



# Mitigating Educational Disruption in Kenya: Analyzing Home-Based Support during the COVID-19 Pandemic

Agyei, Aaron Kwadjo

Department of Education and Special Education,  
University of Gothenburg, Sweden

[kwadjoaaron@gmail.com](mailto:kwadjoaaron@gmail.com)

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## Abstract

This study examines students' support and confidence in schoolwork during the COVID-19 pandemic in Kenya. Doing so contributes to a smaller research gap concerning student support. Bourdieu's theory of social reproduction (cultural and social capital) served as the theoretical foundation for selecting variables in this study. This quantitative research study used secondary data from Responds to Educational Disruption Survey (REDS)2021; 910 student samples were used to analyse the data. Three aspects were examined: (1) Home-based support, (2) support from teachers, and (3) support from others concerning the socioeconomic status of students.

The result shows that 41.3 % of Kenyan students reported having "no one" available to help at least sometimes in their schoolwork, and 58.7 % reported that they never had anyone available to help. In other words, at least sometimes, most students have someone to help them with their schoolwork. Again, the result showed that students from high SES backgrounds received greater home-based support than students from medium and low socioeconomic backgrounds. The study found a significant difference between high, medium, and low in students' SES. The result further indicates a strong association between students from high SES regarding the support they received and confidence in their schoolwork.

**Keywords:** *Student support, home support, teacher support, students' confidence*

## Introduction

The rapid emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic and the ensuing measures drastically disturbed people's lives. In such a situation, it is natural for people to seek out and offer support to one another.

The COVID-19 pandemic prevented many students from attending school for protracted periods across the globe. Learning activities had to be moved to a new location, usually the students' homes. When students need assistance with learning-related issues, such as access to study materials, use of digital devices, or scheduling their

school day, other people become crucial sources of support. This was because their teachers could not provide them with direct contact or supervision in these situations. Given the global disruption of educational systems by the COVID-19 pandemic, this paper narrows its focus to Kenya, where unique socio-economic and technological constraints exacerbate these challenges.

However, it remains unclear who provided this support to students to mitigate teaching and learning during the COVID-19 pandemic at home in Kenya, given that most teachers and parents in Africa, especially Kenya, had little

experience with online instructional learning due to a lack of ICT infrastructure and a lack of ICT skills among many students and teachers and that large gap also exists in technology access in many parts of Africa and its villages. Building on the evidence of unpreparedness for online learning among teachers, the challenge extends significantly to parents. Evidence from recent studies (Uwizeyimana, 2022; Darragh & Franke, 2022) and the Ministry of Education report (2020) underscores the severe lack of preparedness among teachers and parents in Kenya for online learning, highlighting a significant technology gap. Moreover, the study finds that parents were notably unprepared for remote learning and homeschooling. They were often asked to facilitate their children's learning at home but struggled to perform this task. This is particularly true for parents who have little education and resources, poor literacy skills, limited access to technology like TVs and radios, and who have to work to support their (Darragh & Franke, 2022; Ministry of Education [MoE], 2020). A study conducted by Ireri, (2021) Kenya shows that both teachers and parents were not well prepared to support virtual learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Ministry of Education report (2020) also shows that students in Kenya had Unequal access to learning portals. Given the widespread unpreparedness for online learning among teachers and parents, this study seeks to understand how these challenges translated into support for students' schoolwork during the pandemic, particularly in terms of socioeconomic disparities.

Against this background, this study will utilize the Response to Educational Disruption Survey (RED) 2021 dataset to analyze the types and effectiveness of support provided to students, with a focus on variations across different socioeconomic groups in Kenya (UNESCO, 2021).

Unlike previous studies that broadly addressed the challenges of online learning in Kenya, this study delves into the specific types and effectiveness of home-based support systems during the pandemic, using the unique dataset of RED 2021. This study will analyze the RED 2021 dataset to identify the types of support provided to students and evaluate their effectiveness, particularly focusing on the disparities across different socioeconomic groups. This approach allows for a nuanced analysis of support mechanisms across socioeconomic statuses, highlighting disparities that were not previously quantified.

This study seeks to answer the following: How did home-based support systems for schoolwork, provided to

students in Kenya during the COVID-19 pandemic, vary across different socioeconomic groups, and what were the implications for educational equity? This study aims to analyze the support provided to students in Kenya during the COVID-19 pandemic, focusing on the disparities across socioeconomic statuses, thereby addressing the gap in understanding the effectiveness of such support systems.

### **Definition**

Support is defined in the study as any instructional materials, resources, or other help (guidance or advice) that schools, parents, or other third parties give to students when schools are closed (UNESCO, REDS, 2021).

### **Discussion of Socioeconomic Disparities**

The study hypothesizes that students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds face compounded challenges, not only in accessing technological resources but also in receiving pedagogical and motivational support due to parental illiteracy or work obligations. By analyzing data across socioeconomic strata, the study aims to highlight the differential impacts of these challenges on educational equity.

#### **1.1 Home-based support during the school closure.**

It is noteworthy that the COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the importance of family support even more because parents have been compelled to participate in the teaching and learning process directly (Ireri, 2021; Tweni et al., 2022; Winthrop, & Ershadi, M.; Angrist, N.; Bortsie, E.; Matsheng, M., 2020). Studies compared social learning outcomes of homeschooled and traditionally schooled children in Kenya. The result showed no significant difference between the homeschooled and traditional schooled children as perceived by the children, parents and teachers. Learning results for children may be significantly impacted by parents' lack of education and capacity to assist with homework, particularly during school. Brossardi et al., (2020). Similarly, (Ardiansyah et al., (2023) conducted a study on the effect of parental support on the learning motivation of grade 10 elementary schools in Kenya and found that parental support given to children is very important because it motivates them to achieve and build self-confidence and foster enthusiasm when children face problems. Also Heller & Fantuzzo, (2019) examined reciprocal peer tutoring and parent partnership. The findings indicate that parental involvement and reciprocal tutoring displayed a high level of accurate mathematics computation on the curriculum and received high positive academic and social behaviour ratings. Research suggests that since children absorb their parents' positive views regarding school and learning,

children of interested parents are more driven to learn for learning's sake (OECD, 2022). The largest positive effects on learning come from supporting and supervising children's primary learning objectives, which are to study and learn, model positive school-related behaviours and attitudes, and emphasise the value of education (Castro et al., 2015).

### 1.2 Teacher Support and Student Socioeconomic Status

The COVID-19 epidemic had a significant impact on the educational system, disparities in students' learning, their socioeconomic status and rising inequality. Since students with low socioeconomic status (SES) are particularly affected by these issues, supporting teacher interactions is important. Bukšnytė-Marmienė et al., (2023) A few studies have found a relationship between teacher support and students' socioeconomic status. For instance, Bakchich et al., (2023) identified a statistically significant difference between high and low-SES students regarding their perception of the support they received from teachers and how that affected their self-confidence. They concluded that it is important for teachers to deepen the support to increase the self-confidence of low SES students. Moreover, Atlay et al., (2019) concentrated on differences in perceptions of teacher support as a function of students' SES. Sortkær, (2019) discovered that high-SES students perceived facilitative feedback (i.e., a form of conversation between a teacher and a student as equals, without directives more easily than low-SES students in a study using PISA 2012 data from five Nordic countries (e.g., Norway, Finland, Sweden, Denmark, and Iceland). For the benefit of high-SES students, this offers some empirical evidence of the influence of SES on students' perceptions of teacher support. In contrast, Atlay et al., (2019) found that low-SES students had a broader perception of teacher support than high-SES students. They argue that, though they perceived less, low-SES students may collectively have more positive perceptions of their relationships with teachers. Bakchich et al., (2023) emphasise that parents from high-SES backgrounds adopt a concentrated cultivation kind of education that promotes children's talents, ideas, and capabilities while encouraging a sense of entitlement. While parents from lower socioeconomic status are more likely to believe that their children's growth happens naturally and spontaneously, they are also more inclined to focus largely on basic needs (such as food and comfort). This teaching strategy would lead to a lesser sense of entitlement (or a greater understanding of restraint Lareau, (2011) in low-SES students. As a result, low-SES students are less likely

to receive effective support from teachers than students from high-SES homes.

### 1.3 Relationship between home-based support and socioeconomic status

Most empirical studies on parental support differ depending on socio-demographic characteristics (such as marital status and educational attainment) and economic status (Jones & Schipper, (2015) investigated the institutional and home-based factors influencing the day students drop out of school in Kathiani District, Machakos, Kenya. The study revealed that day secondary school dropout rates in Kathiani district are affected by several factors, including peer pressure (24%), family issues (40%), and financial issues (36%). However, the study revealed additional socioeconomic factors contributing to student dropouts. Mulatya, (2012) research on home-based influencing Kenya certificate of primary education performance in public primary schools in Yatta Division, Kenya. According to the study, most parents in the Yatta division (65.0%) are farmers. However, a sizable portion (75.5%) always encouraged their children to read and complete their homework at home to achieve success. Parents should provide a conducive learning atmosphere at home and reward children who perform well. According to Lareau (2011), American parents with lower SES are less likely to think they must oversee their children's education and are less actively involved in at-home and in-school learning activities. Because lower SES parents are frequently less educated, the skills and knowledge they can impart to the school and their child may be constrained (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005) According to some studies, parents with less education may also be less confident in their ability to contribute to their children's education (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005; Lareau, 2011) student learning is at risk due to low family SES (Zhang et al., 2021). This means that parents may pass on some of these characteristics to their children, making them less confident in their schoolwork. A study by Zhang indicates that parental support (school-based and home-based support) partly mediated the relationship between family support. They found strong mediating effects, and home-based support had the lowest mediating effects. Consequently, empirical evidence further suggests that parents of high-SES families are more engaged and involved in their children's education (Cheadle & Amato, 2011; Roksa & Potter, 2011). They also appear to provide more academic resources than parents of low-SES families (Cheadle & Amato, 2011; Roksa & Potter, 2011).

Parental support activities at home, such as helping with homework, talking to children about school, and reading to them, have been linked to better academic outcomes for minority students in the US (Sui-Chu, & Willms, n.d.). In Ghana, parental support at home has a favourable impact on children's academic success (Nyarko, 2011)

Finally, parents from lower socioeconomic backgrounds work more hours, which might make it difficult for them to support their children at home and school (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005) However, Hill & Tyson, (2009) indicated that home-based participation (such as parental support with homework) is not positively associated with achievement and that academic socialisation had the largest association with academic achievement. In addition, Barger et al., (2019) also discovered a negative correlation between parental homework help and adolescents' academic adjustment. Similar findings have been made in China, where an empirical study suggests that parental homework help is not significantly associated with the academic success of teenagers (Wenger, 1998)

### 1.3METHODS

This study investigates students' support and perception of their confidence in schoolwork during the COVID-19 pandemic in Kenya using the Response to Educational Disruption Survey (REDS) 2021. The study employed quantitative data from the RED 2021 dataset to identify support patterns across socioeconomic groups with a two-stage stratified random sampling design, with schools as the first stage and students and teachers as the second stage. This methodology will enable a comprehensive understanding of the effectiveness of different types of support. The target populations were students, teachers, and headteachers in Kenya, with a focus on grade 8 students. The study met the minimum requirement of 150 schools and a student sample of 3000. However, due to issues with the sampling methodology and missing data, the findings only reflect the experiences and viewpoints of the respondents and should not be inferred to apply to the target population. The study focused on 910 students who attended school during the data collection period for the analysis.

### Result

This chapter presents the study results for each of the research questions. First, the results of research question one is presented with tables.

### Research Question One.

Who provided home-based support with schoolwork to Kenyan students during the COVID-19 pandemic? Was there a difference in the socioeconomic background?

The tables below show the percentages of support offered to students by parents/guardians, other siblings, others and no one available, otherwise known as home-based support

**Table 1 Parents Or Guardian's support for students during COVID-19 in Kenya**

| Response categories |       |      |           |      |              |      |
|---------------------|-------|------|-----------|------|--------------|------|
| Variable Name       | Never |      | Sometimes |      | Often/Always |      |
|                     | N     | %    | N         | %    | N            | %    |
| ISIG15A             | 120   | 13.2 | 544       | 59.8 | 236          | 25.9 |

According to Table 1, parents or guardians of most students (85.7%) in Kenya were at least sometimes available. They could help students with their schoolwork during the COVID-19 pandemic, while 13.2% of students responded that they never received support from parents /guardians. This means that most students could obtain some support from parents and guardians during the pandemic.

**Table 2 Older Siblings support for students In Kenya**

| Response categories |       |      |           |      |              |      |
|---------------------|-------|------|-----------|------|--------------|------|
| Variable Name       | Never |      | Sometimes |      | Often/Always |      |
|                     | N     | %    | N         | %    | N            | %    |
| ISIG15B             | 189   | 20.8 | 499       | 54.8 | 208          | 22.9 |

According to Table 2, 77.7% of the respondents believed that the vast majority of students' older siblings were at least sometimes available and could help them with their schoolwork during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, 20.8% of students responded that they never received support from older siblings.

**Table 3 How Other People than Parents\Siblings Support Students during COVID-19 In Kenya**

| Response categories |       |      |           |      |              |     |
|---------------------|-------|------|-----------|------|--------------|-----|
| Variable Name       | Never |      | Sometimes |      | Often/Always |     |
|                     | N     | %    | N         | %    | N            | %   |
| ISIG15C             | 415   | 45.6 | 409       | 44.9 | 74           | 8.1 |

Table 3, shows that 415(45.6%) students never received support from other people than siblings and parents. However, only 53% responded that they sometimes, often/always received support from other people regarding schoolwork. It may be that students who responded that they often/always received support from other people might come from households with middle- or high incomes and had access to some schooling. This might also suggest that either school closure policies were less strict or higher-income households had access to online or remote education.

**Table 4 No One Available to Help Students during the COVID-19 In Kenya**

| Variable Name | Response categories |      |           |      |              |     |
|---------------|---------------------|------|-----------|------|--------------|-----|
|               | Never               |      | Sometimes |      | Often/Always |     |
|               | N                   | %    | N         | %    | N            | %   |
| IS1G5D        | 525                 | 58.7 | 308       | 33.8 | 68           | 7.5 |

Table 4 shows that 41.3 % of Kenyan students reported having “no one” available to help at least sometimes in their schoolwork. This means that 58.7 % of students reported that they never had no one available to help. In other words, most students had someone to help them at least sometimes with their schoolwork.

**Table 5 Relationship between Home-based Support and Socioeconomic Status in Kenya**

| Ses           |  |        |         |     |
|---------------|--|--------|---------|-----|
| Variable Name | Variable Description                               | Sig    | R       | N   |
| Is1g5a        | How\Available Help\Parents Or Guardians            | P<.001 | .207**  | 898 |
| Is1g5b        | How\Available Help\Older Siblings                  | P<.001 | -.112** | 894 |
| Is1g5c        | How\Available Help\Ppl Other Than Parents\Siblings | P<.025 | .075**  | 896 |
| Is1g5d        | No One Available                                   | P<.001 | .116**  | 899 |

\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

\*\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

In response to the second part, what is the relationship between SES and the different aspects of home-based support? Spearman's rank correlation examined the relationship between Home-based support and students' socioeconomic status. There was a positive but weak significant correlation between parents /guardian support and the Socioeconomic status of students variables

(CI)=(.141,.270) n=898, r = .207\*\*, p<.001. (see Table 5) This indicates that socioeconomic status also increases as the frequency of parents/guardians' support increases. Secondly, there was a negative but weak significant correlation between support provided by older siblings and students' SES CI(-.172,-.038) n=894, r= -.112, p<.001. This indicates that while the frequency of support provided by older siblings decreases by -.112 the independence variable (Socioeconomic status )increases. Thirdly, there was a weak correlation between support from others and students' socioeconomic status CI(.006,.135) n=889, r=.075, p<.025. This also indicates that while the frequency of support others provide increases by .075, the independence variable (Socioeconomic status )increases by one unit. Lastly, there was a positive but weak significant correlation between students who have no one available to help them with their schoolwork and Socioeconomic status variables (CI)=(.056,.176) n=899, r =.116 p<.001. This indicates that while the dependent variable (No one available) increases by one unit the independent variable (Socioeconomic status)also increases.

In summary, students received some support from parents and guardians during the pandemic. Most students had someone to help them at least sometimes with their schoolwork. There was a positive but weak significant correlation between parent/guardian support and Socioeconomic status.

### 3.Discussion of Results

Returning to the research question, the findings will be briefly presented and systematically discussed. The result of the first objective indicates that the vast majority of Parents or guardians ( 85.7%) in Kenya were at least sometimes available and could help students with their schoolwork during the COVID-19 pandemic. In comparison, 13.2% of students responded that they never received support from parents /guardians. However, Table 15 shows that 41.3 % of Kenyan students reported having “no one” available to help at least sometimes with their schoolwork. This means that 58.7 % of students reported never having anyone available to help. In other words, at least sometimes, most students have someone to help them with their schoolwork. Again, the result shows that students from high SES backgrounds received greater home-based support. These results might show how students possess different amounts of cultural and social capital. This could be interpreted that for students from high SES backgrounds born into cultural capital, it is easy for them to acquire more because she /he has what it takes to succeed in their schoolwork. What is interesting is that



SES and the frequency of support from parents and others are positively correlated. This means that students with higher SES have good, frequent access to support from parents (primarily) and support from others and teachers. This could be because parents could hire in-home tutors to support their children at home. After all, they possess economic capital. The results also show that students with higher SES get less frequent support from siblings. This may be because support from siblings is not needed. After all, they are getting more frequent support from parents and others. Those with lower SES have to rely on siblings more often, maybe because parents work multiple jobs and do not have the time to support them with their schoolwork.

This study's results support those of earlier studies, which showed that cultural capital/SES is important for students' educational outcomes/opportunities. (Bowe et al., 1994; Reay, 2005; Sullivan, 2001) The study finding is further in agreement with Bowe et al. (1994), who suggested that students born into middle-class homes have more advantages because their parents have the economic capital to move them to good schools; they can pay for private tuition and choose an independent school where they obtain social capital. Along similar lines, Cheadle & Amato, (2011); Roksa & Potter, (2011) study indicates that parents of high-SES families are more engaged and involved in their children's education and appear to provide more academic resources than parents of low-SES families.

However, the study's findings contradict those of (2019) and Hill & Tyson (2009), who indicated that home-based support (such as parental support with homework) is not positively associated with schoolwork. Similar findings have also been made in China, where an empirical study suggests that parental homework support is not significantly associated with the academic success of teenagers. (Wang et al., 2016)

### **Conclusion**

Kenyan students were already vulnerable before the COVID-19 outbreak, even though the entire world's educational system has been impacted. Most students had to continue their schoolwork online, on radio, TV and other platforms at home. However, students have been facing various problems related to an unfavourable study environment at home (Barrot et al., 2021) It would be safe to assume this sudden change was upsetting, particularly for vulnerable students. One such disparity was the student support gap, related to stratification based on access and non-access to capital (SES).

To lay the groundwork for an in-depth comparison, the Kenya REDS 2021 dataset sample was split into three subgroups with three varying degrees of socioeconomic status (low, medium & high). The study's theoretical framework was Boudiurs' theory of social reproduction. The various forms of capital were operationalised and measured: cultural capital (SES) and social capital (Home-based support, supported by others and teachers). Students' support was measured using a multi-dimensional tool that considered home-based support from others and teachers. The secondary data was analysed using the bivariate analysis of means, one-way ANOVA.

The research findings showed that the subgroup of students from high SES backgrounds indicated significant differences in several measures of student support. However, there was no significant difference between children from medium and low socioeconomic statuses, but a significant difference was found for high SES students in terms of the support they received from teachers.

### **Implication for Policy and Practice**

Findings from this study are expected to inform policymakers about the critical gaps in the current educational support system exacerbated by the pandemic. Recommendations will focus on targeted interventions to bridge the technological divide and equip parents and teachers with the necessary skills and resources for effective home-based learning, especially in low-resource settings.

### **Ethical Approval Declaration**

"All procedures involving human participants in this study were conducted in accordance with the ethical standards set by applicable research guidelines and the principles of the 1964 Declaration of Helsinki and its subsequent amendments. Ethical approval was secured before the commencement of data collection."

### **Funding: -**

This study did not receive any external funding.

### **Data availability:-**

The datasets generated and analysed during the current study will be available from the author upon reasonable request.

### **Consent for publication:-**

I hereby provide consent for the publication of the manuscript detailed above.

### **Competing interests:-**

The authors declare no competing interests

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