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Influence of COVID-19 Curfew Measures on Youth Socio-Economic Development in Turkana Central Sub-County, Kenya

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Abstract
This study examined the influence of COVID-19 curfew measures on youth socio-economic development in Turkana Central Sub-County, Kenya. Anchored on Erik Erikson's Psychosocial Development Theory, the study explored how these disruptions affected youth identity formation, productivity, and social integration. A convergent parallel research design was adopted to study a target population of 25,918 youth (aged 18–35 years). Using the Krejcie and Morgan formula, a sample size of 379 respondents was determined. Stratified random sampling was utilised for the quantitative survey, while purposive sampling was used to select participants for Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs). Quantitative data were analysed using SPSS, while qualitative data underwent thematic analysis. The findings revealed that curfew measures severely strained youth livelihoods by triggering a 49.6 per cent reduction in informal jobs, which were poorly compensated, 78.4 per cent reduced business hours due to movement restriction, slashing incomes to 90.6 per cent as it affected salaries and wages, limiting credit access to 51.8 per cent due to lack of collateral, and escalating transport costs to 53.2 per cent due to high fuel cost. Youth in the informal sector, particularly in *boda boda* (motorcycle) transport, fishing, retail, and *Jua Kali* (informal manufacturing) enterprises faced the most severe economic hardships due to movement barriers and collapsed market opportunities. The study recommends collaborative interventions between the government, financial institutions, and development partners to foster recovery through affordable credit, entrepreneurship support, digital inclusion, and targeted skills development.

Key words: COVID-19, curfew, Kenya, socio-economic development, Turkana Central, youth.

INTRODUCTION

COVID-19 is an infectious illness caused by the novel severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus. In response to its rapid spread, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the outbreak a Public Health Emergency of International Concern on 30 January 2020. The WHO later classified COVID-19 as a global pandemic on 11 March 2020 (Cennimo et al., 2022). The COVID-19 pandemic resulted from the rapid international spread of SARS-CoV-2, a coronavirus that causes COVID-19 disease. As of Oct 22, 2021, more than 242·3 million infections and 4·9 million deaths were documented, making it one of the most extensive pandemics in history (Singh, 2021).

The COVID-19 pandemic profoundly disrupted economic and social life across the globe. In Kenya, the government implemented dusk-to-dawn curfew containment measures, which influenced transport and non-essential services. While these interventions were necessary to curb the spread of the virus, they significantly affected the livelihoods and well-being of young people, who constitute a large proportion of the country’s active population.

During the pandemic, many workplaces that did not provide essential services were closed, forcing employees to work remotely where possible. Educational institutions were shut down, and mass gatherings including religious, cultural, and sporting events were suspended to minimise person-to-person contact. Although the government launched innovative solutions such as internet-enabled balloons in partnership with Google to support e-learning, remote work, and e-commerce, access to such technologies remained limited in marginalised regions such as Turkana Central Sub-County.

Consequently, many young people in Turkana Central faced job losses, learning disruptions, reduced income-generating opportunities, and limited access to digital infrastructure. These challenges not only deepened existing inequalities but also hindered youth socio-economic development and resilience. Despite the national and global discourse on the pandemic’s effects, there is limited empirical evidence on how COVID-19 specifically impacted the socio-economic development of youth in Turkana Central Sub-County. Therefore, the paper examined the influence of curfew on youth Socio-economic development in Turkana Central Sub-County.

The World Health Organization (2020) reported that COVID-19 caused significant loss of life across the globe and posed unparalleled threats to healthcare systems, food security, and labour markets. Business closures associated with the pandemic had severe economic consequences, leaving around 10 million people vulnerable to extreme poverty. Furthermore, the global population experiencing undernourishment, estimated at about 690 million, was expected to rise by up to 132 million without prompt and effective management. Millions of enterprises face an existential threat of loan default as banks plan to recover their money from assets acquired by the individual. Approximately half of the world's 3.3 billion workers faced the possibility of losing their means of livelihood during the COVID-19 pandemic. Those employed in the informal sector were especially vulnerable because many lacked social protection, access to quality healthcare, and productive resources. As lockdowns disrupted income-generating activities, numerous households struggled to provide sufficient and nutritious food for themselves and their families.

Mathur et al. (2021) argued that young people in Countries like the United Kingdom, South Asia and England escaped the economic and social impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Situation for pre-pandemic influenced, busy markets in urban centres and opportunities for many young people, making them precarious and insecure in doing business in the Central Business District. The closures in sectors that traditionally employ the youth labour force, such as retail, tourism and consumer services, and younger staff were the first to be made redundant, moved onto insecure work contracts and find jobs at all (ILO, 2021). Youth sources of income were interrupted as job insecurity increased, as young people depend on casual work for survival. During 2020, global youth employment fell by 8.7 per cent, while adults experienced a 3.7 per cent drop. In middle-income countries, country-level data show that as a demographic group, young people had been particularly impacted by declines in employment (Barford et al., 2021).

Akanni and Gabriel (2020) revealed that COVID-19 on the Nigerian economy led to disruption of activities and economic instability. Government regulations such as Quarantine, stay-at-home, and social distancing had limitations in spending and supply factors, which included cutting or stopping production and output, and had a negative impact on economic growth. This led to an increased unemployment rate, resulting in poverty among urban dwellers. The National Bureau of Statistics report 2020 ranked Nigeria at position 21 among 181 countries with a high unemployment rate of 23.1 per cent; it is estimated that about 87 million Nigerians live in abject poverty with less than $2 a day. Globally, businesses cancelled trade shows and conferences, which resulted in cancelled trips due to lockdown. At the start of 2020, global airlines repeatedly revised their projected financial losses from COVID-19, increasing estimates from US$29.3 billion to US$63 billion and eventually to US$113 billion as passenger bookings continued to decline beyond China and the wider Asian region. These developments left the aviation industry highly vulnerable, severely disrupting international travel and the movement of goods and services, particularly in developing countries.

Mercy Corps (2020) suggested that in the period of crises, young people were among the first to lose their jobs, and many were in the informal economy, working in areas like tourism, transportation, and hospitality. Young people were being hard hit by the COVID-19 pandemic and made homeless, earned less income, and were vulnerable to inequality. Obi and Kabandula (2021) revealed that COVID-19 pandemic containment measures of self-isolation, lockdown and curfews contributed to limited access to livelihood opportunities. This had generated economic pressures that led youth to engage in criminal activities, causing unrest in their communities. Incidences of sexual and gender-based violence have increased, as well as tension emanating from the perception of unfair access to livelihood.

Finamore (2019) in Kenya observed challenges influencing youth in their socio-economic development as failure to succeed in education, family problems, Substance abuse, pressure of materialism, lack of affordable housing, negative stereotyping and crime. COVID-19 pandemic caused more harm in employment sectors, where 35 per cent of young people aged 15-29 years are employed in low paid and insecure jobs on average in restaurants, hotels and gig industry facing high risk of job and income loss compared to 15 per cent of middle-aged employees 30-50 years and 16 per cent of older workers aged 51years and above (OECD, 2020). This formed a gap for the current study to investigate the extent to which Covid-19 pandemic had influenced youth education in Turkana Central.

The COVID-19 pandemic had created many challenges for both individuals and healthcare systems in Turkana Central, such as staff shortages, personal protective equipment (PPE) shortages, and intensive care unit (ICU) and hospital bed capacitiesat the population level, public authorities and governments introduced lockdowns and quarantine to prevent the spread of the virus, since it was discovered that the virus is more active in social areas. The quarantine, stay-at-home, and social distancing policies were implemented to control the spread of the infection (Alghamdi & Alghamdi, 2022).

The COVID-19 pandemic affected employment in Turkana Central as the Government cushioned the youth against socio-economic threats associated with the pandemic, and employees experienced stress that degenerated into depression and drove them into mental health problems as a result of Containment measures of social distancing (UNDP, 2020). The prolonged lockdown, curfew and closure of public places in major towns of Lodwar, Kanamkemer, Kalokol, Kerio and Kangatotha made a bad situation worse as workers in hotels, Retail shops and the fishing sector slowed down due to restricted movement to contain the spread of the pandemic by the Government of Kenya (ILO, 2021).

In Turkana Central, Development Initiative Organisation findings showed that youth over 75 per cent embraced technological change and innovations to promote remote working, learning, and conduct business as an alternative solution to mitigation strategy for the COVID-19 pandemic and minimise congestion in areas of socio-economic development (Development Initiative, 2020). The opportunities for online workers improved with socio-economic challenges brought by the COVID-19 pandemic; online workers were not affected because their workspace was safe to conduct business and deliver services, as the government offered digital support innovation on online operations through formulation of a policy framework to protect misuse of online services (Gagliardone et al., 2021). This growing reliance on digital platforms underscored the importance of digital technologies in sustaining social and economic activities during the pandemic, a phenomenon examined by Alghamdi and Alghamdi (2022). They highlighted that technologies such as digital health platforms, online communication tools, and data-driven systems helped governments, organisations, and individuals adapt to pandemic-related disruptions. Despite Governments and Partners struggling to mitigate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic through imposing lockdowns, curfews, supporting SMEs and Digital innovation, little has been done in this field in the area of study on the COVID-19 pandemic andsocio-economic development, which forms the basis for this study in Turkana Central Sub-County.

Statement of the Problem

The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted economies and livelihoods across the world, with Kenya experiencing significant social and economic challenges. Although the pandemic affected all population groups, young people were among the most vulnerable due to their high dependence on informal employment, small businesses, casual labour, and limited financial security. Government measures such as lockdowns, movement restrictions, closure of businesses, and suspension of learning institutions contributed to widespread job losses, reduced incomes, and increased economic uncertainty among the youth.

Before the pandemic, youth unemployment was already a major development challenge in Kenya. The pandemic further worsened this situation by reducing employment opportunities, disrupting entrepreneurial activities, and limiting access to markets and financial resources. Many young people were forced to close businesses, deplete savings, or rely on family support and informal coping strategies to survive. These challenges had broader implications for poverty levels, food security, mental well-being, and long-term economic prospects.

Despite government interventions and recovery programs aimed at mitigating the effects of the pandemic, there was limited empirical evidence on the extent to which these measures restored or improved youth livelihoods in different regions of Kenya. Furthermore, existing studies often focus on the general economic impact of COVID-19 without adequately examining its specific effects on youth employment, income generation, entrepreneurship, and household welfare.

In Turkana Central Sub-County, a similar pattern was observed during the COVID-19 pandemic, where youth, particularly those in low-income, informal employment, experienced a greater loss of income and faced more significant barriers to returning to work in different sectors (Grove & Zwi, 2006). Health interventions, particularly in the context of the pandemic, illustrated gendered effects in urban centres of Turkana Central, where a unique burden was placed on young women as healthcare resources from the Government of Kenya and the World Health Organisation were redirected toward the pandemic response, as other critical services such as addressing gender-based violence(GBV) were severely disrupted (Caspani, 2015). This study therefore seeks to examine the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on youth socio-economic development in Turkana Central Sub-county, by assessing its effects on employment, income, business activities, and coping mechanisms. The findings are expected to provide evidence that can inform policymakers, development partners, and other stakeholders in designing effective interventions to strengthen youth resilience and improve livelihood opportunities during future public health and socio-economic crises.

Objective of the study

To examine the influence of curfew on youth Socio-economic development in Turkana Central Sub-County.

Research Questions

To what extent have curfew measures influenced youth socio-economic development?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Review

Erikson's Theory of Psychosocial Development

Erikson (1902–1994), a renowned German-American psychologist, proposed a comprehensive theory of human development emphasising the social and emotional aspects of growth. The theory posits that a person undergoes a series of psychosocial challenges throughout their lifespan. The successful resolution of each conflict results in the development of a virtue or a positive character trait, which enables individuals to address future challenges. These conflicts are deeply rooted in our interactions and relationships with others.

For this study, which focuses specifically on youth (typically spanning adolescence to young adulthood), several of Erikson's (1950) stages are particularly relevant. The Identity versus Role Confusion stage, occurring between ages 13 and 19, is a critical adolescent period where individuals explore various options regarding their self-identity and potential futures. Successfully navigating this crisis leads to a strong sense of self and a clear understanding of one's role and responsibilities in the world. This stage is highly pertinent to the study, as youth grapple with significant educational and career choices, which the pandemic profoundly disrupted. Following this, the Intimacy versus Isolation stage, spanning ages 20 to 30, sees young adults focused on forming close, meaningful friendships and romantic relationships. Successful resolution fosters a sense of care for others and an appreciation for commitment. The social restrictions imposed by the pandemic directly impacted opportunities for such interactions, potentially leading to feelings of isolation and hindering social development crucial for networking and community engagement in adulthood.

Although these stages occur during early childhood, the developmental achievements associated with Initiative versus Guilt (ages 3–6) and Industry versus Inferiority (ages 6–13) provide an important foundation for later youth development. When children are encouraged to take initiative and their creativity and efforts are positively reinforced, they develop confidence in their ability to accomplish goals. Disruptions to early childhood and primary education during the pandemic could therefore affect the foundational development of these virtues, potentially impacting a youth's sense of self-efficacy and perseverance later in life, especially in entrepreneurial or educational pursuits.

Erikson's (1950) theory provides a robust framework for understanding how the unprecedented disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic may have influenced the psychosocial development of youth, particularly concerning their socio-economic trajectories. The pandemic's impact on employment, Micro and Small Enterprises (MSEs), and education directly interfered with the normative developmental tasks associated with identity formation, the pursuit of independence, and the acquisition of skills (Identity vs Role Confusion; Industry vs Inferiority). For instance, school closures and economic hardships could have limited opportunities for exploration of vocational identities, while social restrictions might have hindered the development of crucial interpersonal skills (Intimacy vs Isolation) vital for networking and collaboration in business. By examining the challenges youth faced in securing employment, sustaining MSEs, and accessing education amidst the pandemic, this study can analyse how these external stressors potentially led to role confusion, feelings of inferiority, or isolation, thus hindering their overall socio-economic progress and well-being. The theory underpins the understanding that barriers such as financial constraints, personal factors (e.g., substance abuse), and systemic issues (e.g., corruption) can directly impede a youth's ability to successfully navigate these developmental stages, ultimately impacting their aspirations for entrepreneurship, employment, and personal growth.

Erikson's (1950) theory is significant in extending developmental psychology beyond childhood, proposing that personality continues to evolve throughout life. Unlike earlier models such as Freud's, which focused on early childhood and biological drives, Erikson emphasised social and cultural influences at old age. This perspective allows psychologists, educators, and therapists to understand challenges and growth opportunities at all ages, including adolescence, midlife, and late adulthood. This theory remains important because it treats human development as a lifelong, socially influenced process, providing insight into how early experiences, social interactions and cultural context shape personality, relationships and emotional resilience throughout life.

Empirical Review

The COVID-19 pandemic, together with public health containment measures such as lockdowns and dusk-to-dawn curfews, significantly disrupted the day-to-day operations of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) around the world. These Government restrictions were necessary for public health, as they protected the general population from infection; they curtailed economic activity and disproportionately affected smaller businesses, which frequently serve as important entry points and income sources for young entrepreneurs and workers (Fairlie, 2020).

Empirical studies carried out in various countries demonstrate the devastating effects on SMEs. In the United States, reliable information from the Wilmoth (2021) indicated a drastic loss of over 15 million jobs in small businesses during the first half of 2020, a figure equivalent to the total job gains for all sectors over the preceding seven years. Research indicates that small businesses were particularly at risk as compared to larger firms, which typically own greater financial resources or assets, more organised legal structures, and economies of scale to adapt to social-distancing regulations (Fairlie, 2020). For instance, out of the 20 million job opportunities lost in the U.S. in April 2020, 11 million were lost by small and medium-sized businesses (Welter et al., 2020). Similar trends were observed internationally; New Zealand noted a 4 per cent decline in jobs within small businesses in March and April 2020 (Welter et al., 2020), while in Australia, empirical data showed that hours worked by the self-employed, a sector frequently characterised by youth entrepreneurship, dropped by 32 per cent since the pandemic's onset (Biddle, 2020). Furthermore, Italian MSEs, more specifically in the retail and wholesale sectors, encountered cash flow challenges, low sales, and disrupted supply chains attributable to government-imposed lockdowns and curfews (Carletti, 2020).

Beyond specific business sectors owned by majority youth, MSEs experienced socio-economic shifts during the pandemic, which significantly impacted the viability of MSEs, including those operated by youth. In Brazil, empirical findings revealed that the national employment level dramatically dropped to 49.4 per cent of the working population in 2020. This decline led to notable expansion in informality and precarious work arrangements, which reflected similar characteristics of youth employment within MSEs (Sott et al., 2022). In Russia, studies on MSEs reported a decline in sales, with 78 per cent of surveyed entrepreneurs experiencing revenue reduction and 60 per cent expecting further losses. Experts projected the total unemployment rate as high as 10 per cent for the economically active population by late 2020 during the active pandemic period, with a multiplier effect threatening the closure of an additional 64.2 per cent of small and medium-sized firms, which threaten the socio-economic situation of the young population (Shelyakin et al., 2020). While the Childcare responsibilities on young women have been accelerated by the burden of School closures (OECD, 2021), it was concluded that these broader socio-economic pressures indirectly constrained the capacity of young women to establish or sustain MSEs, particularly those requiring flexible hours or external support systems.

Developing Countries in East Africa, including Kenya, adopted phased easing of restrictions to mitigate the economic repercussions on businesses. In Nairobi, the conditional reopening of cafes and restaurants was permitted under stringent health protocols imposed by the Ministry of Health [WHO], although a dusk-to-dawn curfew remained in effect (Nyabiage, 2020). Nationwide, these curfews substantially hindered productivity and impacted diverse service provider sectors, including the food industry, transport, informal economy, and hospitality. There was an experience of reduced operating hours for workers, disrupted supply chains, and increased transport costs that directly impaired the profitability and sustainability of many MSEs who were directly contributing to the economy of both National and County Governments (Okoth, 2020). A COVID-19 Business Tracker Survey report conducted in Ghana suggested that approximately 770,000 workers, which is equivalent to 25.7 per cent of the total workforce, experienced wage reductions, and 42,000 employees were laid off during partial lockdowns to allow businesses to operate effectively without unnecessary debts, as financial institutions had controlled borrowing for MSEs due to an increased number of defaulters. Notably, the report also documented that about 244,000 firms adapted their business models by increasing reliance on digital solutions for sales, highlighting a significant adaptive response as each engagement was totally online and there was no physical contact between the service client and the one receiving services (World Bank, 2020). Similarly, in Ethiopia, the MSE sector faced immense challenges, with the number of business owners dropping drastically from 15 million to 11.7 million due to pandemic mandates by the Ministry of Health. Government regulations monitoring working days further reduced total working hours for business owners by 29 per cent, changing operation schedules for busy organisations (United Nations Ethiopia Assessment Report, 2020; Fairlie, 2020). In Uganda, a rapid business survey indicated that three-quarters of businesses laid off employees due to the pandemic and its containment measures, resulting in a 42 per cent reduction in temporary employment and a 7 per cent reduction in permanent employment; this disparity was a result of employees not being able to pay their wages and Salaries for their staffs during the pandemic period (Lakuma & Sunday, 2020).

In Turkana Central Sub-County, youth-owned MSEs undergo operational challenges from the pandemic's restrictions. Young individuals who participated in the Jua kali industry, boda boda services, fishing activities, and hawking, all prevalent forms of MSEs in the region, struggled with reduced working hours and significantly unstable income from services provided by the majority of the youth from strategic areas of urban centres. This directly enabled them to earn income to provide basic necessities for their families (Nicola, 2020). Businesses within Lodwar Township experienced a series of disruptions to transport systems and supplies, and faced increased operational costs due to inflation of goods and services. Traders operating in Lodwar Market reported numerous challenges from product expiry, shortages of working capital, low sales, inability to meet salary payments and expenses, loan defaults, and difficulties in acquiring new raw materials and stock for business continuity. These difficulties were largely contributed to by a decrease in consumer demand, which was itself a consequence of increased youth unemployment during the pandemic (World Food Programme, 2020). These empirical observations from Turkana Central Sub-County underscore the extent to which the COVID-19 pandemic has underscored the ongoing growth of youth Small and Medium Enterprises in the area of study, necessitating further localised investigation.

Conceptual Framework

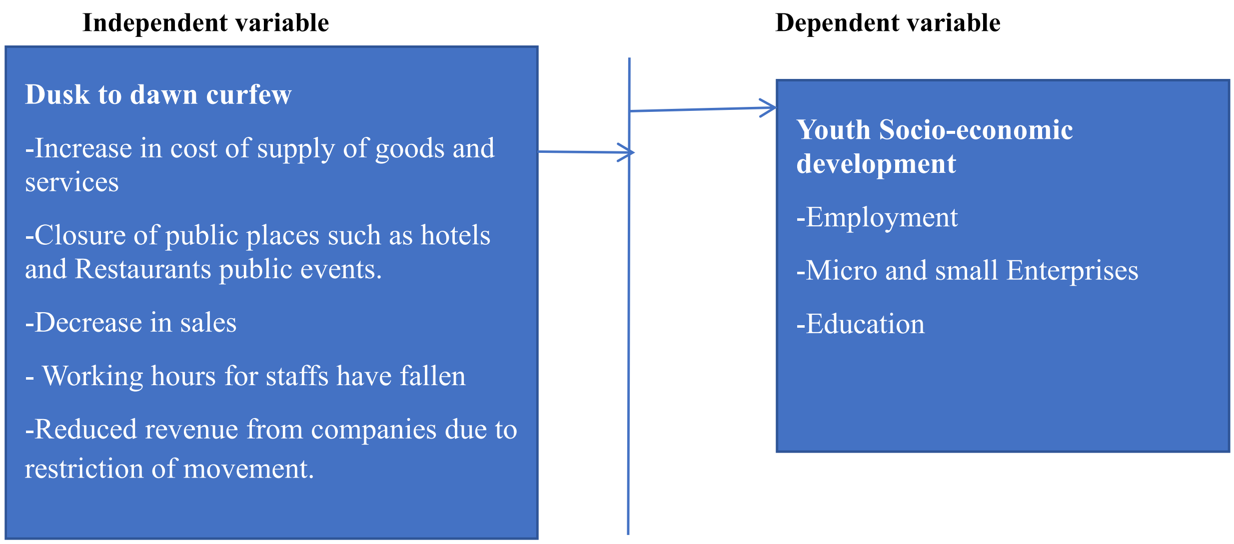

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

In Figure 1, the COVID-19 pandemic serves as the independent variable, whose parameters are lockdown, dusk-to-dawn curfew, Closure of public places and Youth Socio-economic development, dependent variable measured by employment, participation in micro and small enterprises (MSE) and access to quality education.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a convergent parallel research approach. This approach helped the researcher to simultaneously collect both numerical and narrative data from respondents. The study was carried out in Turkana Central Sub- County. Turkana Central Sub-County is one of the administrative units of Turkana County, located in north-western Kenya.

The study targeted young people aged 18–35 years living in Turkana Central Sub-County. Based on the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS, 2019), the sub-county has an estimated population of 185,305, including approximately 25,918 individuals within the youth age bracket. This group was selected because it represents the economically productive segment of the population and was significantly affected by the socio-economic consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic.

This study adopted a stratified random sampling technique to ensure fair representation of respondents from different administrative units within Turkana Central Sub-County. The study area was stratified into five County Assembly Wards, from which a total of 379 participants were selected. Stratified sampling was considered appropriate because the target population was not homogeneous, and the technique enhances representativeness across various sub-groups within the population.

Within each stratum (ward), respondents were equally selected based on the population size of youth aged 18–35 years. This approach facilitated homogeneous participation across the different wards. The County Assembly Wards were used as the main sampling units since they form the basic administrative and social structures where youth activities are common, and where key respondents with reliable information could be easily identified and interviewed.

In addition, purposive sampling techniques were used to select participants for Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs). This included relevant representatives from youth groups, heads of institutions, traders, and directors of relevant departments. Participants were purposively selected for their knowledge, experience, and active involvement in youth socio-economic activities during the COVID-19 pandemic (Kothari, 1990).

The sample size of 379 youth respondents was determined using the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) sample size determination table, which provides a scientific basis for selecting an adequate and representative sample from a known population size.

The study engaged questionnaires and focus group discussion (FGD) guides as the primary research instruments used for data collection. The selection of these instruments was guided by the nature of the data required and the specific objectives of the study. The questionnaires were administered to the youth, while Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were carried out with selected participants such as youth leaders, traders, institutional heads, and departmental directors.

Quantitative data obtained from household surveys were analysed using descriptive statistical techniques, whereas qualitative data from key informant interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs) were subjected to thematic analysis based on the study objectives.

In this study, the reliability of the instrument was established through a pilot study of 40 participants chosen from villages in Lorugum through structured and semi-structured questionnaires in Loima sub-county to collect preliminary data on the impact of COVID-19 on youth socio-economic development, as Sub-Counties shared similar socio-economic characteristics with Turkana Central. This aided in refining the questions in the questionnaire and ensured the instrument captured the required information. The validity of the instruments was also pretested in Soweto village (Township ward) and Nadapal village (Turkwel ward).

The documents were presented to the board of Postgraduate Studies at Turkana University College to determine whether the document was ready for data collection. The student was offered an authorisation letter from the Directorate of Postgraduate Studies and applied to NACOSTI for a licence for data collection, which it offered the researcher a research permit. The letter was presented to the head of the institution, researcher, market manager, Director of departments and the Ministry of Youth and gender affairs, and they arranged with their staff on how to engage with the research on filling the questionnaire and Focus group discussion. The information provided by the respondents was treated as confidential. The integrity of the data collected was maintained as recoded. The objectives of the research were explained to the respondents. Consequently, their consent was sought. This was possible through a request to the respondents. The study maintained high moral principles, and no respondents were coerced into giving information unwillingly.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Demographic Characteristics

The study administered 379 questionnaires. However, 240 were collected, while 139 were either not collected or not completed as required. This translated to a response rate of 62.1 per cent. From the obtained data, the study established that the majority of the study participants, 161(66.9%), were male, while 79(33.1%) were female. The majority of respondents (53.2%) fell within the 21–25-year bracket, indicating a youthful demographic. The second largest group was 26-30 years (17.3%), followed by 16-20 years (16.5%). Respondents aged 31-35 years constituted the smallest group at 12.5 per cent. This distribution reflects a predominantly young population, which may be attributed to the active involvement of youth in community-based programs and easier accessibility during data collection. The age structure is crucial in interpreting findings related to attitudes, awareness, and engagement with strategic or developmental interventions. The highest proportion of respondents (32.4%) were drawn from Township Ward, likely due to its relatively higher population density, urban setting, and ease of accessibility. This was followed by Kanamkemer Ward (21.6%) and Kalokol Ward (19.4%), while Kangatotha and Kerio Delta recorded 15.8 per cent and 10.8 per cent respectively.

The variation in participation across wards reflects differences in settlement patterns, availability of respondents during the survey, and logistical ease of accessing certain locations. The study ensured proportional representation across wards, which helps to enhance the credibility and inclusiveness of the study findings. The majority of respondents (53.2%) had attained university-level education, indicating a highly educated sample population. This was followed by tertiary education (college/diploma level) at 37.4%, while those with only secondary education constituted 9.4 per cent of the total**.** This educational profile suggests that most participants were well-informed and likely capable of articulating views on development initiatives and community issues with clarity. It also implies that the study findings may reflect perspectives from a relatively literate and skilled segment of the population, which could influence interpretations of local development challenges and strategic priorities. It indicates nearly half of the respondents (48.2%) rely on parental support as their main source of livelihood. A further 38.1 per cent are self-employed, engaging in income-generating activities such as small-scale business or informal sector work. Only 12.9 per cent of respondents reported being formally employed. This distribution indicates that a considerable number of respondents were either economically dependent or engaged in informal economic activities. These findings are consistent with the youthful age profile of the sample and may influence respondents' levels of financial autonomy, decision-making power, and participation in formal development initiatives.

Dusk-to-Dawn Curfew and Youth Socio-Economic Development

The study examined how the dusk-to-dawn curfew imposed during the COVID-19 pandemic affected youth socio-economic development in Turkana Central Sub-County. Various aspects such as business operations, liquidity, employment, income, credit access, transport costs, inflation, and sectoral performance were analysed. The responses were summarised in the table below.

Table 1: Influence of Dusk-to-Dawn Curfew on Youth Socio-Economic Development (n = 240)

Indicator	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Hours spent on business premises before curfew	0–10 hours	198	58.4
	0–5 hours	50	41.6
Hours spent on business premises during curfew	0–5 hours	178	68.4
	6–10 hours	52	31.6
Liquidity challenges experienced	Yes	216	89.9
	No	24	10.1
Wages and salaries before curfew	Better	79	33.1
	Fair	119	49.6
	Low	42	17.3
Reduction in workers' wages/salaries	Yes	217	90.6
	No	23	9.4
Employees laid off	Yes	161	66.9
	No	79	33.1
Access to credit facilities	Yes	116	48.2
	No	124	51.8
Business activity disruption	Businesses shut down	128	53.2
	Working from home	112	46.8
Cost of transport during curfew	High	157	65.5
	Low	79	33.1
	Moderate	3	1.4
Inflation of goods and services	Yes	130	54.0
	Very little	91	38.1
	Not at all	19	7.9
Loss of company revenue	Yes	181	75.6
	Not sure	38	15.8
	No	21	8.6
Effect on Boda boda industry	Received more income	16	6.5
	Received less income	205	85.6
	Not sure	19	7.9
Effect on Jua Kali industry	Received more income	9	3.6
	Received less income	231	96.4

The findings demonstrate that the dusk-to-dawn curfew significantly disrupted youth economic activities in Turkana Central Sub-County. Before the curfew, 58.4 per cent of youth traders spent between 0–10 hours daily on business premises engaging in sales, cross-border trade, and online transactions. However, during the curfew period, 68.4 per cent reported reduced working hours (0–5 hours), indicating a drastic contraction in business activity due to movement restrictions and curfew enforcement.

Liquidity constraints were a major challenge, with 89.9 per cent of respondents reporting cash flow shortages as revenues declined while operational costs persisted. This situation forced 90.6 per cent of businesses to reduce wages and salaries, while 66.9 per cent laid off staff to survive the reduced demand. Before the curfew, 49.6 per cent of respondents reported fair wage conditions, but this deteriorated significantly as most informal sector jobs were lost or poorly compensated.

Access to credit facilities also declined, with 51.8 per cent indicating they could not obtain loans due to lack of collateral or formal registration. Informal youth traders in Lodwar and Kanamkemer centres faced greater financial exclusion despite the availability of digital credit platforms such as M-Pesa-linked loans.

Business operations were further constrained, with 53.2 per cent reporting complete shutdowns, while 46.8 per cent attempted to work remotely where possible. Transport costs rose sharply, as 65.5 per cent of respondents cited high fare prices due to limited capacity, curfew restrictions, and higher fuel expenses. Higher transportation costs fuelled inflationary pressures, as 54 per cent of the respondents reported noticeable increases in the cost of goods and services, especially food products and essential supplies obtained from Kitale and neighbouring Uganda.

Revenue loss was widespread, with 75.6 per cent of companies and traders acknowledging a reduction in earnings during the curfew period. Sectors such as hospitality, retail, and cross-border trade were severely affected, leading to widespread unemployment and business closures.

Sectoral analysis showed that 85.6 per cent of respondents in the Boda boda industry and 96.4 per cent in the Jua Kali sector experienced a decline in income due to reduced customer flow, restricted operating hours, and closure of markets. Only 6.5 per cent of boda boda operators and 3.6 per cent of Jua Kali artisans reported increased or stable income, mainly those offering essential services such as goods delivery and repairs.

The evidence suggests that curfew measures, though essential for controlling the pandemic, had substantial negative socio-economic consequences on youth livelihoods. The contraction in business hours, liquidity strain, and restricted mobility undermined enterprise resilience and widened income disparities among informal youth traders. The findings underscore the need for targeted recovery interventions such as affordable credit, business training, and digital inclusion to rebuild youth enterprises in post-pandemic contexts.

The findings revealed that lockdown measures severely disrupted youth employment and income-generating opportunities in Turkana Central Sub-County. Many youths, particularly those engaged in informal sectors such as boda boda transport, fishing, and small-scale trading, reported income losses, job termination, and reduced working hours. This is consistent with global trends reported by the International Labour Organization (2020), which documented an 8.7 per cent global decline in youth employment, and the Local Government Information Unit (2021), which observed that South Africa's lockdowns disproportionately affected low-wage youth and informal workers.

Similar to Iortsor's (2023) findings in Nigeria and Asante and Mills (2020) in Ghana, this study observed that movement restrictions and business shutdowns aggravated poverty among youth, pushing many to engage in casual labour or illegal activities to survive. The economic disruptions mirrored the experiences of youth globally, though they were magnified in Turkana by pre-existing socio-economic vulnerabilities such as limited formal employment and inadequate social safety nets.

From Erikson's psychosocial perspective, these findings align with the Identity versus Role Confusion stage, where young people seek purpose through work and economic independence. The lockdown undermined these developmental tasks, leading to frustration, uncertainty, and dependency, which may result in role confusion or diminished self-efficacy. The loss of employment and business opportunities interrupted the transition to adulthood, weakening confidence in personal agency, a key tenet of Erikson's theory.

The study found that the dusk-to-dawn curfew significantly curtailed the operations of youth-owned and youth-run Micro and Small Enterprises (MSEs). A majority of respondents indicated reduced business hours, loss of customers, disrupted supply chains, and increased operating costs. Businesses such as food vendors, boda boda operators, and traders in Lodwar town faced serious liquidity challenges, mirroring global evidence where small businesses suffered most from pandemic-related restrictions.

Empirical studies by Fairlie (2020) and Carletti (2020) demonstrated that MSEs in the United States and Europe lost millions of jobs and faced severe liquidity constraints. Similarly, Lakuma and Sunday (2020) in Uganda and Okoth (2020) in Kenya observed reduced productivity and profitability among youth enterprises due to curfew-induced time limitations. These parallels affirm that the economic impact of curfews transcended national boundaries, with youth entrepreneurs among the most vulnerable.

In Turkana Central, where MSEs form a critical part of youth livelihoods, curfew restrictions not only reduced earnings but also increased psychosocial stress and dependency. Many youths struggled to meet basic needs, which may have exacerbated social problems such as petty crime and substance abuse outcomes consistent with the conceptual framework's link between curtailed business operations and deteriorating socio-economic welfare.

Applying Erikson's theoretical lens, the findings demonstrate how curfews interfered with the Industry versus Inferiority stage. Youths derive a sense of competence and achievement through productive work; thus, restricted business opportunities and job losses may have fostered feelings of inferiority, helplessness, and reduced motivation. The inability to engage meaningfully in economic activities disrupted the progression toward self-reliance and community contribution, which are central to youth development.

These findings also resonate with Nicola (2020) and World Food Programme (2020) reports that observed declining income, loss of capital, and supply chain disruptions among youth entrepreneurs in Lodwar and other urban centres. The curfews thus amplified local economic fragility and underscored the need for targeted recovery programs for youth-owned MSEs.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion: The study established that the COVID-19 pandemic significantly disrupted youth socio-economic development in Turkana Central Sub-County through three interrelated mechanisms: lockdown restrictions, dusk-to-dawn curfews, and the closure of public places, especially learning institutions and social facilities. These containment measures, although necessary to prevent the spread of the virus, had far-reaching socio-economic implications on youth livelihoods, education, and psychosocial well-being.

Lockdown measures caused extensive job losses and wage reductions among the youth population. About 43.2 per cent of respondents lost their jobs, while 56.8 per cent reported a reduction in wages. Working hours decreased drastically, with those working less than four hours a day rising from 12.9 per cent before the pandemic to 48.2 per cent during the lockdown period. Furthermore, 69.8 per cent of youth reported limited participation in workplace and business activities due to movement restrictions, curfews, and border closures. These findings indicate that lockdowns led to underemployment, decreased income, and reduced productivity among the youth. Qualitative evidence revealed that many young people, particularly those in informal sectors such as retail, boda boda transport, and hospitality, experienced severe livelihood disruptions. Others turned to informal or illicit survival strategies, indicating a decline in psychosocial stability and identity formation as explained in Erikson's Identity versus Role Confusion stage.

The findings of the study lead to several important conclusions. First, lockdown measures implemented during the COVID-19 pandemic had severe socio-economic repercussions for youth in Turkana Central Sub-County. The loss of jobs, wage reductions, and reduced working hours undermined their economic independence and social identity. The lockdown period amplified existing vulnerabilities among youth, particularly those working in informal and low-income sectors.

Second, the dusk-to-dawn curfew negatively affected micro and small enterprises by constraining operational hours, limiting market access, and disrupting supply chains. These measures led to widespread business closures, liquidity shortages, and rising transport and commodity costs. The curfew period highlighted the fragile nature of youth employment and enterprise sustainability in Turkana's informal economy.

In conclusion, COVID-19 mitigation measures addressed disease control, but also had profound socio-economic and Psychological consequences on youth development. The structural weakness of the pandemic was reflected in areas of Employment, entrepreneurship, education, and social protection systems. To understand how disruptions during youthhood can hinder identity formation, Economic freedom and social responsibility have significance in Erikson's psychosocial theory of development. Addressing these challenges requires a comprehensive, youth-focused recovery strategy that fosters resilience, innovation, and social inclusion.

Recommendations: The reinforcement of post-pandemic youth recovery is facilitated at the stakeholders' level, with participation from financial institutions, the private sector, schools, and community organisations. Financial institutions should design reliable and affordable loan products directed to the needs of young entrepreneurs. Youth-owned businesses can be facilitated by partnerships with digital credit providers and can further access capital and facilitate the restart or expansion. To safeguard young employment, education continuity, and build enterprise resilience during times of crises, relevant private sector and County governments have to formulate and institutionalise emergency response and business sustainability plans. Furthermore, community representatives, learning institutions, parents and guardians should participate in supporting youth reintegration and continuous learning through sensitisation of the public on mitigation measures on the pandemic. Schools and local authorities should strengthen re-enrolment campaigns for students from different levels who dropped out during and in the aftermath of the pandemic and establish mentorship and counselling programmes to enhance access and retention of learners in Schools. Parents and community leaders should also participate in awareness creation that supports youth participatory and responsible socio-economic development at all levels.

These recommendations call for a collective multidisciplinary approach in rebuilding youth socio-economic resilience through supporting youth capacity. Successful implementation will require joint action for government institution support, development partners for capacity building, financial institutions support, and community stakeholders' engagement to ensure that youth in Turkana Central Sub-County are adequately equipped to reinstate them from the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and to grow in the post-pandemic economy.

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