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PUBLIC INTEREST LOST IN UGANDA'S EDUCATION SECTOR DURING COVID-19

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Abstract: *The global spread of COVID-19 brought to the lime light the lack of public goods in Uganda during the fight against this contagious virus. The public servants demonstrated selfishness at the expense of fostering services for the majority of Ugandans. Thus, a cross-sectional qualitative approach was used to collect data from the private primary school teachers. Data were collected from 12 participants using an interview guide. The study findings demonstrate how public interest was lost during attempts to curb the spread of the pandemic. Researchers call for additional scholarship pertaining to reviving the lost common preferences in times of pandemics, particularly the coronavirus.*

Keywords: *COVID-19, Coronavirus, Public interest, Uganda*

1.Introduction

This article has one main aim. To examine how public interest was lost in Uganda's education sector during Covid-19. The arrival of COVID-19 on the African continent in Egypt in February 2020 led to fundamental transformations (such as shock to human life, shattered businesses, feelings of uncertainty, school closures, reduced human contact, and adoption of online learning, among others). This threatened the lives and normality of humankind. As elsewhere, the free flow of people, products, and ideas in East Africa was affected by the new global turmoil. Ugandans were not spared ever since the president announced the country-wide lockdown on March 18th 2020 and eventual

reporting of the first corona case on March 21, 2020 *'a 36-year-old businessman from Kampala, who had travelled to Dubai'*. From 23rd July when the first death was recorded from the contagious pandemic, the Pearl of Africa has been seriously affected and hit by this highly infectious disease with reported 121,984 cases, 3,119 deaths and 95,835 recovered people (Ministry of Health Report, June 2021), while the rising cases are alarming. The government, desperately looking for ways to flatten the infection curve and reduce total fatalities from the disease, came up with a number of measures. These were termed standard operating procedures (SOPs) and numbered 34 in number. They were largely to confine people to their respective homes in the form of a lockdown and limited social gatherings to halt the spread of COVID-19.

As the corona cure was causing havoc across Italy, France, Spain, and the UK, the Ugandan government closed all teaching and learning institutions with their respective buildings. Thus, rendering a number of Uganda jobless, for example, over 140,000 private primary and secondary teachers became jobless immediately in Uganda (Kanywa, 2020). Since then, schools have remained closed to date (22/10/2021), Uganda remains the only country globally whose schools are still shut yet person-to-person classes were cancelled, face-to-face lectureships were no longer, and exams and school activities were put on halt. This led to the creative idea and action of teaching remotely to continue learning as a response to the 'external shock' of the pandemic. The abrupt change in learning approaches from physical to online teaching comes with a number of challenges, especially the remote assessment of learners/students. Again, communal prayers in all religious places of worship were suspended, parties were postponed while burials would be conducted with utmost 10 people strictly observing the established SOPs, public political gatherings were stopped (much as it was an election/political season), monthly markets like cattle auction markets were halted, banned movement of public and private cars, social contact restrictions locally termed as 'tonsebelera,' mask-wearing, 'working from home,' curfew time maintained at 7:00pm among other SOPs as elements of a 'new normal.' This increased economic insecurity, as businesses, both formal and informal, came to a standstill.

Much as pandemics are part of the history of life on Earth (for example, the Spanish flu at the beginning of the 20th century and HIV-AIDs) (Grek & Landri, 2021), COVID-19 has triggered the lives of normal everyday routines in terms of contact, travel, and activities so as to diffuse its spread. Health care systems, economies, and the lives of mankind changed in unnumbered ways that were unimaginable at the beginning of 2020. Specifically, the education sector was profoundly disrupted by the pandemic. Schools that convene large groups of people have become a go-no area to foster precautionary measures to minimize the rapid spread of the deadly virus. The International Association of Universities (2020), an independent global organization affiliated with UNESCO, initially reported that more than a billion and a half of students across the world are affected by school closures due to the COVID-19 outbreak. The imposed lockdowns resulted in the immediate closure of schools, thereby affecting over 63 million teachers worldwide (UNESCO, 2020).

This pandemic has created an unprecedented crisis in most sectors across Uganda, especially in education. Schooling learners at primary, secondary, and tertiary institution levels have been in their homes for so long (close to two years), while a number of these students had paid school fees at the time of closure. This has affected learners by missing two academic learning years, while most of their parents or guardians lost employment or income with the arrival of the global pandemic. A number of candidates are required to pay examination fees to complete high school, secondary, and primary categories of education, respectively. This increases the chance of not completing different levels of education. Private schools that have been enhancing literacy rates are being sold largely because they are surviving on loans, as they cannot survive the pressure from financial institutions and money lenders that need their money. The academic calendar will be interrupted for many

months and years as Uganda tries to bridge the lost education years. It is disturbing that presently; the education sector appears not to be clear on the dates for reopening. This study questions the reading materials distributed in confinement via online communication systems in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. These did not reach all the common Ugandans; the materials ranging from Maths, Literacy, English, Geography, Entrepreneurship, and other subjects were not delivered to a number of ordinary learners. Not all communities in this country can afford/access online classes; ordinary pupils lack access to phones, computers, and the Internet, and even charging these gadgets is a luxury in a typical Ugandan setting. The cost of buying batteries is unsustainable in many rural villages. The government looking for a way into automated learning promised radio to all households across the country and TV learning. This was for model teachers to prepare lessons and air lessons on radio and television stations across the country. To the detriment of the populace, Ugandans are yet to receive the promised radios.

On the contrary, a number of learners, students, and lecturers responded positively, with huge adaptability to online learning. A number of school buildings are closed, and online learning takes place via digitalization. However, learning institutions that have attempted to adopt knowledge sharing remotely in a bid to refrain from social gatherings/contacts, such as Christian University Mukono and Uganda Management Institute, have faced challenges, especially the examination of learners electronically. So far, they have started two semesters (two academic terms) without conducting the end of the model examinations to assess whether learning has occurred. Schools and institutions of learning realized that they could not keep teaching while cancelling or postponing examinations. Teachers lack a clear understanding of how to give out exams online, which has halted grading and promoted students from one class to another. The poor Internet connectivity in most parts of Sub-Saharan Africa, few computers/phones to use, and how to invigilate, especially detecting fraud during examination, as some learners may hire others to sit for them, frustrate electronic examination. At the time of writing this paper, the Uganda Management Institute (UMI) had not yet succeeded in an online assessment approach; however, online learning has been ongoing for nearly two years.

The pandemic has overwhelmingly polished the financial gap between the government and private teachers. At the beginning of the lockdown, public teachers continued to earn, while private teachers' salaries were reduced. In the long run, private teachers lost jobs, had no salaries, and currently had no pay at all. As both categories of teachers teach Ugandan students, public teachers have continued to receive salaries to date, yet their counterparts last received wages a year plus ago, much as they have families and dependants to take care of. Teachers struggle with financial stress, thereby suggesting the need to rethink how to cater to private teachers as public officers. Through the Ministry of Education's national database, the government of Uganda is aware of the number of private schools and their respective teachers. This ought to act as a basis to guide the government on how to assist teachers in prevailing catastrophic times.

According to Mbah et al. (2021), Covid19 has been less deadly in Africa than in other regions for five reasons. These include drastic actions taken by many nations to halt or slow the spread of the virus, wide public support for different measures, characteristics of the population being mostly young people, favorable climate, and good community health systems. Maeda and Nkengasong (2021) also capture a limited testing regime, pre-existing immunity, and genetic factors. Tembo et al. (2021) also suggests that there is evidence of possible underreporting. Surprisingly, there are countries that did not go into lockdowns, including Sweden, which is recognized worldwide for its approach in dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic. Thus far during COVID-19, life in Sweden has remained relatively unchanged, with some recommendations in place, such as maintaining social distance, limiting social gatherings, and, whenever possible, working from home. However, no lockdown regimes have been

implemented (Kamoga & Varea, 2021). Irrespective of these critical incidents, the government of Uganda seems to have neglected the common man during these trying moments of the pandemic. Prior crisis-response studies have largely focused on firm survival and adaptation efforts (Novelli et al., 2018; Rapaccini et al., 2020). Relatedly, recent empirical studies on COVID-19 have tended to concentrate on its impact on the economy, oil price, stock volatility (Albulescu, 2020; Estrada et al., 2020), biosecurity risk management (Melly & Hanrahan, 2020) and the expansion of the disease (Chinazzi, 2020; Gilbert et al., 2020) amongst however, little is known about the concept of public interest, particularly during the outbreak and control of COVID 19. Drawing from grounded theory, this paper the objective of this study was to examine how public interest was lost in Uganda's education sector during Covid-19.

2. Theoretical Predictions

2.1 *Grounded Theory*

This study adopted a qualitative research approach based on Grounded Theory founded by Glaser and Straus (1967). This theory is underpinned by symbolic interactionism, which focuses on the nature of social interaction and is essentially a theory of human behavior that sees humans as both actively creating the social environment and being shaped by it. A person's response to an event is determined by understanding and interpreting the meaning of the event and their ability to communicate this meaning using language (Blumer, 1969). Specifically, the model rests on collecting, examining, and checking data (Charmaz, 2015). It is a systematic method aimed at theory construction that relies on rigorous analysis and conceptualization of data. This theory is iterative, comparative and interactive. The theory involves coding different processes that imply abstracting and relating categories in the data analysis. This supports the systematic procedure of data analysis, which enhances the ordering of data by offering traceability between the data and categories (Pries-Heje, 1992). It is emphasized that category development should be unprejudiced and open-minded (Charmaz & Belgrave, 2018). Similarly, Orlikowsky (1993) asserted that the ability to incorporate unique insights during the course of the study is one of the benefits of this model. It is also credited for its theoretical power in the sampling process, whereby new data are gathered to enrich the evolving theory (Dey, 1999).

COVID 19 is a complex, dynamic, and fluid phenomenon that is transferred in diverse and often conflicting ways. To make sense of this, this complexity can be appropriately examined using grounded theory. This paradigm of choice allows themes to emerge inductively from data, culminating in data-driven but abstract theoretical understanding of social reality (Charmaz, 2014). This enhances the discovery and generation of new knowledge regarding the pandemic by being central to organizing concepts that serve to both direct the research process and provide a heuristic for data analysis and interpretation. The adoption of GT stems from the need for theory development and creative perspectives, generating powerful insights into the unique deadly corona that caused crisis, and the human race is failing to return to normality. Almost all individuals, communities, societies, and countries are caught off guard, and they appear to fail to understand what can be done to control this catastrophic phenomenon from different viewpoints.

3. Literature review

Public interest, Covid-19 and Education

It is difficult to define the construct of public interest because it is socially constructed and meanings attached to the term by governments, regulators, and other stakeholders (that include a range of groups and organizations representing the public and its views) have varied across time and place (Myles et al., 2023). For example, in the nineteenth-century in Canada, the public interest pertained to service provision by qualified (ie, trained and educated) individuals to lessen patient or client harm, ensure adequate health service access, and practise ethically and competently (Wei et al., 2021). By the late twentieth century, understandings of the public interest had shifted to place more emphasis on cost containment and efficiency in service provision (Adams, 2020). More recently, Kwemarira et al., (2025), has conceptualized the global construct of public interest to include the dimensions of citizens will, egalitarianism and common good.

Public interest has been advanced in response to curbing COVID19 through the use of new technologies and socio-technical landscapes while altering work practices and service in the education sector (Casey, 2019). This was evidenced in the widespread shift to virtual education provision (). Again, technology, increased mobility and easy access of education provision to many learners and students while in their different homes thus serving the public interest (Sweatman & McDonald, 2022). Relatedly, in the spring of 2020, public schools across the United States were forced to close their campuses due to an emerging public health crisis caused by the detection of the first cases of the COVID-19 virus. Although schools closed their buildings, the delivery of educational services did not stop. This included the ongoing provision of services mandated by federal law to ensure that learners continued to attain education (Jameson et al., 2020).

Education is traditionally a domain of the government, where public authorities determine how education is organized and quality assured. This is in line with a rights-based approach: governments are the duty-bearers and as such, are responsible for ensuring the right to education. While governments have succeeded in making education more accessible over the past decades, the role of the government has also been changing as public budgets were shrinking and the private sector encouraged and facilitated to play a new and expanded role in providing public education (Wulff, 2021).

Researchers have argued that there can be no doubt that the crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic will be looked back on as a historic moment – one that could come to be seen either as an important turning point for humanity or as a huge missed opportunity, a mile stone in the story of our deterioration and mismanagement of the planet. How we respond and the actions we take now will have a profound impact on the society of the future, including the future of education. It will determine whether we continue on our current course, leading, as it would appear, to increasingly brutal, authoritarian and inequitable forms of capitalism, or whether we recognise the profound dysfunction at the heart of our socio-economic arrangements and try to create something better. To do so, we must be sure to act on the basis of values and principles that can enable us not only to build back better but to build back fairer and in a more inclusive, democratic and sustainable way. Education, of course, has a critical role in all of this, as it helps to mould these formative values while at the same time being moulded by them (Stanistreet et al., 2020).

Globally, the last 50 years have seen serious huge growth worldwide in the provision of education at all education levels. COVID-19 is the greatest challenge to humanity that these expanded national education systems have ever faced. Many governments from low to developed countries have ordered institutions to cease face-to-face instruction for most of their students, requiring them to switch, almost overnight, to online teaching and virtual education (Daniel, 2020). This shows the

need for governments to offer online platforms to foster the continued provision of education services to their publics, teachers, institutional heads and state officials who must manage the educational consequences of this crisis (Kwemarira et al., 2025a).

4. Methodology

This study adopts existential phenomenology. Existential-phenomenology is a paradigm that blends the philosophy of existentialism with phenomenological methods of phenomenology (Valle & King 1978). In existential phenomenology, the human being is understood as essentially embodied, and the body 'is a physical thing, an object that can be weighed, measured and described using purely physical or naturalistic terms. However, it is also the source of subjective feelings, perceptions, and sensations; it is the seat of subjectivity and the place where consciousness occurs. As such, the body is a subject object, a unique being that can be experienced both from a first and a third person's point of view' (Carel, 2011). For example, existential-phenomenological methods have been employed in research concerning the experiences of anxiety and depression (Fischer 1978) which are closely associated with the study of COVID 19 and its related predictors or outcomes. Researchers have adopted this paradigm because it focuses more on ontology or what it means to be (Heidegger, 1962/1999) in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

5. Research design

This article used a qualitative method with a case study research type. The purpose of this study was to examine how public interest was lost in Uganda's education sector during Covid-19. This study was conducted at the lead author's residence in Nakinyuguzi village, located in Salaama-Munyonyo in Uganda's capital city, Kampala. Data were collected using interview techniques by selecting specific informants to obtain relevant primary data. The selected informants were 12 private teachers who had not received any salary since the closure of schools, in line with the lockdown. These 12 participants are consistent with the concept of saturation was originally developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967) to qualitative research, which focuses to the point in data collection when no additional issues or insights emerge from data and all relevant conceptual categories have been identified, explored, and exhausted. These respondents had been seriously negatively affected since the declaration of the corona quarantine. This study sought to gain insight into each of the severely impacted teachers through the use of interview procedures and thematic analysis. Following social distancing, sanitizing, and masking, interviews were conducted. This was to control the spread of the coronavirus by abiding by set SOPs (MoH, 2020). The researchers further interpreted the experiences of the affected teachers through a thematic analysis. This theme is the main product of this analytical technique (Green et al., 2007).

6. Participants

The participants were notified and invited to participate in the interviews by the lead scholar (Kwema) a week prior via telephone calls. The intention of the visit was made thorough to the interviewees (the purpose was made clear that it was only for scientific purposes). Informed consent was obtained verbally before conducting interviews. All the teachers spoke and understood English, which was used as a communication model. This was intended to understand how public interest was lost from interviewees' perspectives. Using semi-structured interviews, each of the authors interviewed four participants to collect the qualitative data. As opined by Qu and Dumay (2011), a

semi-structured interview involves questioning, which is guided by identified themes in a consistent and systematic manner interposed with probes to elicit more elaborate responses. All interviews were audio-recorded with the oral permission of the **respondents**, all the interviews were audio recorded. Each experiment lasted for approximately 1 h. The responses generated were analyzed using the QSR*NVIVO qualitative data software program for data management (Kwemarira et al., 2021). Thereafter, the generated responses were analyzed to obtain the emerging themes and sub-themes indicated in the NVIVO outputs.

Table 1: Showing Profile of informants

Cas- es	Age	Gender	Marital status	Education Level	Years	Way of survival
1	35-46	Male	Married	Diploma	11	Went into Peasantry
2	26-35	Male	Married	Degree	10	Self-employment/ Fruits
3	36-45	Female	Married	Diploma	15	Self-work/Bakery
4	Below 26	Female	Single	Degree	4	Settling into corporate
5	26-35	Female	Married	Degree	6	Teaching via Zoom
6	26-35	Female	Single	Single	9	Massage parlour
7	36-45	Male	Married	Diploma	12	Gardening
8	Above 46	Male	Married	Certificate	16	Awaiting for reopen- ing
9	36-45	Female	Married	Certificate	15	Operating a salon
10	36-45	Male	Married	Diploma	7	Car wash
11	36-45	Female	Separated	Certificate	16	Pool Table
12	Above 46	Male	Divorced	Diploma	10	Waiting for re-open- ing

Source: Primary Data; September 2021

7. Emerging themes

After data analysis stemming from information gathered from respondents in Table 1, nine critical themes were generated from the master transcript of the responses of the participants in line with public interest being lost during the coronavirus. The results are presented and discussed below.

Critical theme 1: The lockdown

During the first wave of the coronavirus, the government of Uganda imposed a lockdown where the cessation of stay-at-home orders was undoubtedly enforced. The study reveals that this was a challenging decision where, for the first time in the history of Ugandans, people were to stop working and be confined to their homes to curb the spread of the virus. In effect, this involved isolation and loss of physical contact, which frustrated the wider social bonds that threatened the core of our Ugandan social human existence. The researchers noted increased challenges in a number of Ugandans' mental health due to the lockdown brought in by physical isolation and loss, combined with fear of unpredictable threats and economic hardship. This affected the income of the citizenry, especially the urban Ugandans. The lockdown immediately ushered in unemployment; thus, poor or questionable feeding became inevitable, implying a lack of home materials. This points to the failed government provision of basic commodities during the lockdown, ranging from food and medical insurance (participants argue that a number of people with HIV/AIDS died due to failed access

to ARVs). It is important to note that the government's emphasis was seemingly on security for citizens to abide by curfew guidelines at the expense of providing basics in communities. A number of patients who were on motorcycles, locally termed *boda bodas*, were not given a chance to proceed to hospitals to receive medical care. The security officers dehumanized the citizens by beating them in the evening to enforce the lockdown directives. The lockdown was extremely expensive, and many citizens questioned its relevance in fostering the common good. Again, urban dwellers were highly affected; they were forced to stay in their homes, unlike their counterparts in rural areas, who continued to cultivate their land and farming continued normally, while the government ignored this disparity.

Viewpoint 2: The standstill of formal schooling

School closures were a difficult decision. School activities mobilize many people: teachers, head teachers, students, parents, and other staff. While Covid-19 was soon revealed to be more dangerous for the adult population (notably for older age groups), school closures were considered one of the most effective measures for containment and prevention of the disease because different learners congregate from different homes, and in the evening, they could transfer the virus to their parents.. This paved way for the viewpoint of closing schools and those that attempted to teach online was challenged by the high costs and challenging access to the Internet in almost all regions of Uganda. The transformation from traditional education to online via zoom in the context of Uganda faces a number of challenges, especially inadequate facilities and electricity coverage, to charge these gadgets, which are viable enough to replace the traditional system. The informants indicated that learners who were to be promoted are yet to be promoted at another level of education. Schools have been sold off in a bid to clear proprietor loans, leaving learners wondering where they are going for studies as soon as schools reopen. At the reopening of schools, learners will pay afresh irrespective of what they had paid before the closure of the schools, to the detriment of parents and guardians. Additionally, masks would have been made compulsory and put on every time while on school premises and emphasized again while talking in class plus other SOPs. Participants argued that washing hands, social distancing, and isolating sick learners and teachers suffering from flue was the best alternative for averting the spread of the virus. This would have kept schools open at the same time without frustrating the learning process. It appears that the government rushed to close schools. When schools closed, everything came to a standstill, girls became pregnant, unemployment rose, and teachers went into a miserable life; they could not provide basics for themselves or their families. Participants informed the researchers that for close to two years, private teachers are yet to receive salaries, and a number of them have been sent out of houses for failure to pay rent. One interviewee said, *'two meals are a luxury in this lockdown, we only survive on posho and beans once a day. I am intending to take my family to the village. Only if I can get someone to buy my computer such that I get transport money. I am very sure of not going back to teach, the school would have given me some relief in form of food and accommodation fees. I have been a laughing case in my neighbourhood. To hell with teaching again in my life time'*. Teachers, especially private, did not receive salaries throughout the lockdown and no savings, yet they needed to pay for accommodation, food, and medication insurance for their family members as the government kept a deaf ear, yet they offered their services to the entire public.

Emerging theme 3: Online education

The world, inclusive of Uganda, witnessed a rapid transformation of the education system with the coming of COVID 19 and subsequent closure of schools. Online education gained wind in its sail during this pandemic event now more than ever. Previously, online-based education was (mostly)

limited to pre-recorded videos and online courses (both using institutional learning management systems and massive open online course platforms), but in the desperate times of the pandemic, it transformed physical classrooms into virtual classrooms, connecting the teachers and students to live through the Internet and necessary devices. For a lower-middle-income developing Uganda, which is going through a transforming period to officially achieve the status of a developing country, this seemed like a desperate measure without deliberate consideration to maintain educational quality, similarity or resemblance, reach, and interaction, or the same teaching method of the live online classes made the virtual classes parallel to physical ones.

However, COVID 19 did not present a chance for Ugandan teachers to reap from the benefits of online teaching by being trained in appropriate approaches to convert traditional methods to online learning. This greatly affects the understanding of the use of available technologies. The reality is that it is much harder to transfer a number of subjects online, for example, practical subjects such as agriculture and biology. Virtue learning requires significantly more motivation and attention, while the screen creates an emotional removal that makes it difficult to have dialogue or feedback without feeling as if you are speaking into a void. Interviewees suggested that this kind of teaching required a great deal of resources and careful planning. Moreover, a huge change in the mindset of students and teachers is required to play new roles in the educational process. In Uganda, another major challenge for online learning is the limited coverage of electricity to charge computers, and the limited funds to buy these gadgets as the government keeps increasing taxes on computers and the Internet instead of subsidizing or providing them freely.

Due to the lockdown and resultant closure of schools, the government would have rushed to avail learning gadgets at subsidized or no cost and even provide free internet. Instead, the government hiked the costs of the Internet, frustrating common learners. Instead, it would have gone on to avail learning video recordings of what was to be taught in the communities, to be accessed freely. In contrast, it promised free radios that we are yet to receive. The reading materials provided in the media were not afforded by the majority of common Ugandans. Relatedly, the study questions the availability of teachers after the lockdown, high dropout of learners, and the fact that a number of girls have had unwanted pregnancies, while all the Ugandans are disturbed by the loss of academic two years while at home.

Theme 4: Social distance

“Social distancing” was an essential element SOP announced by the president of Uganda a global recommendation to mitigate the community from the spread of the deadly coronavirus. It was conceived from the perspective that the emergence of social distancing was an effective measure to curb the spread of the virus. The idea of social distancing brought forth working from home (remote work), virtual courts, online classes, and greeting from friends and close relatives at a distance against the Ugandan culture of hugging without engaging socially to prevent the virus from spreading. The COVID-19 outbreak had a devastating impact on Ugandans and shattered the social system with a massive jolt to hugging and partying culture, both in villages and urban areas. The COVID-19 pandemic quickly led to the closure of universities, colleges, and secondary and primary schools with government instructions to follow social distancing, which could help to flatten the infection curve and reduce total fatalities from the disease. The most important pandemic precaution called “social distancing” or “physical distancing” has attempted to reduce interpersonal contact and thereby minimize the kind of community transmission that could develop quickly in dense social networks like the school campuses.

Critical incidence 5: The new normal

During the COVID-19 outbreak, new habits and practices that were previously considered normal came into being and have been termed the 'new normal.' The interviewees observed "new normal" as they lived day to day in the times of lockdown. The participants noticed that some changes in their routines, both positive and negative, occurred. For example, cooking their own food in people's respective homes as all restaurants and hotels were closed, sleeping as much as they could because people had a lot of idle time. However, on a positive note, the Ugandans are now minding about their cleanliness, especially washing their hands regularly. The participants are sure that even after the demise of corona virus this culture of washing hands and sanitizing will stay that will keep the populace from a number of diseases. The public has adopted a good culture of nutritious foods, especially fruits, to boost immunity.

Emerging theme 6: Inequality between public and private teachers

Between March and May 2020, 132 countries, including Uganda, implemented country-wide school closures affecting hundreds of millions of students worldwide (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2020). As part of the unprecedented societal and economic effects associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, national education systems face short- and long-term negative effects spanning from the detrimental social and health conditions of vulnerable children and families to exacerbating social and educational inequalities (Van Lancker & Parolin, 2020). In Uganda, private and public education systems have witnessed high inequalities during the lockdown. This originated from the immediate closure and subsequent cessation of receiving salaries and wages among teachers and other employees of private learning institutions at all levels. The lives of private teachers were turned upside-down, while the government demonstrated that it could not assist these teachers and instead focused on only public teachers, as the private teachers served all Ugandan learners. This appears to be illogical, paying government teachers for two close years, yet their counterparts have never been paid since the closure of schools. The corona crisis shrewdly demonstrates that much as private teachers offer their services to the Ugandan populace and even pay taxes, the government of Uganda does not care about their wellness.

Emerging theme 7: Financial stress

From the beginning of the pandemic in March, the suffering of private teachers, each and every month that passed, became more significant. Private teachers suffered from financial stress, but the majority of the Ugandans faced financial setbacks. For example, the transport system, agriculture, manufacturing and production, hotels, games, sports, and the music and entertainment industries were extremely halted, which affected the incomes of the citizenry. Financial setbacks among the populace were largely a result of the immediate stay home to implement the set guidelines from the Ministry of Health, as forwarded by the president of Uganda. For private teachers, having no cash to use stemmed from the government completely ignoring them financially as if they did not teach Ugandan pupils. The interviewees noted that disrespectfulness emerged from the learners towards the teachers as they were found doing indecent work like brick laying and hawking different food items, which greatly affected them psychologically.

Emerging theme 8: Cars movement put on standstill

Since the announcement of the lockdown, the livelihoods of the citizenry have changed, especially from the transport perspective. One measure to stop the spread of the contagious virus during the lockdown was to halt the use of public transport. This has pushed the populace towards the use of private cars and individual means of transport. Transport is crucial to connect communities but was

highly challenged as cars were packed, walking long distances (to and from markets and hospitals) became the new normal, bicycles and motor bicycles (Boda bodas) were also used in trying to reduce the spread of the pandemic, and a few citizens could afford to hire pickups and motorcycles. The interviewees noted that the sick suffered more while others died, as they could not afford transport to access hospitals for medication.

Emerging theme 9: Domestic violence

During the lockdown, a number of incidents of domestic violence were witnessed during isolation and forced stay at home. The husbands, wives, children, and relatives were fighting and abusing each other largely because of a lack of resources. The lockdown frustrated the intimate relationships, and the family institution was largely torn apart, largely as a result of fathers failing to provide as a result of being rendered jobless. One participant asserted that without financial resources, staying at home can be dangerous, as the number of requests continues to accumulate without being sorted. This was not the intent of restricting people to their homes per se. The forced stay at home was intended to curb the spread of corona virus yet it made domestic violence inevitable as a result of accumulated unmet needs in homes. The researchers note that any teachers to teach in private schools are, in most cases, registered/examined and passed by the Ministry of Education (MoE). They even pay taxes to schools, especially their respective schools, and thus this was the basis for the government to come in and assist financially so as to keep earning even in times of pandemic, like the ongoing situation.

8. Concluding remarks

In the first and second waves of the pandemic, Ugandans, particularly teachers, faced significant challenges as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic that came with the closure of schools. The impact of the pandemic on the population would have been neutralized by the government. However, the regime demonstrated egoism to the detriment of citizenry. It is important to change the trend of handling the interests of the public with those of authority. This study notes that public servants tend to remain blind to the desires, needs, and preferences of their citizens. They have only cared for their selfish interests at the expense of what benefits most Ugandans. This stems from the poor-quality masks, and questionable food in terms of quality and quantity (the beans and posho) were extremely not in lieu of the public value of the taxpayers' money spent. In addition, Ugandans collected staff and money during the lockdown to act as relief for vulnerable Ugandans; surprisingly, those who were supposed to receive emergency facilities have never received the collected money and materials, while no clear accountability has been provided to that effect.

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