

**EFFECTS OF COVID-19 PANDEMIC CONTAINMENT MEASURES ON
INTRA-FAMILY SOCIAL DYNAMICS WITHIN FAMILIES IN RUIRU
SUB-COUNTY, KIAMBU COUNTY, KENYA**

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DECLARATION

I declare that the work presented in this Thesis is novel and has not been submitted to any other University or College for an award.

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OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS OF KEY TERMS AND VARIABLES

Containment Measures	Move by government moved to suspend transport to and from certain areas that were considered epicenters of the epidemic and this also prevented overcrowding. The practices involved: lockdowns, curfews, travel bans, and school closures, among others.
COVID-19 pandemic	Infectious disease that can be transmitted through the environment (contaminated surfaces) also describes a person or animal capable of transmitting the disease.
Family	A social group made up of people who are linked through marriage (civil, customary, or religious) between two people of different sexes, adoption, foster care, or blood links (kinship).
Family interaction	Interpersonal dynamics among family members in various settings and activities. A procedure to keep up ties with parents, siblings, family, and other people
Family protection	Securing the family against any form of risks and insecurities within or from outside that may cause harm. Support for families that emphasize family resilience in an effort to fortify families and preserve families as much as possible.
Family resilience	Families' capacity "to endure and recover from disruptive life situations."
Social interaction	The Interpersonal dynamics among family members in various aspects such as communication patterns, emotional support, conflict resolution, and shared responsibilities.
Gender role identity	Sense of identifying oneself as male or female and the roles that are prescribed by society according to the gender.
Household	Unit of people living in same house but for purpose of this study we will only include family members and exclude employees and visitors.
Marriage	A man and woman coming together voluntarily, whether they are in a monogamous or polygamous partnership. While traditional and Islamic marriages are polygamous or

possibly polygamous, Christian, Hindu, or civil unions are monogamous.

Nuclear family

Family unit limited to parents and their biological or adopted children.

Pandemic

Spread of an occurrence usually an infectious disease in a country and later to the whole world

Quarantine

Separating or limiting the movement of those who appear healthy but may have come into contact with an infectious disease.

Social distancing

Outlines the methods to restrict the transmission of a disease by putting more space between people. COVID-19 is particularly contagious in confined and populated areas.

Social implications

Wider society changes with significant or positive changes that achieve goals through deliberate efforts through short term or long-term goals/effects. The consequences of an organization as a whole on the larger community over a long period of time, including both planned and unplanned or spillover effects, are referred to as social implications.

Vulnerability

A lack of ability for individuals, groups, and civilizations to withstand the damaging impacts of the many pressures to which they are subjected. Characteristics found in social interactions, institutions, and cultural value systems help to partially explain these findings.

Work-family balance

A phrase that describes how well someone perceives their relationships with their work and family obligations, where such ties are seen as harmonious and balanced with one another within the family.

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
EHCP	Educational, Health and Care Plan
EVD	Ebola Virus Disease
HIV	Human immunodeficiency virus
ICU	Intensive Care Unit
M & E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MTEF	Medium Term Evaluation Framework
MoE	Ministry of Education
PHEIC	Public Health Emergency of International Concern
PLWHA	People Living with HIV/AIDS
PWDs	Persons with Disabilities
SARS	Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome
SRH	Sexual and Reproductive Health
SSPS	Statistics Social Package Science
UN	United Nations
WHO	World Health Organization

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ABSTRACT

Prior to the onset COVID-19 pandemic in December of 2019, life was generally characterized by a sense of normalcy and freedom that we often take for granted, as people gathered freely and socialized with each other. However, during COVID-19, a number of containment measures were imposed by national governments to contain it. These measures included restrictions on travelling, general home confinements, reduced tourism activities, curfews and ban on any and all social, cultural, sporting or religious events, and limited physical gatherings. Law enforcement authorities were mandated to ensure people complied with these measures. People were kept away from many aspects of social life and confined within their family and household settings. The confinement consequently brought positive and negative social effects on family life and social interactions. Based on the aforementioned, the study assessed the effects of COVID-19 pandemic on social interactions within families in Ruiru Sub-County, Kiambu County. The specific study objectives were to examine effects of COVID-19 on social interactions between parents and their children, siblings to siblings, spouses to spouses and suggest mitigation strategies to challenges posed by COVID-19 on family life and social interactions. The study was guided by two theories: family system theory and social interactionism theory. The study employed mixed research design, which allowed quantitative and qualitative data to be collected, analyzed, and interpreted simultaneously in order to explore the relationship between study variables on social interactions of families. The study target population was 58,264 households in Ruiru Sub-County (household being defined as any house with occupants who stay together regardless of composition). Yamane (1967) formula was used to determine a sample of 396 households for the study. The study participants were selected from the study area using simple random sampling. The study also involved 10 key informants who were 6 social workers and 4 chiefs. Semi-structured questionnaires were used to collect primary data since the cost of administering them was relatively cheap. Quantitative data was collected and analyzed using descriptive statistics and presented by frequency tables using Microsoft Excel while qualitative data was analyzed through narrative analysis and presented through narrations. Study findings showed that containment measures due to COVID-19 pandemic ensured families spent more time together than was usual affected social interaction in families between parents and their children and between spouses. However, the social interaction in families between siblings was not affected by the containment measures due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The study findings that the containment measures negatively impacted social interactions between parents and children and between spouses will benefit policy makers and social practitioners in preparing and responding to pandemics of similar magnitude in case they happen in future to prevent family break-down. The study recommends that the government and other players carry out a critical assessment and measurement of marital, parent-to-child and sibling-to-sibling interactions to inform future policy formulation regarding social interaction in families. The study also recommends that the government establishes intervention measures such as family counseling services that address interaction issues within families in Ruiru sub-County.

CHAPTER ONE

1.0 Introduction

This chapter introduces the study by covering the background, problem statement, objectives, study justification, significance, scope, limitations and assumptions of the study.

1.1 Background of Study

Quality household interactions which entail relationships between spouses, parents and children and siblings are significant in enhancing sense of belonging, emotional support, personal growth and even communication. A change of household interaction equilibrium can precipitate a change in the quality of interaction aspects in a family. Pandemics have been known to interrupt social interactions including interactions within families. According to Woolhouse and Gowtage-Sequeria (2005), the majority of pandemics have been brought on by the "zoonotic" spread of pathogens from animals to people. Human-animal interactions have increased since domestication, and potentially dangerous zoonoses like avian influenza are still spreading among animal populations (Van Boeckel et al., 2012; Carroll et al., 2018). Numerous viruses, including Ebola, have emerged from wildlife reservoirs into human societies via the hunt and consumption of wildlife species including bush meat, the wild trade, and other contacts with wildlife (Rimoin et al., 2010; Wolfe, Dunavan, & Diamond 2007). These viruses have affected human social interactions. For Example, when Ebola broke out in March 2014 in Southern Guinea, most countries cancelled flights to West African countries that were affected by the virus (Ebola Disease Outbreak Locations, 2024). Apart from cancellation of flights there was while there was cessation of movement out of and into the affected areas.

Global human populations continue to be threatened by contagious diseases, which also harm and put them in great danger. Such diseases include the plagues experienced during medieval period, Spanish Flu of 1918, herpes and legionnaire disease of the 1970s, HIV/AIDS of the 1980's, Ebola that occurred in 2013 – 2016 that first occurred in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Sudan (now South Sudan), the severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS, 2002 – 2004) (Bubb & Jones, 2020). Ebola disease has recently re-emerged, and the latest cases have been identified in Uganda and potentially spreading to Kenya, with a few infections detected in Bungoma County in August 2022. COVID-19 was the most recent and most massive pandemic. All these pandemics affected and threatened the human population causing deaths and immense suffering to families. Because of this, during epidemics and pandemics, people and the media have reacted by spreading rumors, misleading information, and frequently depicting the disease as being foreign and imported to Africa for the purpose of eliminating populations. An example of such is the work published in the Fyodor Dostoyevsky's play dreams of a "*plague and punishment*" (Pamuk et al., 2020) and wrote that he dreamt that the world was condemned to a new strange plague that had transmitted from Europe and Asia and which took place in the early 1900's when the coronavirus pandemic broke out.

Pandemics and epidemics have affected social life since civilization. According to Ghendon (1994), the first pandemic, is believed by current medical fraternity to have been influenza and affected social life, first occurred in 412 BC, and was recorded by Hippocrates. Subsequently, other outbreaks were noted in the Middle Ages, with the Spanish Influenza outbreak of 1918 serving as the most noteworthy example. The

unexpected advent of SARS and the Avian flu brought the memory of the effects of the Spanish Flu (Cheng & Leung 2007).

So as to better comprehend the intensity and the effects of the pandemics to an extent on family social life even during the earlier days, the following are the pandemics that affected the world causing deaths and human suffering in large numbers are discussed in detail.

The H1N1 virus, swine flu with an avian gene that spread from 1918 to 1919, was to blame for this pandemic, which was the worst in recent human history. In the spring of 1918, the first case of the pandemic was discovered in the military in the United States. A third of the world's population at the time, or approximately 500 million individuals, were thought to have been infected by the swine flu virus. An estimated fifty (50) million people died worldwide, with just roughly 675,000 of the deaths taking place in the United States.

The most affected populations were the under five-year-olds, adults between the ages of 20 and 40, and people aged 65 and older had significant fatality rates. The world was solely dependent on non-pharmaceutical preventative measures like the use of chemicals for disinfection, personal cleanliness, quarantine, isolation, and restrictions on public gatherings that were applied inconsistently because there were no vaccines available for protection against infections caused by influenza and no antibiotics for treating the secondary infections caused by bacteria that can be linked to these diseases (Mahmoud, 2006). The intervention measures proved effective in reducing the spread of the disease and hence reduced the mortality rates (Belling, 2009).

In the filoviridae family of viruses is the genus Ebolavirus, which causes the rare but severe disease known as Ebola virus disease (EVD). It is spread from person to person by contaminated needles, broken skin, mucous membranes, urine, faeces, saliva, and other bodily fluids. It is transmitted by wild animals (Rewar & Mirdha, 2014; Feldman et al., 2011). The average case fatality of EVD in 1976 was around 50% and case fatality rates vary from 25% to 90% depending on the species and strain of the virus (Sanchez et al., 2007). The EVD patients show symptoms such as high fever, headache, vomiting, anorexia, diarrhea, and muscle aches. In the advanced stages, there is bleeding in the eyes, gums, nose, and gut (Goejienbier et al., 2014).

The first EVD case was reported in 1976 in Congo near the Ebola River. Since then, there have been several outbreaks in several countries in Central Africa such as Uganda and Sudan (Munyembe -Tamfum et al., 2012).

The control and/or prevention measures to EVD taken were isolation and quarantine, educating the patients and the citizens about the epidemic and guide them to stay at home confinement. The government invoked people to adhere to social distancing measures that were put in places in the epidemic regions and public gatherings including sports, entertainment joints and shopping were closed. Communication and burials were the government responsibility because they were required to educate the public by giving accurate communication about the epidemic without delay. According to Williams (2014), cremation and interment of bodies had to be done according to the Ministry of Health guidelines in the affected countries. Traditional burial processes were stopped in areas where they were in practice and travel restrictions were imposed thus affecting social life.

1.1.1 The COVID-19 pandemic

COVID-19 is a highly contagious illness that spreads from an infected person's mouth or nose when they speak, sing, sneeze, or cough microscopic liquid particles. The first case was detected in December 2019. If a healthy person is near an infected individual, they can contract the virus by breathing it in or by touching their noses, eyes, or mouth after touching a contaminated surface. In indoors and highly populated places, the virus spreads very quickly and rapidly. The virus was first discovered in Wuhan City, Hubei Province in the mainland China which later spread rapidly to other parts of the world. This was after diagnosing and identifying several cases of unknown pneumonia (Karkhah, et al., 2020).

On 30th January 2020, and 11th March, 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) categorized the outbreak as a pandemic and a public health emergency of great global concern respectively. As of 30th January 2020, China had 12,167 suspected cases and 7,736 confirmed cases. The WHO proclaimed the outbreak of SARS-CoV-2 a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC) on the same day that 82 confirmed cases were found in 18 more countries (Burki, 2020). The spread of the COVID-19 pandemic in Kenya was first reported on 12th March 2020 and the subsequent health emergency led to several restrictive measures which changed normal ways of interactions within the family and other social setups. Educational institutions were closed at the end of 16th March 2020. Containment measures such as quarantine, social distancing became necessary, leading to general closure of almost all public spaces including business establishments and activities except for essential services such as health and security. It

was only food, security and health sectors that operated on a strict schedule and on limited hours observing the guidelines provided by the Ministry of Health.

This however affected how families interacted, interaction between parents, sibling to siblings, spouses to spouses shifted to new norms that brought both positive and negative impacts to families. Parent time, especially women's time, was spent caring for children due to school closures and orders to stay at home (Keskinocak et al., 2020; Calarco et al., 2020; Sevilla & Smith, 2020). Spending more time with children could have unforeseeable consequences. On the one hand, it became challenging for at least some mothers to raise young children while staying at home alone and possibly juggling career related tasks. However, according to nationally representative data, parents who spend time in childcare reported feeling more positive effects and a sense of purpose than parents who spent time doing any other activities, particularly for parents who reported financial constraints (Kalil et al., 2019).

The couple interactions during COVID-19 gave rise to both positive and negative social aspects. For instance, COVID-19 containment measures like lockdowns and curfews made couples spend more time together, which encourages couples to have pleasant sexual experiences as well as the sharing of family concerns. Only when there is no intradyadic stress does time spent together increase intimacy. However, the COVID-19 pandemic might have had severe societal repercussions to harm couples (Milek et al., 2015). For example, during COVID-19, it was apparent that changes in social life caused by COVID-19 may have a negative or positive impact on satisfaction. According to Arafat et al. (2020), characteristics that have a beneficial effect include couples' ability to spend more time together, lower employment loads, lesser societal pressure and

expectations, and fewer options to partake in recreational activities. Thus, a rise in interpersonal conflict, stress, a lack of privacy, financial hardships, and health problems are all detrimental and had negative effects on sex and other engagements by couples.

1.1.2 Family Relations in Ruiru Sub-County During Pandemic.

Kenya was among many countries that implemented containment measures in response to the outbreak, including lockdowns, quarantines, curfews, and other movement restrictions. Nonetheless, Ruiru and other Kenyans had significantly worse mental health conditions (Sahu, 2020; Sharma & Bhaskar, 2020), which created additional challenges for families during an already trying time. Additional containment measures, including social distancing, public space closures, mask use requirements, and temperature inspections, were implemented in the Kakuma Refugee Camp as a result of the coronavirus limitations (Boru, 2020; Rodgers, 2020). According to some US research, around 70% of people experienced higher levels of stress and anxiety following the COVID-19 pandemic; in China, these figures were lower. Numerous more investigations (Son et al., 2020; Cao et al., 2020; Wang et al., 2020) support this.

Thus, the purpose of this study will be to examine the effect of COVID-19 on family life and social interactions in Ruiru Sub County, Kiambu County. The study will also demonstrate the link between studied variables and family social interactions so as to answer knowledge gaps about the study subject. The findings of the study will offer interventional strategies to prevent unforeseen pandemics that might lead to confinement in the future. Milek et al. (2015) shared that time only improves intimacy if there is no extra-dyadic stress.

1.2 Statement Problem

Since Humans are inherently social beings who thrive on maintaining regular routines and interactions with others. The restrictions of movement imposed by the Government of Kenya as part of COVID-19 containment measures significantly altered household dynamics in Ruiru Sub-County, Kiambu County. On one hand, these restrictions fostered increased bonding as family members were compelled to spend extended periods together. On the other hand, prolonged cohabitation strained household relations, giving rise to negative outcomes such as domestic violence, heightened conflicts, and communication breakdowns. The closure of workplaces and schools further intensified these dynamics by forcing spouses, parents, and children in nuclear families into constant proximity, thereby reshaping the nature of family interactions.

Although existing studies have examined household interactions broadly (Scharp & Hall, 2019; Shaligram, 2021; Toseeb, 2022), few have focused on how COVID-19 containment measures specifically influenced nuclear families. Moreover, much of the available literature comes from Western or Asian contexts, where family structures differ significantly from those in Kenya. In the Kenyan setting, where nuclear families are becoming more common in urban and peri-urban areas such as Ruiru, little is known about how prolonged lockdowns affected parent–child, spousal, and sibling interactions within the nuclear unit. This is a critical gap, as the nuclear family forms the primary context for children’s socialization and parents’ emotional support. Addressing this gap may provide valuable insights into how crises such as pandemics reshape family life, and it will inform targeted interventions to strengthen nuclear families in similar contexts.

1.3 General Objective of the Study

To assess the effects of COVID-19 on social interactions within the family setup in Ruiru sub-county, Kiambu County, Kenya.

1.3.1 Specific Objectives

The study will be guided by the following specific objectives:

- i. To explore how COVID-19 containment measures affected the interaction between parents and their children in Ruiru Sub-County, Kiambu County, Kenya.
- ii. To assess the impact of COVID-19 containment measures on sibling interactions in Ruiru Sub-County, Kiambu County, Kenya.
- iii. To investigate how COVID-19 containment measures influenced interactions between spouses in Ruiru Sub-County, Kiambu County, Kenya.
- iv. To propose intervention strategies for addressing the issues of family social interactions experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic in Ruiru Sub-County, Kiambu County, Kenya.

1.4 Research Questions

The subsequent questions will guide the study:

- i. How did COVID-19 containment measures influence the nature and quality of interactions between parents and their children in Ruiru Sub-County, Kiambu County, Kenya?
- ii. What was the impact of COVID-19 containment measures on sibling interactions in Ruiru Sub-County, Kiambu County, Kenya?
- iii. In what ways did COVID-19 containment measures affect interactions between spouses in Ruiru Sub-County, Kiambu County, Kenya?

- iv. What intervention strategies can be adopted to address challenges in family social interactions experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic in Ruiru Sub-County, Kiambu County, Kenya?

1.5 Justification of the Study

The COVID-19 pandemic brought about many changes in society, key among them is how people interacted. Being a contagious disease, COVID-19 required containment measures to stop it from spreading further. At its peak, the government of Kenya introduced containment measures that were meant to slow down and eventually stop it from spreading further. The containment measures brought significant changes to social interactions within families since family members had to spend more time together than they used to. Spending more time together within families was a new phenomenon in recent times given that there has not been a pandemic of a global scale which required imposition of containment measures. Therefore, this study sought to examine how the containment measures as a result of COVID-19 pandemic which resulted in families spending more time together affected social interactions within families.

1.6 Significance of the Study

The study's findings may contribute to the existing body of knowledge on the effects of pandemics on social life of families and communities. The findings may also aid in focusing to other areas such political and economic disruptions as a result of pandemics, which may have never been done before therefore avoiding re-inventing the wheel thus advancing the existing knowledge in the research field.

Further, the findings may significantly guide policy makers in the Kenyan government, through the Ministry of Education (MoE), and all other stakeholders in the education sector in planning, evaluating, and being prepared to develop pertinent and practical policies or measures that will enable them to manage highly contagious diseases such as the Corona Virus among others when they emerge. In turn, this can make it possible for the close-contact teaching and learning process to proceed without the students' and teachers' concerns about contracting such contagious diseases during close social interactions. The study may substantially influence the government's perception of the need to implement health education and enhance the life skills teachings in the curriculum.

The research study may also guide policymakers on more funding for use in case of future occurrence of unexpected pandemics. This is due to the possibility that, if COVID-19 impacts are not effectively addressed, the social crisis it has sparked may worsen in the medium and long term, leading to increased inequality, discrimination, marginalization, and global unemployment. Further, the research may also inform the policy makers on the introduction of E-health, telemedicine and telehealth to the patients, health care workers as well as individuals that can be used in case of emergency of future pandemics.

Additionally, the findings may assist social practitioners in identifying and protecting society's most vulnerable members as well as serving as a leading analytical voice for fostering social inclusion, lowering inequality, and addressing poverty. Since universal social protection acts as an automatic stabilizer and always provides a basic income as a safeguard, it plays a considerably longer-lasting function in protecting workers and

lowering the occurrence of poverty. This increases people's capacity to deal with and withstand shocks (i.e., social crises created by COVID-19 inequality, exclusion, discrimination, and global unemployment).

1.7 Scope of the Study

Ruiru Sub-County is one of 12 sub-counties in Kiambu County with an area of 201.4 square kilometers and divided into 8 wards. There is a wide range of economic activities in the Sub-County which include: agriculture, industries/manufacturing, small trades, and mining among other activities. This therefore attracts more people due to the economic opportunities available and hence many people of diverse cultures live here. The scope of the study will be the relationship between COVID-19 containment measures and social interactions within families with a focus on Ruiru Sub-County in Kiambu County, Kenya. Four objectives guided the study.

1.8 Limitations of the Study

The study encountered several practical challenges. For instance, some respondents were initially unwilling to cooperate, which required additional awareness efforts and engagement to create a more conducive environment for administering the tools and obtaining reliable responses. Another challenge was time constraints that arose due to delays in scheduling and data collection processes. To overcome this, prior meeting schedules were organized and communicated on time. Financial constraint was another limitation in this study. Timely data collection and preparations required that money to be availed on time. This was addressed by budgeting for this study, setting aside funds for the study and using the funds for the intended purposes.

1.9 Assumptions of the Study

It was assumed that those respondents who participated had experience on effects of restrictions on movement of social interactions within families during COVID-19 and would provide honest information and opinions concerning the questions they were asked about. It was also assumed that questionnaires would be answered fully before leaving the targeted households. Finally, the study assumed that parents provided accurate information regarding their children.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the existing literature and theories supporting the study, empirical reviews, gaps, and conceptual framework on the effects of COVID-19 on social interactions of families in Ruiru Sub-County, Kiambu County.

Before COVID-19 pandemic, relationships in a family set up varied widely depending on individual circumstances and cultural norms. Families often spent time together in physical proximity before COVID-19 pandemic. Socialization of families with the extended family members, relatives and friends was the norm and people often came together to celebrate special occasions such as birthdays, anniversaries, weddings and religious activities. On travel and vacations, families often planned and enjoyed vacations together, travelling to new places which strengthened family bonds and created shared experiences.

The emergence of COVID-19 pandemic first appeared in Wuhan City, Hubei Province in China on a small scale in November 2019, escalated and later became widespread in other parts of the World (Campbell, 2020). On March 11, 2020, WHO proclaimed it to be a pandemic. It was suspected that the SARS-CoV-2 was transferred from bats to human beings in one of the open-air markets although there are other theories that COVID-19 virus may have originated as a biological weapon in the laboratory in China (Lam, et al. 2020).

Infected families have experienced social, economic, and psychological effects as a result of the recent COVID-19 outbreak, which has become a global public health issue and a health danger (Das et al., 2020). This led to many countries across the world including Kenya to adopt containment measures such as lockdown, travel restrictions within and outside the country, social distancing, closure of all public places such as schools, churches, and mosques as well as cancellation of all sporting tournaments and events and embracing the WHO guidelines to combat the spread of this global public health (Nigam, 2020).

Lockdown persisted as a result of the COVID-19, which helped to slow the spread of the virus and drastically lower infection rates. However, this led to the emergence of a new public health crisis with negative consequences of lockdown such as social, economic as well as psychological consequences. There was a marked increase in cases of domestic violence, which led to physical and emotional injuries on the victim, low self-esteem in the victim and the children, anxiety, depression among many other consequences (Bradbury-Jones & Isham, 2020). According to a study by Graham-Harrison et al. (2020), instances of domestic abuse increased in many COVID-19-affected nations, including China, Germany, and the UK.

It is worth noting that upon lockdown, domestic violence increased significantly and relationships within families were affected and constrained across the world. It is noted that less research has been done to determine how lockdown affects social relationships inside the context of the family. This is the driving force behind proposing a research study on the effects of COVID-19 on social interactions within families during the pandemic, especially during the lockdown and to suggest mechanisms that can be put into

place during such occurrences. This is due to the fact that the world has become a global village and in case of future pandemics the effects will be magnitude both in terms of infections and damages that will occur thus need to prepare for such occurrences.

2.1 Empirical Literature Review

This section is a review of the existing research studies and that that was used to inform the current study. Household interactions in this study are conceptualized as day to day interactions between intimate couples, parents and children and between siblings and the aspects associated with such interactions. The key indicators of household interactions entail indicators such as communication, support and sharing of experiences.

2.1.1 Interventional strategies for addressing the challenges faced by families during COVID-19 pandemic

The Kenyan government ought to rethink making provision of e-health, telehealth, and telemedicine services to most parts of Kenya, which can be integrated into healthcare. This will go a long way in managing future pandemics during lockdowns. These services bring (with it a host of benefits to patients, health care providers, and the citizens as it reduces reduction if hospitalization, readmissions, and the cost of healthcare, as well as increases medication adherence (Orlando et al., 2019). Health education should also be incorporated into the curriculum. Giving students health education lectures in educational settings is crucial, according to numerous studies. Empirical research has shown that it is crucial to provide elementary, secondary and university students with health education especially on communicable diseases. This is because health education encourages students to consciously choose healthy habits and lifestyles that lessen or eliminate

dangerous factors that spread communicable illnesses, enhance health, and increase the value of life (Juniarti, 2008).

According to Areba (2020), efforts should be made to dispel misconceptions about dangerous pandemics like the Corona virus and rely on the scientific data provided by WHO and the Ministry of Health (MoH) through the dissemination of health education knowledge. To prevent the probability of infections resulting from infectious diseases like the Corona virus and other similar ailments, the MoE should work more closely with the MoH to further spread information on health and hygienic practices in educational institutions (Ngwacho, 2020). Health education is crucial because it will inform all students in our educational institutions about how to prevent catching the COVID-19 virus while interacting socially with other students, instructors, and staff members.

Family estrangement has been on the rise and is now almost as common as divorce, often resulting in deep pain and alienation that was further intensified during the COVID-19 pandemic due to isolation and confinement measures. Research indicates that such breakdowns are not merely personal choices but are often linked to negative family dynamics. For instance, Lanjekar et al. (2022) found that adverse parenting practices combined with low levels of positive parenting increase children's stress, strain family relationships, and heighten vulnerability to peer pressure, which can ultimately lead them to sever ties with their parents. Children, particularly those from poor, underprivileged, and marginalized backgrounds, were among the most affected during the pandemic, facing heightened risks of neglect, violence, betrayal, toxic family dynamics, mental health challenges, and substance abuse (Haines et al., 2022). Although family bonds are often perceived as permanent, these ties can and do fracture, leaving families unprepared

and their grief unrecognized. This reality highlights the urgent need for interventional strategies, such as those proposed by Shah, Raju, Sharma, and Grover (2020) and Mbithi (2022), which call on stakeholders, including the Ministry of Education and the Department of Children's Services in Kenya, to strengthen family relationships, protect vulnerable children, and improve systems for safety and reporting during times of crisis.

Additionally, Mbithi (2022) emphasized the need for the government and other stakeholders to in Kenya to strengthen efforts in identifying orphans and students from low-income, vulnerable families to provide them with additional support such as food, financial assistance, and other essential resources. Such interventions are critical in preventing at-risk learners from dropping out of school due to a lack of support, resources, or necessities, thereby ensuring their continued enrollment beyond the COVID-19 crisis. This highlights the importance of allocating additional budgetary resources to the education sector in the aftermath of the pandemic to safeguard affected learners and enable them to recover from the unforeseen socio-economic shocks brought about by COVID-19. These recommendations align with Kenya's second national goal of education, which seeks to meet the social, economic, technological, and industrial needs of the nation for sustainable development.

2.1.2 Interaction of parents and children during the COVID-19 Pandemic

Family estrangement is increasingly common and has become almost as prevalent as divorce. Those affected often experience profound pain and alienation, a situation that was further compounded by the isolation and confinement measures imposed during the COVID-19 pandemic. Estrangement mostly happens when a family member deliberately distances or isolates themselves from others due to longstanding negativity within the

relationship. Contrary to the belief that estrangement is simply a matter of choice, media reports and research evidence indicate otherwise. Studies, such as Lanjekar et al. (2022), show that high levels of adverse parenting combined with low levels of positive parenting contribute to children becoming stressed, experiencing strained family relationships, and being more vulnerable to peer pressure, factors that can ultimately turn them against their parents. As a result, some individuals, once they reach adulthood, may choose to reduce or completely sever communication with one or both parents.

A recent study by Scharp and Hall (2019) found that some things, including poor or inadequate communication, physical separation, the involvement or utter lack of emotion, negative or positive effects, the eagerness to be part of a family, role reciprocity, and pursuing legal action, can cause a family to break up.

In the spring of 2020, 139 women from various socio-economic backgrounds participated in a survey that was done by Calarco et al. (2020). They discovered that mothers who, on average, spent a lot more time caring for their kids during the epidemic had proportionately greater levels of stress, anxiety, and irritability with their kids. However, the COVID-19 crisis had an impact on parental mental health and increased stress levels, which could make behavioural and socio-emotional issues in kids worse. The quantity of time parents devote to their children engaging in educational or developmental activities has a significant impact on their growth (Mazza et al., 2020; Ryan & Kalil, 2020; Price & Kalil, 2019). Parents might have increased time and chances of bonding with their children because there was no school during this period, which may result in better relationships between them. Interruptions in the COVID-19 containment efforts resulted in behavioral changes, economic shifts, and increased negative encounters.

According to a study by Gadermann et al. (2021) that looked at how COVID-19 affected family mental health in Canada, social isolation, shutdown of daycare centres or schools, and job stability have all led to previously unheard-of hardships for parents who are parenting their children at home. A cross-sectional survey of 300 adult Canadians served as the national sample for a descriptive study that examined the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on the mental well-being of parents with children below the age of 18 living at home. The remainder of the sample data, which was gathered by an online survey, was congruent with these findings. The study's main finding was that people reported alterations in their mental well-being after the pandemic and stress started. Suicidal tendency and self-harm were indicated as reactions to substance usage and use behaviours. Gadermann et al. (2021) also found that parents mentioned resources for help they used and adjustments in how they interacted with their children that affected the mental health of the latter. The results showed that 44.3% of parents who had children under the age of 18 living at home and 35.6% of participants without children below the age of 18 experienced adverse effects on their mental health as a result of the COVID-19 epidemic. 27.7% of parents noted a rise in alcohol intake, while 8.3% of parents reported an increase in suicide thoughts or feelings and 24.8% of parents said that the mental wellness of their children had worsened as a result of the epidemic. Parents reported developing relationships with their children both more and less frequently as a result of the epidemic (Gadermann et al., 2021).

2.1.3 Interactions of families between spouses during COVID-19 pandemic

In order to ascertain how COVID-19 affected these relationships, Karp et al. (2021) conducted a mixed-methods study on young relationships in the COVID-19 era involving

adolescent girls and young women in Kenya. To learn more about how young people's perceptions of intimate relationships changed during COVID-19, inductive theme analysis was used to evaluate qualitative information gathered from in-depth interviews with 76 paired youth between the ages of 15 and 24. By influencing partners' sexual and reproductive health (SRH), COVID-19 effects may impede the growth of healthy young relationships. The factors influencing relationship quality dynamics and SRH outcomes were investigated using bivariate and multivariate logistic regression. Findings revealed that about 75% of young people reported changes in the quality of their relationships after the outbreak, with 24% saying that less time spent with partners has gotten worse. This finding was the best predictor of decreased relationship quality. There was a correlation between youth who lost their partial or full household income and deterioration of their relationships. A thorough investigation showed how COVID-19 mitigation efforts hampered close friendships, school closures, rushed marriages, and females' reliance on their partners for financial support.

We are in the age of dual-income couples, where both spouses are either in employment or running a business. The issues of transfers and relocation were somehow limited by COVID-19 as there was restricted movement. Most families had to stay together. There is also notable increase of egalitarianism at home. During COVID-19, there was restricted movement and thus most families were forced to stay together by circumstances.

There is also notable increase of egalitarianism at home. During COVID-19 pandemic issues like gender-role identity also emerged among couples. A man with traditional gender-role beliefs would see himself as primary provider and decision maker and would

likely refuse to share roles rationally meant for woman such as taking care of the children, washing dishes or cooking.

Interactions between spouses normally have four important components, conscience intentions, effect on others (sometimes unintended), implicit judgment and implicit behaviour goals. Implicit judgments and goals are manifested in body language, facial expressions, and tone of voice. They inspire consciousness with confirmation bias. We only process information that confirms implicit judgment and ignore disconfirming evidence.

2.1.4 Interactions between siblings during COVID-19 pandemic

According to research by Shaligram (2021), children who were isolated during the COVID-19 pandemic experienced stress, developmental standstill, stigma, increased substance use, and suicidal thoughts. Youth mental health was impacted as caregivers passed away or became ill because of the epidemic. While shared social isolation, social media use, and sibling connections may have been mitigating variables during the epidemic, social isolation does have an impact on young people's mental health. The relationship between siblings during the pandemic was impacted by pre-pandemic traits such as challenging temperament, chronic disease, impairments, and emotional issues. In the absence of parental assistance, research from the past reveals that siblings aid one another. Previous research has shown that there were tenuous sibling relationships in the wake of the pandemic such as rise in domestic violence, but some older siblings became more attentive to their younger siblings' needs in an effort to lessen their own misery (Shaligram, 2021).

Zhang et al. (2022) studied how COVID-19 impacted sibling relationship qualities in Chinese setting. Through a web-based survey, 154 parents provided information on the sibling relationships of their kindergarten students aged 3 to 6. The descriptive information and correlations analysis revealed that there was good interaction and acceptance between the siblings. Findings of the regression analysis indicated that the parents' and guardians' perceptions of the features of the sibling relationship were significantly different. Particularly, compared to male kid siblings, female child siblings were more talkative and emotionally stable. The sex effect was more pronounced in first-born females. To help in improving the quality of sibling relationships, more research is required to look at the nature of sibling relationships in other significant life circumstances.

Toseeb (2022) conducted a study on sibling conflict in households with special education needs and disabilities (SEND) prior to and following the first lockdown in the United Kingdom. Between 24th March 2020 and 10th October 2020, 504 parents of children with this condition completed an online questionnaire (more than half responded to the survey more than once). As lockdowns persisted, children with this disease were slightly more likely to be singled out or injured by their siblings compared to earlier lockdown phases, but there was no difference in how often they themselves picked on or hurt other siblings. Young individuals with SEND, severe, or complicated needs were slightly safeguarded from conflict after lockdown, however, not at the same rate as it was during the first month of lockdown.

It is a fact of family life that siblings fight. They get angry with each other for stealing toys, borrowing clothes, or even crossing invisible boundaries. There are also a lot of

positive interactions among the children and there are a lot of positive things that happen between them. Some children sometimes tolerate some negativity in their interactions. The ability for children to fight and resolve conflicts is important for child-adult development. Sibling rivalry and jealousy can start the day the oldest child gets his first sibling (Dağcıoğlu, 2018). The advantage of the parents' full, pompous attention is taken away from the older siblings. This gives a child the best chance to learn how to handle conflicts, take criticism, put up with intolerance, and contribute (Latané, 1981). Sometimes favoritism of children by parents causes siblings rivalry, parents favoritism manifest in different ways that include spending time with one child, more affection given selectively, more privileges, loss discipline or on worse scenario, less or more abuse. Favoritism breeds sibling's resentments and unflavored child direct his/her anger to the other siblings.

The inter-familial interactions were greatly affected by restriction measures that were imposed due to COVID-19. There was a marked increase in children's susceptibility to abuse, neglect, violence, exploitation. There was also an impact on social isolation leading to loneliness, anxiety, stress. Economic stress was also experienced as a result of loss of job/employment and labour due to lockdowns (Martin et al., 2020).

2.2 Summary of literature review and identification of knowledge gaps

Findings from the empirical studies reviewed revealed that different crisis-creating circumstances affect family life and relations in different ways, especially when they are forced to stay together than they would normally do. Most of the literature concentrates on how families are affected by crisis-creating circumstances that prolong their stay

together rather than the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on social interactions within family set-ups. Based on the analyzed literature, there is a distinct gap in relation to the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on social interactions within family set-ups in Ruiru, Kiambu County, Kenya.

2.3 Theoretical Framework

This subsection presents the theoretical framework that guided the study, which was anchored on two complementary theories: Family Systems Theory and Social Interactionism Theory. These theories were adopted to provide a comprehensive lens for examining the dynamics of family interactions during the COVID-19 pandemic. Their relevance and application to the study are discussed below.

2.4 Family Systems Theory

The Family Systems Theory was first developed by Murray Bowen in the 1950s, with its foundational concepts later elaborated and formalized in his seminal work *Family Therapy in Clinical Practice* (1978). Kerr and Bowen (1988) subsequently expanded on these ideas, providing a more comprehensive framework for understanding family dynamics. The theory explains a family as a complex social organization in which members interact and influence one another's behaviour. The theory highlights the crucial role parents play in shaping the development and expression of children's emotions and behaviours (Miller et al., 2000). The theory also emphasizes the behavioural exchanges that occur during family interactions, asserting that contact patterns can generate both adaptive and maladaptive behaviors. These relational

dynamics are therefore essential for understanding human behavior and emotions, as well as the quality of family relationships (Johnson & Ray, 2016).

The COVID-19 pandemic, with its stay-at-home orders, school closures, and disruptions to work, confined children's interactions largely to their immediate families (Fegert et al., 2020). Parents had a significant impact on their children's emotional and behavioural responses to the pandemic, with factors such as reduced income, increased stress, and longer periods of inactivity influencing parenting styles and children's outcomes (Liang et al., 2020; Deng et al., 2021). For example, rigorous and micro-managing parenting practices were found to correlate with heightened negative emotions such as anger, loneliness, and sadness (Wissemann et al., 2021). These dynamics align with Family Systems Theory, which emphasizes that family interaction patterns, whether between parents and children, siblings, or spouses, are important in shaping emotional and behavioural outcomes.

In relation to the study objectives, this provides a lens through which to explore how COVID-19 containment measures affected parent-child interactions, sibling relationships, and spousal interactions. By recognizing that stressors experienced by one family member can influence the behaviour and well-being of others, the theory explains how disruptions during the pandemic may have altered communication, closeness, and conflict within households. Furthermore, the theory's focus on interactional patterns justifies the need to propose intervention strategies that strengthen family resilience, promote positive communication, and mitigate the negative effects of crises on family well-being. Applying this theory in the study helped to bridge gaps in understanding how containment measures influenced different family subsystems in Ruiru Sub-County,

Kiambu County, and contributed to evidence-based strategies for safeguarding family relationships during future pandemics and emergencies.

2.5 Social Interactionism Theory

The Social Interactionism Theory was developed by George Herbert Mead (1934) and later advanced by Herbert Blumer (1969). The theory posits that human behaviour and social reality are constructed through everyday interactions, and the meanings individuals attach to them. The theory emphasizes that meanings are not fixed but emerge from social processes, communication, and shared experiences. Within family settings, this perspective highlights how members interpret one another's behaviours, negotiate roles, and redefine relationships in response to changing circumstances.

In this study, Social Interactionism Theory complements Family Systems Theory by focusing not only on the structural dynamics of the family but also on the subjective meanings attached to family interactions during the COVID-19 pandemic. While Family Systems Theory explains how the family operates as an interdependent system where one member's behaviour affects others, Social Interactionism provides insight into how family members understand, interpret, and respond to these changes in their daily interactions.

In relation to the study objectives, the theory helped to explain how parents and children constructed new meanings of authority, care, and communication under stay-at-home orders. It also sheds light on how siblings negotiated roles and shared responsibilities within the confined household environment, and how spouses interpreted and adjusted to each other's behaviours. Furthermore, by highlighting the importance of shared meaning-

making, the theory supports the development of intervention strategies that strengthen communication, mutual understanding, and adaptive role negotiation within families during crises.

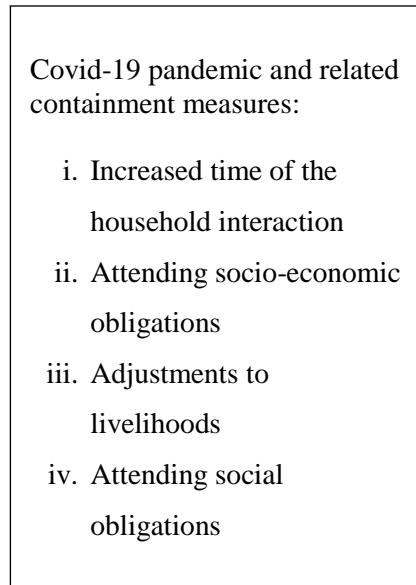
By integrating Social Interactionism with Family Systems Theory, the study benefited from a dual perspective. Family Systems theory captures the micro-level, meaning-making processes of everyday interactions, while the Social Interactionism theory emphasizes the systemic, structural interdependence of family members. Together, these theories provided a comprehensive framework for understanding the effects of COVID-19 containment measures on family interactions in Ruiru Sub-County, Kiambu County.

2.6 Conceptual framework

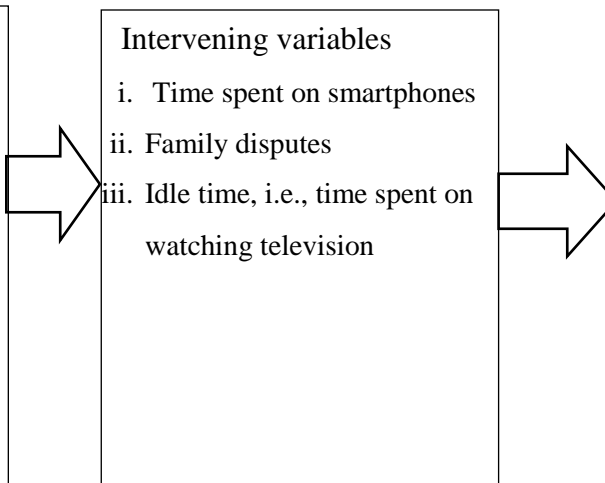
A conceptual framework is a systematic instrument that helps researchers connect study themes by creating and organizing conceptual differences and ideas for a later presentation.

2.1 Conceptual Framework

Independent Variable



Intervening Variables



Dependent Variable

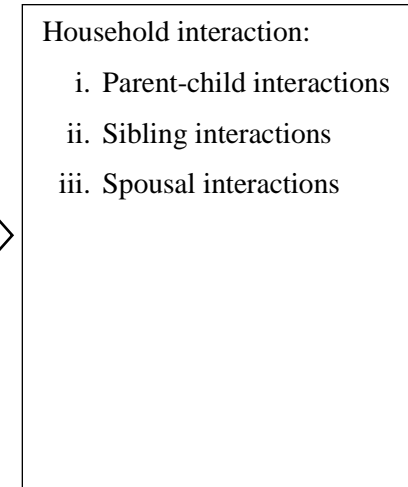


Figure 2.1: Conceptual Framework Showing the Relationship between the Variables

Source, Researcher 2022

Figure 2.1 presents the conceptual framework guiding this study. The independent variable is the COVID-19 containment measures, which include increased time of household interaction, attending socio-economic obligations, adjustment to livelihoods, and attending social obligations. These measures directly influenced the way family members interacted within the household during the pandemic. The dependent variable is social interactions within nuclear families, which is reflected through three key dimensions: parent–child relations, sibling interactions, and spousal relationships. The study assumes that the containment measures disrupted normal family routines, thereby reshaping these interactions either positively or negatively.

The relationship between the independent and dependent variables is further influenced by intervening variables, which are contextual and behavioural factors that can either increase or decrease the effects of the containment measures. These include time spent on smartphones and digital devices, pre-existing family disputes, socio-economic pressures, and patterns of leisure activities such as prolonged television watching. These intervening factors may strengthen or weaken the impact of COVID-19 containment measures on family social interactions.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

The methods and approaches that were employed in carrying out the study are presented in this chapter. The following sections are covered in detail: the research design, study site, sample size estimation, sampling technique, instruments and methodology for gathering data, methods for analyzing that data, and logistical and ethical considerations.

3.1 Research Design

A research design is a framework of research methodologies and methods that a researcher selects to carry out a study (Sileyew, 2019). This study employed a survey research design, which incorporated both quantitative and qualitative approaches. A survey design is particularly useful in studies that seek to collect data from a large population to describe, explain, or explore specific social phenomena. Within this framework, the study applied a mixed methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative data to enhance the breadth and depth of analysis (Alavi & Habek, 2016). The use of surveys allowed for the collection of statistical data alongside comprehensive qualitative insights, thereby facilitating a more holistic understanding of the research problem. This design was appropriate for examining how COVID-19 containment measures influenced household interactions, as it enabled the researcher to capture both measurable patterns and lived experiences.

3.2 Study Site

The study was carried out in four Wards in Ruiru Sub-County namely, Biashara, Mwiki, Gitothua and Kahawa Sukari. Ruiru sub-county is in Kiambu County that is within the Nairobi Metropolitan area. The Sub-County supports many economic activities ranging from agriculture, industry/manufacturing, small trades, and mining among others. It therefore attracts huge population due to the economic opportunities available and hence has slightly more families with diverse cultures living in the area. The four Wards were thus selected because of the high population, mix of both rural and urban settings and family diversity.

3.3 Target Population

According to Levy and Lemeshow (2013), a target population is a clearly defined group of the things being studied, such as individuals, services, objects, and events. Similarly, Snyder (2019) defines a study population as the total collection of factors from which a researcher hopes to conclude. The target population for the study was households consisting of family-related members (unit of people living in the same house but for this study, only family members were included and excluded employees and visitors, or non-family members, in four Wards that included Mwiki, Kahawa Sukari, Biashara and Gitothua of Ruiru sub-County in Kiambu County. Based on the Kenyan Population and Housing Census (2019), related updates and administrative records, the number of households in the four Wards was Mwiki 16,234, Kahawa Sukari 12442, Biashara 13,049, and Gitothua 16,539, resulting in a population of 58,264 households.

3.3.1 Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Respondents included in the study were households in nuclear family setups with children below 18 years of age. Within these households, the study targeted responses from either spouse. Parents responded on behalf of their children. Households that did not meet these criteria were excluded from the study.

3.4 Sampling Frame, Sample Size and Sampling Technique

3.4.1 Sampling Frame

A sampling frame is a list of the population from which a sample is taken, according to Taherdoost (2016). The sampling frame for the study was the total households from four Wards in Ruiru sub-county based on the 2019 Kenyan Population and Housing Census report's data.

3.4.2 Sample Size Determination and Sample Size

Yamane's (1967) formula for small or finite populations was used to determine the sample size for this study. A sample size, as defined by Mugenda and Mugenda (2013), is a relatively small representative unit or group taken from the study population. According to Patten (2016), a good sample should have a modest sampling error, be feasible, affordable, and representative of the total population. Considering the study's finite population, the sample size of 396 was determined using Yamane's formula as follows:

$$n = \frac{N}{1+N(e)^2}$$

Where

n is the required sample size, N = the population size, and e = acceptable sampling error; usually 0.05, to achieve 95% probability of confidence that the sample would be

representative of the population. Applying this formular, the sample size was calculated as follows:

$$n = \frac{58264}{1 + 58264(0.05)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{58264}{1 + (58264)(0.0025)}$$

$$n = \frac{58264}{1 + (146)}$$

$$n = \frac{58264}{147} = 396$$

Therefore, $n = 396$, required sample size at 95% probability of confidence

Therefore, the sample size was determined at 396 households that were randomly selected from four Wards in Ruiru Sub-County. Ruiru sub-county has eight wards, of which 4 were selected for the study, including Biashara, Mwiki, Gitothua, and Kahawa Sukari. Owing to the vast area of Ruiru sub-County, the 4 wards were purposively selected, including 2 urban (Mwiki and Kahawa Sukari) and 2 rural wards (Biashara and Gitothua), to diversify the characteristics of the respondents. The study targeted either spouse in households. Simple random sampling is utilized when there is a conscious effort to choose respondents who are representative of the study population (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2009). Consequently, a sample size of 396 was selected for the study.

To determine the sample size for each Ward, the proportionate stratified sampling formula was applied. The formula is as follows:

$$n_i = \frac{N_i}{N} \times n$$

Where:

n_i = sample size per Ward

N_i = population size per Ward

n = target population

N = total sample size

Based on this formula, the sample size for each Ward was thus calculated as follows:

$$\text{Biashara} = n_i = \frac{92}{255} \times 156 = 56$$

$$\text{Mwiki} = n_i = \frac{109}{255} \times 156 = 67$$

$$\text{Gitohua} = n_i = \frac{54}{255} \times 156 = 33$$

Kahawa Sukari

Table 3.1

Table 3.1: Sample size

Constituency	Ward	Number of households	Sample size	Percentage
Ruiru	Biashara	13,049	87	22
	Mwiki	16,234	110	28
	Gitohua	16,539	116	29
	Kahawa Sukari	12,442	83	21
Total		58,264	396	100

Source: IEBC (2023) and Researcher

3.4.3 Sampling Technique

The method used to choose the study's participants is called a sampling technique. It is necessary to choose a portion of the audience to include in the study. The sampling frame

for the study was 58,264 households in Ruiru sub-County. Yamane's (1967) formula was used to determine a sample size of 396 households from four wards. The sample was selected using a simple random sampling technique, which was considered appropriate because it gives every household an equal chance of being included in the study, thereby minimizing selection bias and ensuring that the sample is representative of the larger population. This technique also enhanced the reliability and generalizability of the study findings. In each selected household, either parent was chosen as the respondent, serving as a proxy for their children and providing responses on their behalf.

3.5 Data Collection Methods

In the study, primary and secondary data were employed. Families chosen at random from four Ruiru Sub-County wards provided the primary data for this study.

3.5.1 Household Questionnaires

The fact that questionnaires are easy to use and save time and money is a factor in the decision to employ them as a data collection instrument. Similarly, questionnaires enable the researcher to rapidly gather vast amounts of data and uniformly handle a variety of difficulties (Ikart, 2019). To gather quantitative data, descriptive survey questions were supplied to the participants selected, and informed consent was obtained. The questionnaire included a variety of sections and items, such as questions about the respondents' social characteristics, the advantages of COVID-19 for families, particularly in terms of interactions, the difficulties that families faced during the pandemic in terms of interactions, and interventional strategies for dealing with those difficulties. Respondents filled out pen and paper questionnaires that had both open and closed-ended questions administered by the researcher and research assistants.

3.5.2 Key Informant Interviews

The researcher also conducted interviews with key informants using an interview guide, which provided an opportunity to collect in-depth data for a comprehensive understanding of the research subject. A total of ten key informants were interviewed, comprising six social workers and four chiefs, who provided valuable insights into how families were affected by the introduction of COVID-19 containment measures. The four chiefs were purposively selected, with one representing each of the four wards in Ruiru Sub-County, to ensure balanced representation of perspectives across the study area.

3.6 Pilot Study

Pre-testing the questionnaire on a representative sample was the main objective of the pilot project, and the results were used to refine the questionnaire for the main study (Kothari, 2004). According to Brooks et al. (2018), the pilot test should use a sample that represents 10% of the total population. A total of 20 respondents from Mwhoko ward in Ruiru Sub-County were picked to participate in the pilot test of the questionnaire. They were not included in the study's final sample.

3.7 Validity and Reliability of the Study

The degree to which an investigator can consistently get the same findings using the same tools is referred to as reliability. Simply put, if a study's findings are highly reliable, such findings should be verified in a second study utilizing a similar research design and set of circumstances. Babbie (2010) contends that there is no surefire defense against the influence of the observer's subjectivity, particularly when the observer is the sole source. The researcher performed a pilot study to make sure that any inconsistencies or biases on

the data collecting instruments were addressed before starting the actual data gathering operation. With twenty (20) respondents in the Mwihoko ward who were not included in the main study, the interview guide and the questionnaire were tested for validity where adjustments were made by ensuring that question items in the questionnaire covered all the study variables as per the conceptual framework. From the 20 participants, 16 of them, equivalent to 80% correctly interpreted the questionnaire while the remaining 4 equivalent to 20% needed clarifications. Thus, the questionnaire was adjusted to ensure that all the questions were clear and easy to interpret.

Validity is the degree to which information, following data analysis, reflects the actual situation in terms of the target population (Kothari, 2004). Validity checks were performed on all data collection tools. The first one focused on how well the data collection tools address the study variables. With the latter, bias-free language, format, and layout are guaranteed in the data gathering tools. Before giving the instruments to the respondents, the supervisors and a postgraduate committee from Kenyatta University authenticated them; the researcher also considered their comments and any corrections or feedback from them.

3.8 Data Collection

Utilizing questionnaires that were based on the study's objectives, the primary data was collected. The questionnaire contained both structured and unstructured questions. A Likert scale questionnaire was used to provide structured questions and gauge respondents' opinions regarding diverse viewpoints on family interactions during COVID-19. Utilizing questionnaires significantly aided in gathering data from the study

sample; they helped in lowering the likelihood of biases and ensure that confidentiality is maintained. However, information from the key informants in Ruiru was gathered using an interview guide.

3.9 Data Analysis

Islam and Islam (2020) define data analysis as a process that examines, purifies, alters, and models data in a manner to identify pertinent information, draw conclusions, and support decision-making. Field notes, interviews, and documents that were collected as qualitative and quantitative data was transcribed, conceived, coded, and analyzed to determine characteristics, frequency, themes, patterns, and trends. Following the completion of the data collecting process, a completed questionnaire provided to be reviewed for accuracy and consistency to facilitate easy analysis and result interpretation. The data then was cleaned to ensure it is error-free by checking for incompleteness, inconsistencies, missing values, and duplicate errors. The data was coded, dividing it into different categories. The quantitative data was analyzed using Microsoft Excel to generate descriptive statistics while qualitative data was analyzed through narrative analysis. Levels of social interactions in families were measured using frequencies and percentages. The findings were presented through frequency tables. Qualitative data mainly from key informants, was analyzed for new and recurring themes that aligned with the objectives of the study and presented through narration.

3.10 Ethical and Logistical Considerations

Research investigations sometimes include interacting with individuals or sensitive information; therefore, it is crucial to maintain ethical considerations throughout the

research exercise. To achieve the aforementioned, the approval to undertake research was obtained from the Graduate School of Kenyatta University and ethical clearance to obtain consent to interview chosen respondents and access pertinent records from KU Ethical Review Committee. Additionally, a research permit from the National Commission for Science, Technology, and Innovation (NACOSTI). Before including respondents in the study, an informed consent form was signed by the respondents. The respondents were informed that the study is exclusively intended for academic purposes and that their participation will be voluntary. They were also assured that the study will not directly or indirectly cause any harm. By securely keeping the information gathered from the respondents away from people who are not participating in the study, respondents were assured of confidentiality. Computer data was kept confidential by protecting it with passwords only known to the researcher. To maintain the respondents' anonymity, respondents were asked not to provide their names on the study instruments given to them.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF STUDY FINDINGS

4.0 Introduction

The findings of the study are presented in this chapter based on information obtained from the fieldwork. An overview of the socio-demographic characteristics of the research respondents is provided in the first section while the study results are presented in the second section of this chapter in accordance with the study's objectives which were to: explore how containment measures affected the interaction between parents and their children during COVID-19 pandemic, establish the effects of containment measures on interactions between siblings during COVID-19 pandemic, explore the effects of containment measures on interactions between spouses during COVID-19 pandemic and suggest interventional strategies of addressing the issues of social interactions that families faced during COVID-19 pandemic in Ruiru Sub-County, Kiambu County, Kenya. The findings are presented in the following sections.

4.1 Response rate

Out of the 396 households that constituted the original study sample, 370 completed the survey and were included in the final analysis after data cleaning. This yielded a response rate of 93%, which is considered highly satisfactory in social science research. According to Babbie (2016), a response rate above 70% is generally regarded as excellent, as it minimizes the risk of non-response bias and enhances the representativeness of the findings. The 93% response rate in this study, therefore, indicates a high level of cooperation from participants, implying that the findings can be considered reliable and

reflective of the target population. The summary of the response rate is presented in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1: Response rate

Ward	Target	Actual response	Percentage
Biashara	87	83	21
Mwiki	110	103	26
Gitothua	116	107	27
Kahawa Sukari	83	77	19
Total	396	370	93

Source: Field data (2023)

4.2 Social and Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

This section presents the socio-demographic information of the respondents involved in the current study.

4.2.1 Socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents

The social and demographic factors included in the study were: gender, age, education level and type of family. Respondents were purposely selected from 384 households from 4 wards purposely selected in Ruiru sub-County. The results are presented in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2: Socio-demographic traits of the respondents

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	178	48.1
	Female	192	51.9
	Total	370	100
Age	18 - 25	58	15.7
	26-35	133	35.9
	36 and over	179	48.4
	Total	370	100
Level of education	None	13	3.5
	Primary	107	29.0
	Secondary	164	44.3
	Tertiary	86	23.2
	Other	0	0
	Total	370	100
Religion	Christian	361	97.6
	Islam	9	2.4
	Other	0	0
	Total	370	100
Occupation	Civil/public service	109	29
	Business	133	36
	Farmer	96	26
	Other	32	9
	Total	370	100
Living arrangements on the household level	Nuclear family	370	100
	Other arrangement	0	0
	Total	370	100

Source: Field data (2023)

The demographic findings in Table 4.2 provide useful insights that strengthen the interpretation of the study results. The near-equal distribution of male (48%) and female (52%) respondents indicates a balanced representation of gender perspectives. This balance was critical to the study objectives, particularly in assessing how COVID-19 containment measures influenced spousal interactions, as both male and female voices were reflected. The fact that slightly more females than males responded can be attributed to their greater presence at home, which was relevant in exploring how household interactions were shaped during lockdowns.

Age distribution findings showed that all respondents were legally adults, with nearly half (48%) being 36 years and above. This age spread implied that the study captured the experiences of relatively mature parents, many of whom likely had children of different age groups at home. Such diversity allowed the study to effectively examine parent-child and sibling interactions under COVID-19 containment measures.

Education levels indicated that 96% of the respondents had at least primary education, with secondary education (44%) being the most common. This high literacy rate ensured that participants were able to engage meaningfully with the questionnaire items. The findings thus increased the reliability of the responses collected for the study's objectives.

Religious affiliation showed that the majority (97.6%) were Christians, while 2.4% were Muslims. These proportions reflect the general religious composition in Kiambu County and highlight the role of religion in shaping household practices, routines, and coping strategies during the COVID-19 pandemic. This dimension was particularly relevant in

understanding how values and faith-based principles influenced family interactions during the crisis.

In terms of occupation, 36% of respondents were in business, 29% were civil servants, and 26% were farmers. These occupations reflect a cross-section of households whose work patterns and income streams were directly disrupted by the pandemic containment measures. For example, business and farming activities were heavily affected by curfews and movement restrictions, which in turn influenced the time parents and children spent together and shaped household dynamics.

Finally, the finding that all respondents came from nuclear family set-ups aligned with the study's inclusion criteria and objectives. By focusing on nuclear households, the study effectively examined parent-child, sibling, and spousal interactions without the influence of extended family structures, which may have introduced different dynamics.

Overall, the demographic characteristics of the respondents provided a solid basis for addressing the study objectives. They validated the suitability of the sample for the research but also contextualized the observed patterns of family interactions during COVID-19 containment in Ruiru Sub-County.

4.3 Interactions between Parents and Children during the COVID-19 Pandemic

The first objective of the study sought to explore how containment measures affected the interaction between parents and their children during COVID-19 pandemic in Ruiru Sub-County, Representatives from sample households that included either of the spouses were requested to indicate their level of interaction with their children during the COVID-19 period. Consequently, this sub-section presents the findings on levels of interaction

between parents and children as reported by respondents in the study. Findings are presented in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3 Interactions between parents and children during COVID-19 pandemic

Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
I have a favourite child in my family	68 (18%)	48 (13%)	32 (9%)	122 (33%)	100 (27%)	370 (100%)
I felt free to engage with a particular child in the family but not other children during COVID-19	49 (13%)	66 (18%)	55 (15%)	102 (28%)	98 (26%)	370 (100%)
I felt I developed a rift with some of my children during COVID-19	82 (22%)	48 (13%)	39 (11%)	105 (28%)	96 (26%)	370 (100%)
My children felt I neglected them during COVID-19 period.	57 (15%)	84 (23%)	36 (10%)	99 (27%)	94 (25%)	370 (100%)
The fact that I lived in a family setting, I felt there were unresolved conflicts with my children.	38 (10%)	56 (15%)	83 (22%)	99 (27%)	94 (25%)	370 (100%)

Source: Field data (2023)

Analysis of results on whether respondents had a favourite member in their family shows that 60% of the respondents (33% agreed and 27% strongly agreed) indicated that they have a favourite family member. On the other hand, 31% (18% strongly disagreed and 13% disagreed) reported that they did not have a favourite family member, while 9% remained neutral. These findings suggest that the majority of respondents, particularly parents, acknowledged having a favourite child in the family.

The findings were further supported by revelations by a key informant, a social worker who stated that:

“It is assumed to be usual for a parent to have a favourite child. Though this is not always openly stated, there are certain behaviour patterns and actions that prove this to be the case. For example, a parent may buy more gifts for a particular child over the other or a child preferring to talk to one parent over the other. It is possible to take note of such behaviours when families stay together over a prolonged period of time like it happened during the COVID-19 period. My opinion is that the prolonged staying together of families during COVID-19 lockdown might have made families to come to this realization.”

These findings are supported by study by Lanjekar et al., (2022) which indicated that members within families have favourite family members where parents have a favourite child or children having a favourite parent. The study by Lanjekar et al. (2022) further revealed that staying together between parents and children for prolonged period of time during COVID-19 pandemic period only contributed to revealing the otherwise hidden fact that individuals usually have favourite family members. Another study by Scharp and Hall (2019) reveals that issues such as parents showing open preference for a particular child over the other are a major contributor to bad relations between parents and other children who may feel less loved by their parents.

Analysis of the study variable on whether family members felt free to engage with a particular person in the family but not everyone during the COVID-19 period revealed that 54% of respondents (28% agreed and 26% strongly agreed) supported this assertion. On the contrary, 31% (18% disagreed and 13% strongly disagreed) did not share this view, while 15% remained neutral. These findings suggest that, during the movement

restrictions, family members were more inclined to engage closely with specific individuals within the household rather than interacting equally with all members.

These findings are supported by a study by Lanjekar et al. (2022), which indicated that children may choose to communicate with one of their parents and stop communicating with the other. Children have a favourite parent whom they prefer talking to freely while they restrict their conversations when they are with the other parent. Likewise, parents may want to engage some children freely in conversations over other children.

The findings further reveal that 54% of the respondents (28% agreed and 26% strongly agreed) felt they developed a rift with some of their children during the COVID-19 period when families spent more time together due to containment measures. In contrast, 35% (22% strongly disagreed and 13% disagreed) did not share this view, while 11% remained neutral. These results indicate that the majority of respondents experienced strained relationships with some of their children during the pandemic.

The findings are supported by statements made by key informants. Social workers who were among the key informants revealed that they had encountered cases where family members wanted to live on their own during the COVID-19 period when there were containment measures such as movement restrictions. Most of the cases involved spouses while some involved parents and children. One key informant a social worker was quoted saying:

“I have encountered cases of spouses wanting to live separately. This intensified during the COVID-19 pandemic period, and I suspect it was due to the prolonged period of spending time together. One case I encountered was that of a husband

who sought advice before divorcing his wife of 10 years. The husband said that conversations with his wife were not intelligent at all, and he wondered how he ended up marrying her.”

The findings are further supported by recent research by Scharp and Dorrance Hall (2019) which indicated that rifts between family members exist because of unresolved issues. The study further revealed that rifts between family members are exacerbated when family members spend more time together as opposed to spending less time together. During the COVID-19 pandemic, containment measures in Ruiru Sub-County that forced parents and children to stay together at home for prolonged periods of time than they usually did played a role in exposing rifts that exist between parents and children.

The findings on whether children felt neglected by their parents indicated that a majority of the respondents at 27% felt that they were neglected by family members, 25% strongly agree, 23% disagree with this assertion while a minority of 15% strongly disagrees with this statement. Another 10% of the participants indicated that they were neutral on this assertion. The findings indicate that majority of the respondents felt neglected by family members as a result of containment measures introduced to curb the spread of COVID-19 in Kenya.

These findings augur with those of Gadermann et al. (2021) which established that cases of attempted suicide and deterioration of mental well-being among teenagers increased during the COVID-19 pandemic when parents had to spend more time together with their children. Children felt neglected by their parents while parents felt that the relationship

between them and their children was deteriorating. According to the research, parents felt that their children were not ready or willing to talk to them about issues affecting them.

Analysis of the study variable on whether there is a feeling that respondents live in a family where there are unresolved conflicts between them and their children revealed that a majority of the respondents at 27% agreed with this assertion, 25% strongly agreed, 15% disagreed while a minority of the participants at 10% strongly disagreed with the statement. A further 22% of the respondents indicated that they were neutral on the subject, implying that they were not comfortable revealing this information.

Key informants indicated coming across family members seeking advice on unresolved family conflicts during the COVID-19 period. One key informant a chief stated that:

“Unresolved conflicts in families between spouses or between parents and children are a common occurrence in this area. During the COVID-19 period when containment measures were introduced by the government to curb its spread, these issues came to the fore because families had to stay together for longer than usual. I would say that I encountered more cases of people seeking help on how to deal with unresolved conflicts during that period.”

Another key informant, a social worker, stated that:

“Family conflicts are usually not brought to the attention of counselors unless they get out of control. However, even the small conflicts need to be resolved instead of piling up and getting out of control. The COVID-19 lockdown made parents spend more time together with their children. Spouses also had to break from their daily routines and spend more time together. A couple came to seek help after realizing that their son had isolated himself after they told him they did not have the finances to buy him a laptop.”

These findings show that the majority of the respondents live in families where there are unresolved conflicts. The findings are congruent with a study by Scharp and Dorrance Hall (2019) which established that families become dysfunctional due to unresolved conflicts emanating from poor communication, financial challenges, frequent arguments, abusive parenting, and drug usage among other issues. The findings are further supported by another research by Lanjekar et al. (2022) which established that aversive parenting results in children developing negative relationships with their parents, and this became pronounced during the COVID-19 period when parents had to spend more time with their children.

The study finds that parents showed that they had favourite children which strained their relationship with other children, parents felt free to engage with one child over the other, there were rifts between parents and children, children felt neglected by their parents and there were unresolved conflicts between parents and children in families. All these are indicators that spending more time together between parents and children during COVID-19 did not improve their interaction, but it worsened it instead. This study therefore concludes that interactions between parents and children were negatively impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic containment measures which included restriction of movements that forced families to spend more time together than it was usual in Ruiru Sub-County, Kiambu County.

Generally, the findings on parent–child interactions during the COVID-19 pandemic can be interpreted using Family Systems theory. The theory posits that the family functions as an interdependent system where shifts in one part of the system reverberate throughout the whole. The evidence that 60% of parents admitted to having a favourite child, and

that significant proportions reported developing rifts, experiencing unresolved conflicts, or perceptions of neglect, demonstrates the strain that containment measures placed on the parent–child subsystem. Prolonged co-residence during the lockdown increased opportunities for both closeness and conflict, highlighting how intensified interactions within the family unit could amplify pre-existing dynamics. From a systems perspective, the emergence of favouritism or conflict reflects the family’s attempt to recalibrate equilibrium in response to the stressors introduced by the pandemic.

The findings can be understood through Social Interactionism theory, which highlights the role of meanings and interpretations in shaping social behaviour. Parents’ perceptions of having a favourite child or feeling estranged from others did not emerge solely from increased time together, but from the meanings parents and children attached to their interactions during the pandemic. For example, differential treatment such as giving gifts or preferential communication may have taken on heightened symbolic significance under lockdown conditions, reinforcing children’s perceptions of favoritism or neglect. Likewise, unresolved conflicts may have persisted because parents and children interpreted daily interactions through prior relational schemas that were magnified in the confined context of the pandemic.

4.4 Interactions within Families between Siblings

The second objective of the study sought to establish the effects of containment measures on interactions between siblings during the COVID-19 pandemic in Ruiru Sub-County, Kiambu County, Kenya. Respondents were parents responding to the questionnaire on behalf of their children. They were presented with questionnaires with statements

regarding the interactions between their children during the COVID-19 period. The findings are presented in Table 4.4.

Table 4.4: Interactions in families between siblings

Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
My children expressed themselves freely to one another better during COVID-19 compared to before COVID-19	96 (26%)	105 (28%)	66 (18%)	63 (17%)	40 (11%)	370 (100%)
My children were open to talking about any elements of their relationship when upset about them, better during COVID-19 than pre-COVID-19	91 (25%)	98 (26%)	81 (22%)	56 (15%)	44 (12%)	370 (100%)
My children settled disagreements between themselves easily during COVID-19, compared to pre-COVID-19	98 (26%)	110 (30%)	74 (20%)	32 (9%)	56 (15%)	370 (100%)
In light of the circumstances, I think the length of time my children spent together did not affect their interactions.	37 (10%)	59 (16%)	78 (21%)	109 (29%)	87 (24%)	370 (100%)
My children felt secure with one another, just like they did pre-COVID-19.	25 (7%)	42 (11%)	71 (19%)	110 (30%)	122 (33%)	370 (100%)

Key: Percentage (n=370)

Analysis of results in Table 4.4 indicates that the majority of respondents (54%) disagreed or strongly disagreed that their children expressed themselves more freely to one another during the COVID-19 period compared to pre-COVID-19, while 28% agreed or strongly agreed, and 18% remained neutral. Similarly, 51% disagreed or strongly disagreed that their children were more open in discussing relationship issues, compared to 27% who agreed or strongly agreed. In terms of conflict resolution, 56% disagreed or strongly disagreed that disagreements were resolved more easily during the pandemic, whereas only 24% agreed or strongly agreed. On the other hand, a notable shift was

observed in statements 4 and 5: more than half of the respondents (53%) agreed or strongly agreed that the time spent together with siblings did not negatively affect their interactions, and 63% agreed or strongly agreed that their children continued to feel secure with each other just as before COVID-19.

Insights from key informants complemented these findings. They highlighted that, although siblings spent more time together during the pandemic than they normally would, time that would otherwise have been spent in school or with peers, this did not significantly alter the nature of their interactions. A social worker noted:

“I think parents had more time to observe interactions between their children more closely during the COVID-19 period. They would have easily observed how their children expressed themselves to one another compared to pre-COVID-19, when parents did not spend much time with their children. The interactions between siblings might have had slight changes because of spending more time together, but I honestly do not think there were significant changes.”

Overall, these findings suggest that while COVID-19 containment measures increased the time siblings spent together, this did not fundamentally transform the way they interacted. Instead, the relationships largely maintained their pre-pandemic patterns, with some evidence of deteriorating bonds in terms of security and closeness. The findings agree with those of Zhang et al. (2022), who found that sibling interactions during COVID-19 remained consistent with pre-pandemic dynamics. However, the findings contradict those of Hughes et al. (2023), who observed that, if anything, containment measures sometimes reinforced sibling relationships.

Analysis of the findings regarding the study variable showed that children were open to talking about any elements of their relationship when upset about them, better during the COVID-19 period when containment measures were in place. majority of the respondents at 26% disagreed with the statement, while 25% strongly disagreed with the assertion. A minority of the respondents, 12%, strongly agreed, while 15% agreed with the statement. Those who remained neutral on the statement were 22%.

These findings demonstrate that there were no major changes in how siblings were open to talk about any elements of their relationship that upset them during the COVID-19 period, when they spent more time together than usual as a result of the containment measures compared to pre-COVID-19 period.

Regarding the assertion that children settled disagreements between themselves easily when they spent more time together as a result of containment measures to curb the spread of COVID-19, majority of the respondents represented by 30% disagreed with this statement while 26% strongly disagreed. The minority of the respondents at 9% agreed with this assertion while 15% agreed. Another 20% of the respondents were neutral regarding the statement.

The findings show that majority of the children were able to settle disagreements between themselves easily during the COVID-19 period just like they did during the pre-COVID-19 time. These findings agree with recent research by Shaligram (2021) which showed that older siblings were more attentive to their younger ones in efforts to settle issues between themselves and alleviate any suffering brought about by the pandemic just like before COVID-19. This means that siblings were able to settle disagreements between

themselves when they spent more time together during the COVID-19 lockdown period just like they did before the measures were introduced.

The study variable on “in light of the circumstances, I think the length of time my children spent together was appropriate”, the majority of the respondents, at 29% agreed with the assertion, 24% strongly agreed, 16% disagreed, while a minority at 10% strongly disagreed with the statement. Another 21% of the respondents remained neutral on the topic.

These findings indicate that the majority of the siblings bonded well with one another during the COVID-19 pandemic when they spent more time together compared to the pre-COVID-19 period. The findings are consistent with a study by Zhang et al. (2022), which established that though there were increased tensions between siblings as a result of spending more time together, there was, however, good interaction and acceptance between siblings during the COVID-19 lockdown period.

Regarding the study variable “My children felt secure with one another during COVID-19”, 33% being the majority of the respondents strongly agreed with the assertion, while 30% agreed with the statement. A minority at 7% disagreed with the statement as did 11% of the respondents. A further 19% of the respondents remained neutral regarding the assertion. This shows that the majority of the respondents felt that their children felt secure when together during the COVID-19 period when containment measures were in place.

Key informants reported that they did not encounter instances of parents requiring professional intervention for siblings fighting or hurting one another in any way during

COVID-19 period when they stayed together for prolonged time as a result of containment measures to curb the virus. One key informant a social worker stated that:

“I did not encounter a case where a child or a parent requiring advice because of major or minor disagreements at home between children. Usually when siblings spend time together even for prolonged periods of time, they have differences but overall, they tend to bond well and look after one another.”

These findings are supported by recent studies which have shown that siblings feel secure around one another (Zhang et al., 2022; Shaligram, 2021). This means that containment measures that resulted in siblings spending more time together did not affect the way siblings relate with each other. Siblings still felt secure around one another.

The study deduces that interactions between siblings were not affected by containment as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic in Ruiru Sub-County, Kiambu County, Kenya. Elements of interactions between siblings assessed in the study such as siblings expressing themselves freely to one another, siblings being open to talk about any elements of their relationship when upset about them, children settling their disagreements easily, and children feeling secure with one another during the COVID-19 period compared to the pre-COVID-19 period showed little effect on sibling interactions in families by COVID-19 pandemic containment measures.

The Family Systems theory emphasizes that each family is an interdependent emotional unit, and shifts in one subsystem, such as increased sibling contact due to school closures, resonates throughout the broader system. The fact that a majority of respondents reported no substantial improvements in communication, openness, or conflict resolution among

siblings, despite prolonged time together, indicates that sibling dynamics are relatively stable and less easily changed by external circumstances. Instead, the findings that siblings continued to feel secure with one another and that prolonged time together did not negatively impact their relationships indicate a resilience between siblings. This aligns with systems theory's assertion that families seek equilibrium; thus, even under the stressors of containment measures, siblings maintained pre-existing interactional patterns rather than undergoing dramatic shifts.

From the view of Social Interactionism theory, these findings highlight the importance of the meaning that siblings attach to their everyday interactions. According to Blumer (1969), individuals act toward each other based on the meanings they derive from social exchanges. In this context, while increased proximity during COVID-19 did not automatically foster deeper openness or easier conflict resolution, it did not erode siblings' sense of security either. This indicates that siblings interpreted their relationships in largely consistent ways across both pre- and mid-pandemic contexts. The symbolic value of security and belonging within sibling relationships may have outweighed the potential frustrations of increased contact, reinforcing stability in how they defined and experienced their relationships.

4.5 Interactions in nuclear families between spouses

Objective three of the study sought to explore the effects of containment measures on interactions between spouses during the COVID-19 pandemic in Ruiru Sub-County, Kiambu County, Kenya. The respondents were presented with a questionnaire with statements regarding their interactions during the COVID-19 pandemic. The findings are presented in Table 4.5.

Table 4.5: Interactions in families between spouses

Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
I communicated more regularly with my wife/husband during COVID-19 compared to pre-COVID-19	99 (27%)	125 (34%)	55 (15%)	50 (13%)	41 (11%)	370 (100%)
The affection with my spouse satisfied my need for passionate physical contact (holding hands, hugging, kissing, touching, - other than when we were initiating or being intimate) during COVID-19 compared to pre-COVID-19.	102 (28%)	130 (35%)	38 (10%)	56 (15%)	44 (12%)	370 (100%)
One or both of us ended up very hurt or frustrated after a fight or disagreement during COVID-19, compared to pre-COVID-19.	32 (9%)	56 (15%)	55 (15%)	123 (33%)	104 (28%)	370 (100%)
I felt appreciated by my partner during COVID-19 compared to pre-COVID-19.	110 (30%)	129 (35%)	34 (9%)	64 (17%)	33 (9%)	370 (100%)

Key: Percentage (n=370)

Analysis of the findings in Table 4.5 concerning interactions in families between spouses shows that 34% of the respondents disagreed on the statement that they communicated more regularly with their spouses during the COVID-19 period compared to the pre-COVID-19 period, 27% strongly disagreed, 13% agreed, while a minority consisting of 11% strongly agreed with the assertion. Another 15% of the respondents indicated that they were neutral with regard to the statement. The findings indicate that communication between spouses in families was less frequent during COVID-19, as the majority of the respondents indicated that they did not communicate with their spouses more regularly compared to pre-COVID-19. This is despite spending more time together as a result of

the movement restrictions due to COVID-19, which resulted in spouses spending more time together at home.

Regarding social interactions within nuclear families in Ruiru sub-county, key informants who were social workers said that communication between spouses might not have been frequent. One key informant a social worker stated that:

“It would appear that communication between spouses should improve when they spend more time together than when apart. This was supposed to be the case during the COVID-19 lockdowns in Ruiru and in Kenya generally. However, factors such as boredom, small or big disagreements might have played a role in limiting communication between spouses. I had a case where a wife was concerned with her husband’s behaviour of always looking at his phone and only talking to her occasionally.”

Another key informant who was an area chief stated:

“Personally, I was involved in solving cases to do with disputes between spouses. The issues would seem small to some spouses, while they were actually big to their spouses. For example, there was a lady who came to complain about her husband sneaking out to go and drink at night and returning home almost at midnight. She found this peculiar since before the onset of COVID-19, her husband never came home late. Remember, there was a curfew imposed by the government at that time, so I had to come in and intervene.”

Another key informant, a chief, stated that:

“I have always been presented with cases of disagreements among couples in this area. I might not say that the cases went up during the COVID-19 period, but I can say that cases during that time were under-reported. I later came to find out

that some couples had separated during the COVID-19 period and only came to reconcile later after the pandemic.”

These results agree with research by Karp et al. (2021) which found that many relationship aspects including communication between spouses were negatively affected during the COVID-19 period as a result of spouses spending more time together. According to the findings of this study, when spouses spend more time together, they discover both pleasant and unpleasant aspects about their partners. The unpleasant aspects cause communication breakdown between spouses if not well handled.

Analysis of the findings concerning spousal satisfaction with affection to guarantee physical contact such as holding hands, hugging, kissing, touching other than when initiating or being intimate during COVID-19 period when there were movement restrictions indicated that majority of the respondents at 35% disagreed with the assertion, 28% strongly disagreed, 15% agreed with a minority of the respondents at 12% strongly agreeing with the statement. A further 10% of the respondents were neutral regarding the statement.

Based on these findings, it is evident that majority of the respondents were of the opinion that there was lack of spousal satisfaction as a result of containment measures that made them stay together for prolonged period of time during COVID19 pandemic period.

Key informants said that they encountered more marital issues during the COVID-19 pandemic period compared to the pre-COVID-19 pandemic period. The issues ranged from financial problems where there were unmet financial obligations, accusations of

sexual dissatisfaction, infidelity, and a lack of understanding. One key informant a social worker was quoted as saying:

“I have encountered a number of incidences of spouses saying that they have been denied their conjugal rights. Usually, it is one spouse complaining of being denied while the other complains of lacking motivation for intimacy.”

Another key informant, a social worker, stated that:

“Movement restrictions during the COVID-19 pandemic should have been a perfect opportunity for couples to spend time together and be intimate. However, that was not always the case. During the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown period, I dealt with several incidents of marital dissatisfaction. For example, I interacted with a lady client who came to seek professional advice on what she should do to improve her sexual appeal to her husband, who seemed disinterested in her. She suspected that her husband was seeing someone else since he had also gone silent on her.”

The findings agree with research by Isik and Kaya (2022), which established that marital interactions during the COVID-19 period deteriorated compared to the pre-COVID-19 period. According to the study, prolonged periods of spending time together between spouses resulted in increased arguments, fights, and a general reduction in the quality of the relationships between spouses, which resulted in poor interactions between spouses.

Findings on whether one or both of the spouses ended up very hurt or frustrated after a fight or disagreement revealed that majority of the respondents at 33% agreed that they ended up getting hurt or frustrated after a fight, 28% of the respondents agreed with the statement, 15% disagreed whereas a minority of the respondents at 9% strongly disagreed with the assertion. An additional 15% of the respondents indicated that they were neutral

on the matter. The results are an indication that majority of the respondents end up being frustrated after a fight.

Key informants who were social workers said that one of the major issues they had to deal with was marital frustration. One key informant said:

“I have encountered spousal frustrations over the years. Frustrations are usually due to many reasons, such as promises not being fulfilled. During the COVID-19 period, when there were movement restrictions, spouses had to spend more time together. I remember during that time a lady came to our office to seek counseling services. The issue was that her husband, who usually works late, was at home on a full-time basis and refused to use his financial savings to help the family cope with the situation. The husband simply said he could not touch his savings no matter what.”

These findings are supported by a study done by Karp et al. (2021), which showed that the quality of relationships between couples deteriorated during the COVID-19 period when lockdown measures were introduced, forcing couples to spend more time together. The research indicated that couples got frustrated with each other after learning that their partners were different from how they had perceived them.

Analysis of the findings on whether respondents felt appreciated by their partners revealed that 35% of the respondents disagreed with this assertion, 30% strongly disagreed, 9% remained neutral, 17% agreed that they feel appreciated by their partners while a minority of respondents represented by 9% strongly agreed that they are appreciated by their partners. The findings reveal that most of the couples did not feel appreciated by their partners. Recent studies have shown that spouses who spent more time together as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic containment measures such as

lockdowns felt less appreciated by their partners (Pieh, Rourke, Budimir a Probst, 2020; Gallegos, Zaring-Hinkle & Bray, 2022). According to the studies, one major reason why spouses felt less appreciated by their partners was that spouses found themselves spending time together at home instead of spending quality time together away from home like going on a vacation.

Family Systems theory posits that the family functions as an interconnected emotional unit, where changes in one relationship inevitably affect the entire system (Bowen, 1978). Although spouses did spend more time together due to movement restrictions, the reduced quality of communication reported by most respondents suggests that the stressors of the pandemic, such as health anxieties, financial constraints, and disruptions to routine, may have strained the marital subsystem.

From the perspective of Social Interactionism Theory, which emphasizes the meaning individuals attach to interactions (Blumer, 1969), the findings suggest that the symbolic value of communication and affection between spouses may have shifted during the pandemic. While physical proximity increased, the meanings attached to expressions of affection, appreciation, or conflict became more salient under conditions of uncertainty and stress. For example, disagreement that might previously have been perceived as routine could be interpreted as more emotionally charged due to the heightened stress context. Similarly, acts of appreciation or affectionate gestures may have carried greater symbolic weight, as they were critical in maintaining emotional stability within the marriage during a crisis.

According to Buscho (2020), increased spousal interactions as a result of COVID-19 containment measures resulted in more divorces in China compared to the pre-COVID-19 period. Couples struggled to fulfill important interaction aspects such as communication, affection, problem solving, and appreciation (Buscho, 2020). Analysis of the study variables in the current study also shows that interactions between spouses were not good during the COVID-19 period when containment measures were in place compared to the pre-COVID-19 period. Analysis showed that important interaction aspects between spouses such as communication between spouses was not regularly done, there was not enough affection between spouses to warrant need for passionate physical contact like holding hands, hugging, kissing, and touching other than when initiating for intimacy, problem solving was not good and spousal appreciation was also not good. Based on these findings, the study therefore deduces that the COVID-19 containment measures had a negative effect on the interaction between spouses in nuclear families in Ruiru sub-county within Kiambu County Kenya.

4.6 Intervention strategies

The final objective sought to suggest interventional strategies of addressing the issues of social interactions that families faced during COVID-19 pandemic in Ruiru Sub-County, Kiambu County, Kenya. Respondents who included spouses from nuclear families were required to respond to suggested intervention measures. Key informants who included social workers and area chiefs were also asked for their opinions on appropriate intervention strategies.

4.6.1 Interventional Strategies on the Interaction between Parents and Children

The study sought to find out from the respondents' appropriate intervention strategies to address issues of interaction between parents and children. The questions targeted the opinions of respondents who included spouses and key informants. The findings are displayed in Table 4.6.

Table 4.6: Interventional strategies on the interaction between parents and children

Statement	Frequency	Percentage
Parents need to establish a good rapport with their children at all times	370	100
Parents or children should engage the authorities in dealing with difficult family issues	82	22
The government should establish family counseling services in Ruiru sub-county	352	95
The government should encourage families to seek professional help to deal with issues between parents and children	300	81

Key: Percentage (n=370)

Analysis of results in Table 4.6 shows that 100% of the respondents were of the opinion that parents need to establish a good rapport with their children at all times. Respondents said that if parents establish good relationships with their children, issues such as having a favourite child or parent or not feeling free to engage certain family members can be avoided, and healthy interactions established.

Further, 22% of the respondents were of the opinion that parents or children should engage authorities such as area chiefs and the police in resolving family issues and disputes of high magnitude such as fights, quarrels and not spousal failure to meet family needs. The respondents further suggested that although authorities should be involved,

they should be the last resort after all avenues to solve the issues within the family have failed.

Another 95% of the respondents were of the opinion that the government should establish family counseling services in Ruiru Sub - County. The respondents said that currently, most family counseling services are run by private individuals who charge high counseling fees. Therefore, there is need for the government to establish counseling services and employ competent professionals to provide counseling services to families at affordable fees.

One key informant, a social worker stated that:

“Family counseling services are not well established in Ruiru and in Kenya by extension. I would say that the government should do more in establishing family counseling services since families are the foundation of any society. A dysfunctional family unit will result in the whole society breaking down. There are so many professionals that the government has trained in this field, but they have not been utilized well.”

Further, 81% of the respondents suggested that the government should encourage families to seek professional help to deal with issues between parents and children. One respondent suggested that the government should do so through local administrators such as assistant chiefs, chiefs and even leaders of *Nyumba kumi* (Community policing leaders). One other respondent suggested that the government should leverage the popularity of mass media to sensitize families on the importance of seeking professional help to deal with family issues.

4.6.2 Interventional Strategies for Interaction between Siblings

The study sought from respondents the best intervention strategies for the interaction between siblings. Results are presented in Table 4.7.

Table 4.7: Interventional strategies for interacting with siblings

Item	Frequency	Percentage
Family education should be introduced in schools and places of worship	355	96
Parents should take control of improving relationships between siblings	362	98

Key: Percentage (n=370)

Based on the results on Table 4.7, 96% of the respondents suggested that there is a need to introduce family education in schools and places of worship. One respondent further suggested that family education should be made a mandatory and examinable subject in school. This would help always create and foster healthy relationships between siblings. One respondent said that although parents have a huge role to play as far as relationships between siblings' relationships are concerned, if such education is introduced in schools, it will raise awareness on the importance of upholding family values such as establishing healthy relationships between siblings.

These suggestions are consistent with a recent study by Long (2015) on the importance of including ideals of family education in the school curriculum such as communication, compassion and honesty. The study noted that relationships between siblings can break down because of poor parenting and may thus require the intervention of government to create healthy families. The intervention can come through introduction of family education in the school curriculum.

Further, 98% of the respondents were of the view that parents should take control in improving relationships between siblings. With regards to this during discussions with key informants who were area chiefs, one chief stated that:

“Parents are the primary care providers to their children. But again, it is possible for parents to miss the point when they display open bias like liking some children while disliking others. This can create animosity between children. I have seen this happen and I could urge parents to treat their children equally.”

4.6.3 Interventional Strategies on Interaction between Spouses

The study sought to find from respondents the best intervention strategies on interaction between spouses. Results are as shown in Table 4.8.

Table 4.8: Interventional strategies on the interaction between spouses

Statement	Frequency	Percentage
There is a need for the government to carry out marital assessment to inform policy formulation	345	93
Spouses should regularly seek professional help from marriage and relationship therapists	297	80
The government should encourage and support the establishment of marriage and relationship therapy centres	310	84

Key: Percentage (n=370)

Based on the results in Table 4.8, 93% of the respondents were of the view that the government should carry out marital assessment to inform policy formulation. During discussions with key informants, one key informant stated that:

“There is need for the government to carry out marital assessment with the intention to inform policy formulation. For instance, that can inform the government to establish marital counseling centres across Ruiru sub-county or across the country to deal with marital issues.”

Another key informant, a social worker, said:

“Communication both verbal and non-verbal between spouses is an important part of their relationship. One should not assume even the smallest aspect that requires it to be communicated otherwise it can have the potential to become a big issue. The government also has a role to play in ensuring good relationships in marriages.”

This assumption is supported by the theoretical underpinning of family system theory which states that “families can examine their own processes and set deliberate goals”. Based on this theoretical underpinning, change can occur when a family system recognizes that a specific family pattern is undesirable and devises new procedures that further the family's objectives. Going by this underpinning, there is need for the government to do marital assessment in Ruiru Sub- County to inform its policy formulation.

Further, 80% of the respondents were of the opinion that there is need for spouses to regularly seek professional help from marriage and relationship therapists. Regarding this intervention, one key informant a social worker, said that:

“Marriage and relationship therapy is as important as a medical check-up. Spouses tend to ignore such services perhaps for fear of looking weak in the case of men or because of the high fees that are charged.”

Another key informant, a social worker, stated that:

“Our society has not embraced professional marriage and relationship therapy. Currently, there is a big gap. I think there is a need to popularize such services because families have started to break down at an alarming speed. Containment measures that resulted in spouses spending more time together during Covid-19 exposed some family interaction issues that need to be fixed.”

Further, 84% of the respondents indicated that the government should encourage and support the establishment of marriage and relationship centres in Ruiru Sub- County. One respondent said that the establishment of such centres by the government would encourage spouses to seek marital counsel. One key informant and area chief stated that:

“Marriage and relationship counseling centres exist in Ruiru Sub- County. However, one would say that they are not enough and perhaps not close to people. The issue of high fee charged by marital therapists would also be an issue for those wishing to get such services.”

The Kenyan government established a National Policy on Family Promotion and Protection (2019) with the aim to encourage healthy marriages. The policy sought to encourage and promote dispute resolution mechanisms that keep spouses together. However, much has not been done to ensure the identification and implementation of such mechanisms.

This study concludes that there are several appropriate intervention strategies that can improve social interactions within families in Ruiru sub-County, Kiambu County Kenya. To improve interaction between parents and children, there is need for parents to establish good rapport with their children at all times, the government should establish family counseling services in Ruiru sub-county and encourage families to seek professional help to deal with issues between parents and children. To improve interactions between siblings and siblings, the government should introduce family education in schools and encourage the introduction of the same in places of worship.

Also, parents should take control in improving relationships between siblings. To improve interactions between spouses, the government needs to carry out marital assessment to inform policy formulation and encourage and support establishment of marriage and relationship therapy centres across Ruiru sub-County. There is also need for spouses to regularly seek professional help from marriage and relationships therapists.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction

The chapter provides a summary, and conclusions based on the observations from the study findings based on the study objectives which included to explore how COVID-19 containment measures affected the interaction between parents and their children, to assess the impact of COVID-19 containment measures on sibling interactions, to investigate how COVID-19 containment measures influenced interactions between spouses and to propose intervention strategies for addressing the issues of family social interactions experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic in Ruiru Sub-County, Kiambu County, Kenya. Recommendations on how the issues of interactions within families identified in the study should be handled as well as recommendations for future research, are presented in this chapter.

5.1 Interactions between Parents and Children

The first objective of the study was to explore how containment measures affected interactions between parents and their children during the COVID-19 pandemic in Ruiru Sub-County, Kiambu. The study established that movement restrictions and stay-at-home orders, which compelled families to spend more time together than usual, generally affected parent-child interactions negatively. A majority of parents reported having a favourite child, feeling more connected to some children while developing rifts with others, and experiencing unresolved conflicts within the household. The findings agree with earlier research, which collectively support the conclusion that the containment measures, while necessary for public health, disrupted the balance of parent-child

interactions and intensified existing relational dynamics within households (Lanjekar et al., 2022; Scharp & Dorrance Hall, 2019; Gadermann et al., 2021). Grounded in Family Systems Theory, these results illustrate how disruptions in one subsystem (parent–child relations) can destabilize the broader family unit, while Social Interactionism Theory emphasizes how prolonged face-to-face encounters reshaped the meanings and interpretations parents and children attached to their interactions during the pandemic.

5.2 Interactions between siblings

The second objective of the study sought to establish the effects of containment measures on interactions between siblings during the COVID-19 pandemic in Ruiru Sub-County, Kiambu County. The study established that containment measures, which kept children in nuclear families at home for prolonged periods, had minimal effect on sibling interactions. The findings align with earlier research, such as that of Zhang et al. (2022), who found that although tensions arose at the onset of the pandemic, prolonged periods of cohabitation had little impact on overall sibling dynamics. Likewise, Shaligram (2021) reported that while siblings provided mutual support during the pandemic, their conflict-resolution patterns remained consistent with pre-pandemic behaviours. From the perspective of Family Systems theory, these results can be explained by the idea that families operate as interconnected systems where changes in one relationship echo through the whole unit. This suggests that sibling bonds, shaped by long-standing patterns of communication and interaction, were strong enough to withstand the temporary disruption of COVID-19 containment measures. Thus, the stability of sibling relationships reflects the family's broader capacity to maintain balance under stress,

reinforcing the principle that family systems strive toward homeostasis even during crises.

5.3 Interactions between spouses

The third objective of the study was to investigate the effects of COVID-19 containment measures on social interactions between spouses in Ruiru Sub-County, Kiambu County. The findings showed that prolonged co-residence due to stay-at-home directives negatively affected marital relationships. The findings are consistent with Karp et al. (2021), who concluded that spousal communication deteriorated during COVID-19 as couples were forced into extended proximity. The findings further agreed with Isik and Kaya (2022), who established that prolonged confinement reduced marital satisfaction compared to pre-pandemic periods when couples spent less time together. Viewed through the lens of Family Systems theory, the findings highlight disruptions in the spousal subsystem, a central pillar of family functioning.

5.4 Interventions to enhance interactions in families

The fourth and final objective of the study sought suggest interventional strategies of addressing the issues of social interactions that families faced during COVID-19 pandemic in Ruiru Sub-County, Kiambu County, Kenya. A number of interventional strategies were suggested by respondents that included; need for parents to establish good rapport with their children at all times, establishment of family counseling services in Ruiru sub-county by the government, encouraging families to seek professional help to deal with issues between parents and children, need for government to carry out marital assessment in Ruiru sub-county to inform policy formulation, regular visits by spouses

for professional help from marriage and relationships therapies, establishment and support of marriage and relationship therapy centres by the government, introduction of family education in schools and places of worship and need for parents to take control in improving relationships between siblings. These interventions are based on the social ecological model developed by Urie Bronfenbrenner in 1970 and family-based behavioral intervention model developed by Epstein, Valosk, Koeske and Wing in 1986. These two models are widely used globally to inform appropriate interventional strategies regarding social interactions in families (Rediy & Tefera, 2020).

5.5 Conclusion

This study concludes that containment measures due to COVID-19 pandemic generally had negative effects on social interactions within families in Ruiru sub-County, Kiambu County, Kenya. The first objective of the study explored how containment measures affected the interaction between parents and their children during the COVID-19 pandemic in Ruiru Sub-County, Kiambu County, Kenya. The findings found that containment measures, which included restriction of movements during COVID-19 that forced families to spend more time together than it was usual, affected the interaction between parents and their children. Family interaction aspects such as freedom to engage with any member of the family, unbiased treatment, harmonious co-existence, and amicable resolution of conflicts were not positive.

The second objective of the study is to establish the effect of containment measures on interactions between siblings during the COVID-19 pandemic in Ruiru Sub-County, Kiambu County, Kenya. The study concludes that containment measures as a result of COVID-19 had an insignificant effect on interactions between siblings. Interaction aspects

between siblings assessed in the study, such as siblings expressing themselves freely to one another, siblings being open to talking about any elements of their relationship when upset about them, children settling their disagreements easily and children feeling secure with one another, were insignificantly affected by the containment measures.

The third objective explored the effects of containment measures on interactions between spouses during the COVID-19 pandemic in Ruiru Sub-County, Kiambu County, Kenya. The study concludes that the COVID-19 containment measures hurt the interaction between spouses in nuclear families in Ruiru sub-county. There were negative changes in spousal interaction aspects such as communication, affection, problem solving, and spousal appreciation as a result of the containment measures.

The final objective of the study sought to suggest interventional strategies for addressing the issues of social interactions that families faced during the COVID-19 pandemic in Ruiru Sub-County, Kiambu County, Kenya. The study concludes that interventional strategies to counter issues of social interactions within families were inadequate. Some of the interventional strategies suggested by the study include parents establishing a good rapport with their children, the government establishing family counseling services in Ruiru sub-county, the introduction of family education in schools and places of worship, the need for the government to carry out marital assessment to inform policy formulation, and the establishment of marital therapy centres by the government.

5.6 Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are necessary to address the issue of negative social interaction between family members in the face of

another calamity like the COVID-19 pandemic that forced families to spend more time together:

- i. The study recommends that since family is the building block of society, the government needs to carry out a critical assessment and measurement of marital, parent-to-child, and sibling-to-sibling interactions to inform future policy formulation regarding social interaction in families.
- ii. The study found that there are inadequate family intervention strategies from the government and other stakeholders and therefore recommends that the government and non-governmental organizations should put in place intervention measures such as family counseling services that address interaction issues within families that might require professional intervention such as estranged relationships between spouses, parents and children or siblings.
- iii. The study also recommends that the government should develop and introduce family education as a subject in the school curriculum as a way of instilling family values in learning from an early age.
- iv. Integrate family therapy into primary healthcare systems
- v. The government should establish and strengthen the social safety net. This included the expansion of support for vulnerable families through cash transfers and food aid
- vi. Government and NGOs to introduce economic empowerment programs. There were a lot of job losses during and after COVID-19 due to containment measures

which included lockdowns. The program will support small businesses and job creation to reduce financial strains on families

- vii. Strengthen mental health support group. Community counselling program and helplines to address stress and domestic violence. There should also be awareness campaigns on coping mechanisms
- viii. Address gender-based issues. There should be programs that promote equitable household responsibilities and reduce domestic violence
- ix. The study also recommends more funding to research institutions to enable them to research more effectively on pandemics so that they can come up with better mitigation measures to address social interactions within families in case of other similar global pandemics that are likely to happen in the future.

5.7 Suggestions for further research

The study recommends that further research be done on:

- i. Effects of COVID-19 containment measures on family interactions in other types of families apart from the nuclear families since the containment measures affected interactions in other family set-ups.
- ii. Family policies like the National Policy on Family Promotion and Protection policy (2019) need to be well effected by funding to enable promotion of healthy social interactions in families.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX I:

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

PRIMARY RESEARCHER

Name : MS. ESTHER NYAGATURI KARINGA

School : LAW, ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

Phone no : 0714142256

Email : nyagaturik@gmail.com

Introduction

I am a student at Kenyatta University undertaking a Master of Arts (Sociology) degree in. I am conducting a study titled “Effects of COVID-19 pandemic containment measures on social interactions within families in Ruiru, Kiambu County Kenya.”

Purpose

The findings of this study will benefit consultants, leaders and policy makers in formulating and implementing policies and frameworks for improving living standards of people.

Procedures to be followed.

The information will be collected through questionnaires.

Discomforts and Risks

You may feel uncomfortable or embarrassed by some of the inquiries that will be posed of you because they are confidential. It will be optional to answer some and leave out others.

Benefits

By taking part in this study, you will assist us in gathering information that will help us refine the containment strategies used during the Covid 19 pandemic.

Confidentiality

Information in the questionnaires will not be disclosed to irrelevant authorities.

Participant Initials or Signature:

APPENDIX II: INTRODUCTION LETTER

ESTHER NYAGATURI KARINGA

KENYATTA UNIVERSITY

P.O. BOX 43844 - 00100

NAIROBI

Dear Sir/ Madam

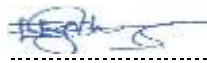
RE: REQUEST TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH ACTIVITY

I am a Master of Arts (Sociology) student from Kenyatta University. Currently am working out on a research study on “Effects of COVID-19 pandemic containment measures on social interactions within families in Kiambu County Kenya.” Research study is one of the requirements before I graduate.

I humbly request you to help me fill out the questionnaire that is included. Please note that we will treat any information you supply in the strictest of confidence.

Thank you for your assistance.

Yours Sincerely,



Esther Nyagaturi Karinga

APPENDIX III: SEMI-STRUCTURED QUESTIONNAIRE

Please provide the most accurate and unbiased responses you can to the following questions. Your comments will be kept in the strictest confidence and will only be used for research. Please complete all five sections of the following questionnaire.

Thank you.

SECTION A (Please tick appropriately)

1. Gender Male
 Female

2. Age

- Below 18
18-25
25-35
36 and over

3. Level of education

- None
Primary
Secondary
Tertiary
Other (specify).....

4. Religion

Christian

Islam

Other

5. Occupation

Civil/public service

Business

Farming

Other

6. What is the living arrangement of your family?

Yes

No

7. Did COVID-19 affect your family interactions?

Yes No

8. If yes in question four (4) above, on weekly basis, how many days do you spend with your family?

Once

Twice

Thrice

Everyday

9. What motivates you to interact with your family?

Money

Boredom

Enjoyment

All of the above

Others specify.....

10. Do you feel satisfied with how your family lives?

Satisfied

Unsatisfied

Other specify.....

SECTION B: Interactions within Families between Parents and Children during COVID-19 Pandemic

Please check the appropriate box (✓) to show how much you agree with the following statements.

	Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
11.	Do you have a favorite member of your family					
12.	I feel free to engage with a particular person in the family but not everyone					
13.	I feel I have a rift with some members of the family					

14.	I feel neglected by family members.					
15.	The fact that I live in a family, I feel there are unresolved conflicts.					

16. Do you think family estrangement (one wants to stay away from other members of the family, exists? Yes [] No []

17. If yes in 13 above, why do you feel there is family estrangement.....

SECTION C: Interactions of Families between Spouses during COVID-19

Pandemic

Please check the appropriate box (✓) to show how much you agree with the following statements.

	Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
18.	I communicated more regularly with my wife/husband during Covid-19 compared to pre-Covid-19					
19.	The affection with my spouse satisfied my need for passionate physical contact (holding hands, hugging, kissing, touching, - other than when we were initiating or being intimate)					

	during Covid-19 compared to pre-Covid-19.					
20.	One or both of us ended up very hurt or frustrated after a fight or disagreement during Covid-19 compared to pre-Covid-19.					
21.	I felt appreciated by my partner during Covid-19 compared to pre-Covid-19.					

22. When I contemplate our relationship, I think I might be happier with someone else.

Yes [] No []

23. If yes in Question 20 above, please explain what causes conflicts between spouses

.....

.....

.....

SECTION D: Interactions between siblings during COVID-19 pandemic

Please check the appropriate box (✓) to show how much you agree with the following statements.

	Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
24.	My children expressed themselves freely to one another better during Covid-19 compared to pre-COVID-19					
25.	My children were open to talking about any elements of their relationship when upset about					

	them, better during Covid-19 than pre-Covid-19					
26.	My children settled disagreements between themselves easily during Covid-19 compared to pre-COVID-19					
27.	In light of the circumstances, I think the length of time my children spent together did not affect their interactions.					
28.	My children felt secure with one another just like pre-COVI-19.					

29. There are no resolved disputes between me and my siblings. Yes [] No []

SECTION E: Interventional strategies for addressing the challenges faced families during COVID-19 pandemic.

Please check the appropriate box (✓) to show how much you agree with the following statements.

	Statement	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Parents need to establish good rapport with their children at all times		
2.	Parents or children should engage the authorities in dealing with difficult family issues		
3.	Government should establish family counseling services in Ruiru sub-county		
4.	Government should encourage families to seek professional help to deal with issues between parents and children		
5.	There is need for government to carry out marital assessment to inform policy formulation		
6.	Spouses should regularly seek professional		

	help from marriage and relationships therapies		
7.	Government should encourage and support establishment of marriage and relationship therapy centres		
8.	Family education should be introduced in schools and places of worship		
9.	Parents should intervene in improving relationships between siblings		

33. Do you think there were other measures that needed to be taken by both government and family members to solve emotional problems during COVID-19?

Yes [] No []

34. If yes in Question 33 above, please explain those measures that need to be taken

APPENDIX IV: KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW GUIDE

I appreciate you taking the time for this interview. I am a Kenyatta University student pursuing a Master of Arts Degree in Sociology. I am carrying out research on Effects of COVID-19 pandemic on social interactions within nuclear families, case study of the nuclear families in Ruiru, Kiambu County Kenya

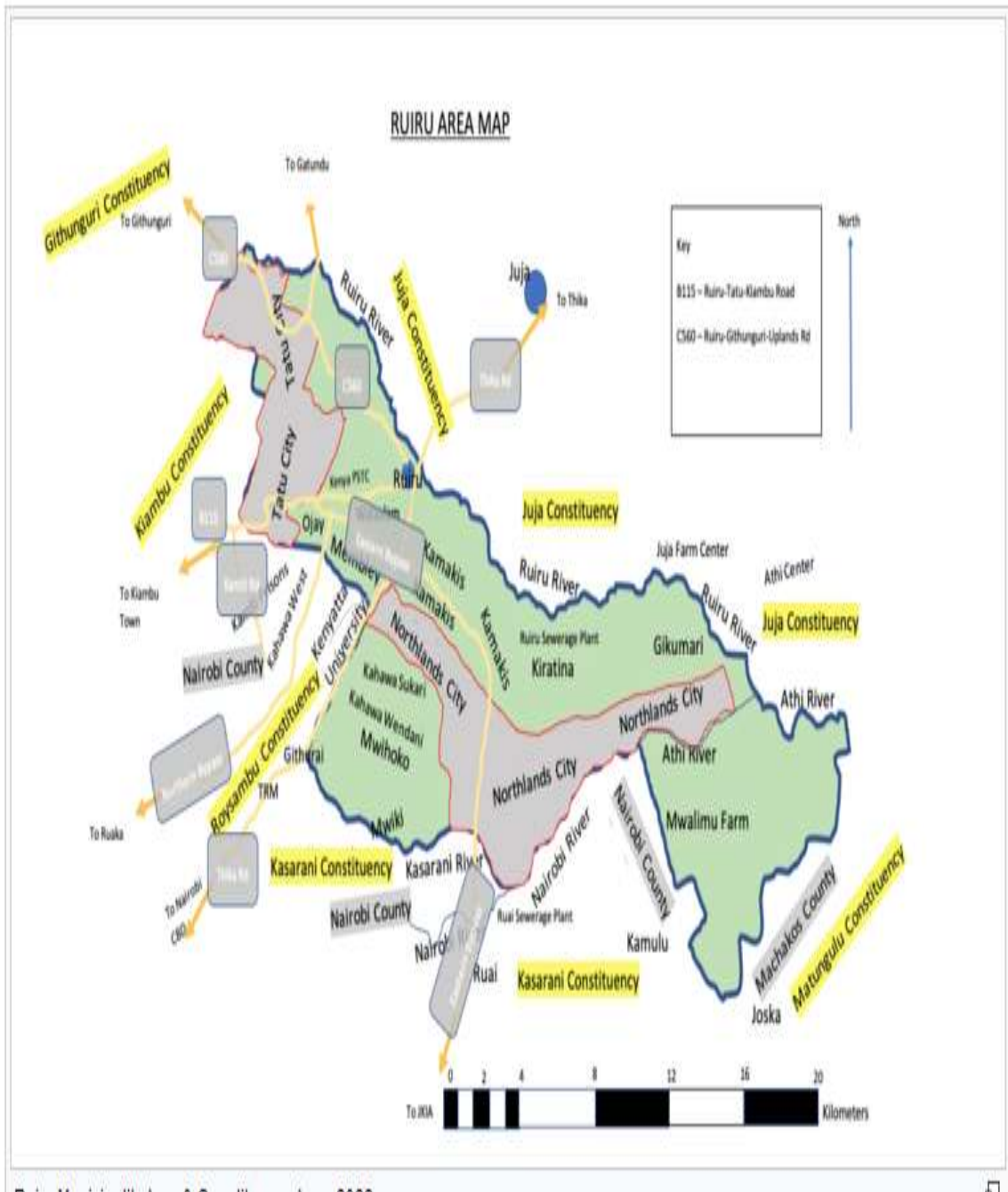
1. What is your opinion on effects of COVID-19 pandemic on social interactions within nuclear families, case study of the nuclear families in Ruiru, Kiambu county Kenya?

2. What level of interaction did you have with families in Ruiru sub-county during Covid-19 containment period?
3. Do you think family members spend quality time together?
4. Do you experience family estrangement (some family members want to live on their own, separately from family)?
5. What do you think about COVID-19 measures taken by government whereby families had to spend time together?

APPENDIX V: WORK PLAN

Activity	Year 2024			
	MARCH	APRIL	JUNE	JULY
Writing of Proposal				
Proposal Submission & Defending				
Collection of Data				
Analysis of Data				
Report Writing				
Project Submission & Defending				

A MAP OF RUIRU SUB-COUNTY



APPENDIX VI: BUDGET

Item Description	Quantity	Cost	Total (Kshs.)
Stationeries	1	1,500	1,500
Internet expenses	N/A	10,000	10,000
Printing and binding drafts	300	5	1,500
Printing of Proposal	300	10	3,000
Proposal Binding 10 @ Kshs 80	10	80	800
Questionnaires photocopying	450	5	2,250
Printing of Final Report	400	10	4,000
Research Assistance	4	2,500 per day	20,000
Thesis Printing	7	300	2,100
Thesis Binding.	7	500	3,500
Total			48,650/=

APPENDIX VII: APPROVAL RESEARCH PROPOSAL FROM GRADUATE SCHOOL



KENYATTA UNIVERSITY GRADUATE SCHOOL

E-mail: dean-graduate@ku.ac.ke

Website: www.ku.ac.ke

P.O. Box 43844, 00100
NAIROBI, KENYA
Tel. 810901 Ext. 57530

Internal Memo

FROM: Dean, Graduate School

DATE: 18th September, 2023

TO: Esther Nyagaturi Karinga
C/o Sociology, Gender & Dev. Department.
Kenyatta University

REF: C50/21511/2020

SUBJECT: APPROVAL OF RESEARCH PROPOSAL

This is to inform you that Graduate School Board, at its meeting of 13th September, 2023, approved your M.A Research Proposal Entitled, "Effects of COVID-19 Pandemic Containment Measures on Social Interactions within Families in Kiambu County, Kenya".

You may now proceed with data collection, subject to clearance with the Director General, National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation.

As you embark on your data collection, please note that you will be required to submit to Graduate School completed Supervision Tracking forms per semester. The form has been developed to replace the progress report forms. The supervision Tracking Forms are available at the University's website under Graduate School webpage downloads.

Thank you.

JACKSON LUVUSI
FOR: DEAN, GRADUATE SCHOOL

c.c. Chairman, Department of Sociology, Gender & Development Studies

Supervisors:

1. Dr. Samuel Mwangi
C/o Department of Sociology, Gender & Dev. Studies
Kenyatta University
2. Dr. George Evans Owino
Department of Sociology, Gender & Dev. Studies
Kenyatta University

JL/mn

APPENDIX VIII: RESEARCH AUTHORIZATION FROM GRADUATE SCHOOL



**KENYATTA UNIVERSITY
GRADUATE SCHOOL**

E-mail: dean-graduate@ku.ac.ke

Website: www.ku.ac.ke

P.O. Box 43844, 00100
NAIROBI, KENYA
Tel. 020-8704150

Our Ref: C50/20511/2020

DATE: 18th September, 2023

Director General,
National Commission for Science, Technology & Innovation
P.O. Box 30623-00100,
NAIROBI

Dear Sir/Madam,

RE: RESEARCH AUTHORIZATION FOR ESTHER NYAGATURI KARINGA – REG. NO. C50/20511/2020

I write to introduce Ms. Esther Nyagaturi Karinga who is a Postgraduate Student of this University. She is registered for M.A Degree programme in the **Department of Sociology, Gender and Development Studies**.

Ms. Karinga intends to conduct research for M.A Proposal entitled, **“Effects of COVID-19 Pandemic Containment Measures on Social Interactions within Families in Kiambu County, Kenya”**.





Any assistance given will be highly appreciated.

Yours faithfully,

**PROF. ELISHIBA KIMANI
FOR: EXECUTIVE DEAN, GRADUATE SCHOOL**

EK/mn

APPENDIX IX: RESEARCH PERMIT FROM NACOSTI

 REPUBLIC OF KENYA	 NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & INNOVATION
Ref No: 333153	Date of Issue: 03/November/2023
RESEARCH LICENSE	
	
<p>This is to Certify that Ms.. Esther Nyagaturi Karinga of Kenyatta University, has been licensed to conduct research as per the provision of the Science, Technology and Innovation Act, 2013 (Rev.2014) in Kiambu on the topic: Effects of COVID-19 pandemic containment measures on social interactions within families in Kiambu County, Kenya. for the period ending : 03/November/2024.</p>	
License No: NACOSTI/P/23/30903	
333153 Applicant Identification Number	 Director General NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & INNOVATION
	Verification QR Code
	
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