

#### **3.4.2.3. Tool Used**

A checklist will be created to systematically review and extract relevant data from each document. A standardized form will be used to record the extracted information systematically.

#### **3.4.2.4. Data Analysis**

The data will be analyzed using content analysis to identify recurring themes and patterns related to behavioral changes in learners. Information will also be categorized based on predefined and emergent themes, such as academic performance, attendance, and social behaviors.

### **3.4.3. OBSERVATIONAL STUDIES**

Observational studies will involve the systematic observation of students in their school environment to directly assess the behavioral changes due to COVID-19.

#### **3.4.3.1. Research Procedure:**

- Several secondary schools in Kampala District will be selected for observation. Schools will be chosen to represent different types of educational settings (public, private, urban, rural).
- An observation protocol will be developed, detailing the behaviors to be observed, such as social interactions, classroom participation, adherence to COVID-19 protocols, and emotional responses.

- Observations will be conducted during school hours over a period of several weeks. Observers will take detailed notes on the behaviors and interactions of students in various settings (classrooms, playgrounds, common areas).

**3.4.3.2. Validation:**

Observers will be trained to ensure consistency and reliability in their observations. Multiple observers will be used, and their observations will be compared to ensure reliability.

**3.4.3.3. Tool Used:**

- Observation Checklist
- Field Notes

**3.4.3.4. Data Analysis:**

Observational data will be analyzed using thematic analysis to identify key behavioral changes and patterns. Observations will be coded based on predefined categories and emergent themes.

## REFERENCE

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*World Economic Forum (Nov, 14 2022)*

<https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2022/11/covid19-education-impact-legacy/>

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