

**COVID-19 PANDEMIC MITIGATION MEASURES AND STUDENTS'
PARTICIPATION IN SCHOOLING: A STUDY OF PRE AND POST COVID-19
PERIOD IN PUBLIC BOARDING SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN
THARAKANITHI COUNTY**

LEAH NTINYARI MURUNGI

**A Thesis Submitted to the Graduate School in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Award of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy of
Education in Educational Foundations of Chuka University**


CHUKA UNIVERSITY

OCTOBER 2025

DECLARATION AND RECOMMENDATION

Declaration

This thesis is my original work and has not been submitted for an award of diploma or conferment of degree in any University.

Signature:  Date: 28/10/2025
Leah Ntinyari Murungi
ED17/40037/19

Recommendation

This thesis has been examined, passed and submitted with our approval as University supervisor

Signature:  Date: 28/10/2025
Dr. Benjamin M. Kanga
Chuka University

Signature:  Date: 28/10/2025
Dr. John Kamoyo
Chuka University

Signature:  Date: 28/10/2025
Dr. John M. Karauri
Chuka University



COPYRIGHT

©2025

All rights are kept. No part of this thesis may be replicated or communicated in any form or any means of mechanical, including reproducing, video recording or any information storage or retrieval system without consent from the author or Chuka University

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my husband Charles Njeru and Children Mercy Wanja, Melvin Fadhili, Alvin Baraka, and Vivian Kanana. To my parents Hezekiel Murungi and Martha Karwitha whose inspiration has no measure.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

First, I want to thank God for the providence given upon me to undergo the processes of obtaining a PhD. Special thanks goes to my supervisors Dr Benjamin Kanga, Dr John M. Karauri, and Dr John Kamoyo. I also acknowledge Dr James Mwenda for his valuable input to this work.

I would also like to thank my respondents who participated in in this study. I too appreciate the support bestowed by Chuka university management and staff, Teachers Service Commission and ministry of education officers at Sub-county and county levels for allowing me to visit schools and interact with my respondents.

ABSTRACT

Education is a cornerstone of national development, fostering literacy, skills, and socioeconomic growth. In Kenya, the COVID-19 pandemic and associated containment measures disrupted traditional schooling, altering student participation in schooling through school closures, social distancing, suspension of co-curricular activities, and introduction of remote learning. These changes deepened existing inequalities, strained school culture, and challenged learner engagement. Understanding the extent and nature of these impacts is critical for developing resilient, inclusive education systems capable of sustaining participation in schooling during future crises. This study examined the effects of COVID-19 containment measures on secondary school students' participation in schooling, by comparing pre-pandemic and post-pandemic schooling experiences. The study targeted a population of 1532 which comprised of 108 curriculum masters/mistresses and 1424 teachers in public boarding secondary schools in Tharaka Nithi County. Purposive sampling method was used to select 20 curriculum masters and simple random sampling was used to select 360 teachers. Data was collected by use of questionnaires for teachers and interview schedule for curriculum master. Piloting of the study was done on 20 teachers and 5 curriculum masters from Meru County. Experts from faculty of education ascertained content validity of the instruments. The questionnaire instrument tested for reliability achieved the alpha Cronbach value of 0.73 for teachers. The data was analyzed using descriptive statistics, and Wilcoxon signed-rank tests for hypothesis testing. The study found that COVID19 lockdown hindered student participation in schooling because they were restricted to staying. The new learning strategies introduced were difficult to implement because it required infrastructure to enhance their implementation which were not available in many rural areas. The adjusted school culture restricted interaction and hence limited the socialization aspect of schooling. COVID 19 mitigation measures created social inequalities and worsened the already existing ones. The study recommends that the Ministry of Education and its stakeholders need to develop a multi-dimensional crisis management policy guideline on how to respond in case of pandemics. The government to addressed digital equity through prioritizing ICT infrastructure investment in all schools, especially in marginalized and rural areas. The curriculum developers need to integrate digital and online learning in school curriculum. The school managements should emphasize and strengthen co-curricular activities as part of the school calendar to enhance socialization. The Parents Association together with teachers need to develop participatory, community-oriented measures with due consideration given to the role of parents, teachers, and local community leaders.