



Teacher Transfers and Teachers' Performance: Experience from Uganda Primary Schools

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Abstract: Achievement of excellent academic performance depends largely on the quality of the teachers deployed in the school. The main objective of this study was to examine the relationship between teacher transfer and teachers' performance in Uganda. The study used exploratory and descriptive designs where both qualitative and quantitative approaches were applied. Quantitative data was analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Scientists (SPSS) Ver. 20 which helped to obtain descriptive statistics that were used in interpreting the data while correlation and regression analyses were used for testing and predicting the study hypotheses. Qualitative data was analyzed using content analysis where data was divided into themes, sub-themes and categories which helped to sort data according to its relevance to each piece of data that was obtained in the findings. Questionnaires and interview guide were used to collect data from a sample of 140 respondents of which 111 returned their completed usable filled questionnaires giving a response rate of 79.3%. The findings revealed that all the dimensions of teacher transfers (voluntary and involuntary transfers) were positively and significantly associated with teachers' performance in Uganda. The major reasons for voluntary transfer were lack of accommodation, distance from families, promotion and illness while involuntary transfers were due to poor performance of teachers, misconduct, conflict with management and drunkenness. The study concludes that voluntary transfer factors are stronger than involuntary factors in accounting for a variation in teachers' performance in Uganda primary schools. The study recommends that the district leadership should map or grade all schools in the district in terms of low, average and high performing schools as well as bring indiscipline teachers to book instead of transferring and establish adhoc transfer committees.

Keywords: Teacher Transfer, Voluntary Transfer, Involuntary Transfer, Teachers Performance

1. Introduction

Teacher transfer is one of the causes of teacher turnover. It's sometimes referred to as teacher migration. Globally, between 1999 and 2001, 7.4% of all public school teachers left teaching employment and 7.7% moved to a different school giving a total of 15.1% attrition and transfer/migration rate (Luekens *et al.*, 2004). Teacher transfer has emerged as a significant problem affecting the teaching profession, school performance and learner achievements (Komakech, 2017; Luekens *et al.*, 2004; Noor *et al.*, 2012) observed that the field of education should improve its understanding of the costs and benefits of turnover and improve its management of turnover in order to reduce its costs and enhance its benefits. The literature complements that education institutions / districts focus mainly on the positive impact of teacher transfer without considering its negative impact on education in the long-run. This study therefore attempted to bring to light the effects of voluntary or involuntary teacher transfer on teachers' performance in primary schools in Uganda.

Mulkeen and Chen (2008) study in Ghana also found that the teacher deployment policy and practice led to inequities in teacher distribution hence leaving small primary schools in remote locations with inadequate number of teacher's hence high teacher-pupils ratio. Adedeji and Olaniyan (2011) argued that teachers who spend much time in an isolated village without access to further education become 'village men or women'. Furthermore, (Noor *et al.* (2012)) cautioned that frequent change of teachers during the session is harmful to academia. This is worst when a teacher is transferred during the academic session and his/ her replacement takes long time to be filled in the future. In addition (Mulkeen and Chen, 2008) study revealed that teachers are always reluctant to locate to an area where the first language is different from their own. For instance, in Malawi, student teachers who come from various ethnic groups

with different first languages posed problems for their deployment in areas with a different dominant language group. On the other hand, some countries like Ghana transfer their teachers to rural areas as a way of increasing teacher's chance of promotion. This empirical study therefore sought to reveal the essence of teacher transfer from urban to rural areas in Uganda.

Conversely, [Luschei and Chudgar \(2015\)](#) reported that in Mexico the government prevents teachers from transferring from challenging locations or allows transfers only once a suitable replacement has been found. However, teachers always express a strong preference for urban postings since living conditions are so much better in urban than in rural areas ([Mulkeen and Chen, 2008](#)). The authors also adds that 'hard-to-staff schools' also known as 'hard to reach schools' are usually plagued with high teacher turnover as teachers are perpetually leaving and need to be replaced. It's therefore important to note that teachers do not want to be transfer because of reasons like fear of the unknown and lack of their participation in the transfer decisions.

Furthermore, early study by [Hannay and Chism \(1985\)](#) revealed that teachers are contented to remain in the grade they had taught for several years and in the school which they might have taught at for ten or more years. Similarly, [Komakech \(2017\)](#) claimed that the Ministry of Education representatives at the district have also compromised the administrative performance of some head teachers. For instance, some head teachers have initiated brilliant development plans and are transferred before the completion of their plans. The author adds that some teachers are also transferred to areas which they don't want with the reason of language, distance from family, security of the area, and inadequate social amenities. This implies that some teachers are transferred at the time they have settled and built good working relationships between their colleagues and the community. [Komakech \(2017\)](#) reported that, in Uganda Head teachers and Parents and Teachers Association (PTA) chairpersons often travel to the district headquarters to negotiate teacher transfers with the District Education Officer / Chief Administrative Officer / District Chairperson / Resident District Commissioner (RDC) either due to public interest or individual interest. Unfortunately, the district officials heed to their claims without thorough investigation about why such teacher(s) should be transferred. Due to undocumented evidence for reasons of transfers, this empirical study will investigate how transfers are initiated and primary teachers' feelings about transfers.

In Uganda, the Government through the Ministry of Public Service (MoPS) developed employees' working document known as Uganda Public Service Standing Orders (UPSSO) and in one of its sections states that public officers, including teachers, should be transferred after a continuous stay in his or her current posting for at least three (3) and not exceeding five (5) years, ([MoPS, 2015](#)). Furthermore, the Uganda Public Service Standing Orders states that the transfer of staff shall be in the public interest and should never be used as a punitive measure or a way of disciplining a public officer. It is against this background that District Education Officer have continued to enforce primary teachers' transfers across the district. For instance, between 2015 and 2016 at least 284 teachers were transferred in Ngora district; 20 teachers transferred from Rwampara newly created district to Mbarara district in 2019; 220 (57 head teachers and 163 teachers) transferred in Tororo district in 2019; Arua transferred 100 in 2020; while 160 teachers were transferred in Yumbe and Luwero district reported the highest teacher transfers record of 573 in 2019 as reported in respective districts. Although, transfer encourages employees to view the organization as one offering them career growth; from review of transfer lists in the above highlighted districts, teacher transfers are high (ranging from 19.6% to 26.7%) with unsatisfactory academic performance in primary schools and yet the assumption of the transfer was to improve academic performance in schools.

In addition, there is also evidence that teachers in Uganda are not deployed according to the existing rules at primary schools. Notably, some schools have a surplus of teachers whereas others have a deficit of teachers for instance in Ngora district, pupil to teacher ratio is 63.7%: 1 teacher as compared to Wakiso with 38.4%:1; Kampala, 42.5%:1; Mukono, 46.1%:1; and Jinja, 47.6%:1 (Teachers Initiative in Sub-Saharan Africa, 2013). As a result, the low performing schools rarely close the pupil performance gap thus they are always rebuilding their staff hence poor performance in national examinations. [Muyingo \(2010\)](#) Who argued that teacher transfer leads to inefficiencies in teachers' performance? This could be the reasons why educators and the general public have time and again criticized teacher transfers in some districts in Uganda. It's against this background that this study examined the relationship between teacher transfer and teachers' performance. To achieve the study objectives, the paper gives brief types of teacher transfers, reviews literature on the dimensions of teacher transfer (voluntary and involuntary transfers) and teachers' performance, presents a brief methodology and findings of the study. In nutshell, the paper presents discussion of findings, conclusions and managerial implications.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Overview of Teacher Transfer

Teacher transfer is an agile alteration in assignment within the district or from one school to another. While changing a position within a school is considered repositioning, rather than a transfer [Muyingo \(2010\)](#) asserts that transfer involves movement of personnel from one institution to another on request, merit or order from superiors; this happens in the public service context and other organizations that have multiple units in different geographical areas. It may also refer to appointments on employees' request or direct posting arrangements by the organization whereby an individual is asked to work in another organization at the latter's request in order to improve performance in the area of placement ([Muyingo \(2010\)](#)). Employee transfer is stipulated within the Public Service Standing Orders 2010. The document clearly explains that the effective date of appointment on transfer will be the date the officer leaves his or her place of engagement to take up his or her duties.

However, in the teaching service, which is part of the general public service, transfers have been dominated by misgivings which at the end lead to inefficiencies in administrative performance by head teachers and teachers ([Komakech, 2017; Muyingo, 2010](#)). The literature indicates ([Howard, 2006](#)) ([Luschei and Chudgar, 2015; Muyingo, 2010; Noor et al., 2012](#)) two forms of teacher transfers namely voluntary and involuntary transfer. [Howard \(2006\)](#) noted that some teachers are transferred voluntarily (where principals usually have hiring discretion) and involuntary (displacement and layoff situations where principals often have less control over the assignment decisions). [Muyingo \(2010\)](#) postulates that the various forms of transfer (voluntary and involuntary transfers) have significantly compromised the administrative performance of some head teachers transferred from various schools to others. This shows that all transfer types have significant relationship with teacher performance. This study therefore conceptualized teacher performance in terms of attitude towards teaching, subject mastery, teaching methodology, relation with student, preparation and planning, effectiveness in presenting subject matter which lead to teachers' productivity, completion of syllabus and involvement in school programmes among others.

2.2. Involuntary Teacher Transfer and Teachers' Performance

Involuntary transfer is a transfer initiated by either a head teacher or a district administrator ([Noor et al., 2012](#)). The transfer initiated by the head teacher or a district administrator is also called "administrative transfer". The transfer is forced on a teacher who is not good and fit for the school or who is performing unsatisfactorily ([Komakech, 2017](#)). Other involuntary transfers may be initiated by the district to solve problems of teacher surpluses due to changes in student enrollment, academic programs or the budget ([Noor et al., 2012](#)). Interestingly, teachers' unions and school administrators might agree that nothing affects students' achievement more than the quality of their teachers ([Noor et al., 2012](#)). On the contrary, unions and administrators widely disagree on which teachers are most qualified and which one should be given priority when applying for a position in the classroom. Despite the need for involuntary transfer as supported by the Uganda Public Service Standing Orders, the following are its effects on the teachers' performance:

Involuntary transfers affect a teacher's efficiency and competence. [Noor et al. \(2012\)](#) studies found that involuntary transfers affect individual performance. The authors emphasized that when a teacher(s) is transferred from any school, the remaining teachers face many problems that damage their efficiency and competency. [Noor et al. \(2012\)](#) adds that the teachers left behind were found to fail to achieve desired outcomes and marked as low efficiency teachers. On the contrary ([Jackson K., 2010; Musili, 2015](#)) study shows that teacher effectiveness is higher after a transfer to a different school and teacher-school matching can explain a non-negligible part of teacher quality. Furthermore, the transferred teachers are also faced with issues such as; distance, transport issue, socio cultural issue and delay in delivery of salary from his/her new work stations, ([Komakech, 2017; Noor et al., 2012](#)). This study therefore filled the knowledge gap by examining how involuntary teacher transfer affects their teaching efficiency.

[Grissom et al. \(2013\)](#) study reveals that involuntarily transferred teachers tend to be somewhat lower in value and to be absent more often in the year preceding the transfer. In addition, involuntarily transferred teachers look worse relative to their peers after transferring in terms of mathematics achievement. This difference could be due to either a drop in performance or to an increase in the performance of the teachers' peer group, given that they are transferring to higher-performing schools ([Grissom, et al., 2013](#)). Contributing to the same debate [Jackson C. K. and Bruegmann \(2009\)](#) suggest that transferred teachers may work harder if they see the transfer as a signal that they need to improve their

performance or if they are relocated to a school environment that encourages extra effort because, for example, they are surrounded by more productive teacher peers.

Another reason for transferring teachers is to improve academic performance of learners in the school. Some excellent teachers are transferred to worst performing schools with views that they can perform better than former teachers; in most cases, they can perform better in new stations if other factors which may affect their performance are catered for (Komakech, 2017; Muyingo, 2010). Involuntary transfer also contributes to effectiveness of service delivery. Muyingo (2010) argues that teachers who have been transferred to new stations may perform better in those new places especially if other factors, which may affect their performance, are catered for. According to Komakech (2017) teachers especially those transferred from first class schools to poor class schools, irrespective of the type of transfer, have got low morale to work which contribute to their poor performance. Komakech (2017) adds that some excellent teachers are transferred to worst performing schools with views that they can improve performance in a new school tremendously. The author postulates that in case the teacher does not accept the transfer, this has a great effect on teachers' attendance especially where a teacher is posted far away from their family or their home area and as a result it will increase pressure to the teacher to take extended weekend breaks in order to visit home (Komakech, 2017; Muyingo, 2010; Noor *et al.*, 2012). This study therefore will contribute literature on how involuntary transfer contributes to the teachers' performance in Uganda.

Teachers are also transferred because of the policy. Noor *et al.* (2012) noted that transfer policy was developed in the light of the philosophy of the system and institution as the teacher needs for transfer. This study finding is in agreement with the Uganda Public Service Standing Orders (2010); which states that public officers should be transferred after a continuous stay in his or her current posting for at least three (3) years and not exceeding five (5) years. This study will establish how Public Standing Order is adhered to when making transfers in Uganda.

A collective bargaining agreement is another reason for involuntary teachers' transfer. Howard (2006) reports that in high-poverty schools where teachers have a collectively bargained agreement, the transfer rate to another school or another district is 7.5 percent, while poor schools where teachers do not have a collective bargaining agreement the transfer rate to another school is 11.3 percent which are all above the national average transfer rate of 7.3 percent (Howard, 2006). The research found that teachers' union does not contribute to staff transfer in Uganda. From the above discussion, authors hypothesize that:

H1: Involuntary teacher transfer positively relate teachers' performance in primary schools

2.3. Voluntary Teacher Transfer and Teachers' Performance

According to Muyingo (2010), voluntary transfer gives insight on the extent to which the educational design has been implemented since teachers are transferred at their own will. Voluntary transfer is initiated by the teacher in that the teacher may choose to be transferred for a variety of reasons, including but not limited to: the desire to work closer to home, sickness, cultural factors, and environmental factors Nassali-Lukwago (2000) cited by Muyingo (2010) Noor *et al.* (2012) Komakech (2017). The following were the major effects of voluntary teacher transfer on the teachers' performance as revealed in the reviewed literature:

Voluntary transfer has great effects on syllabus coverage during the academic session. Noor *et al.* (2012) point out that changing the teachers frequently makes the syllabus move in a circle rather than in a proper direction. The authors add that the situation becomes worst when the school fails to get proper replacement. This is because every teacher has different teaching methodology, devotions to their job, knowledge and skills. This therefore have a direct causal effect on student achievement. They focus on the difference in quality between teachers who leave and those who replace them to account for the overall effect of turnover on teacher performance Ronfeldt *et al.* (2012). When leaving teachers are on average and those who replace them are sometimes worse than them; the effect of turnover on student achievement is assumed to be negative. To the contrary Hanushek *et al.* (2001) study points out that most teachers accept to leave school because of low academic achievement. This is consistent with Allen (2005). Allan found that teacher turnover is greater in schools with low student achievement. This study examined how voluntary transfer affects the teachers' performance in new work place.

Furthermore, Staub (2004) revealed that some teachers are transferred for promotion reasons. Personnel who want a promotion sometimes demand a change or threaten to leave for a different job. Transfer on promotion gives the officers transferred opportunity to assert themselves on their enhanced status from their juniors and where their subordinates comparatively know them (Muyingo, 2010; Smylie

et al., 1994). In addition, Smylie *et al.* (1994) explain that promotion is an incentive and teachers are motivated when promoted on the other hand, there are teachers who do not want to be promoted because they do not like the consequences, which includes transfers. Langseth (1995), considers transfers as being effected when the need for people in one job or department is reduced or increased, if the work load reduced employees would want to relocate to other areas where they can have enough tasks to perform. From the above discussion, authors hypothesize that:

H2: Voluntary teacher transfer positively relate teachers' performance in primary schools

2.4. Methodology

The study was descriptive and exploratory in nature. The use of the descriptive design is especially true with exploratory studies (Bailey, 1994; Sekaran, 2000). Exploratory studies are undertaken when not so much is known about the situation at hand so as to better comprehend the nature of and describe the characteristics of the variables of interest in a situation. Hence, exploratory and descriptive designs fitted this kind of study given the fact that little empirical research have been carried out on relationship between transfer types and teachers' performance in primary schools in Uganda. The study also applied both quantitative and qualitative approaches. Quantitative approach helped researchers to describe the current conditions and investigated the established relationships between the identified variables. This approach was adopted during sampling, collection of data, data quality control and in data analysis. While qualitative approach involved an in-depth probe and application of subjectively interpreted data (Sekaran, 2000) and enabled researchers to gather in-depth information about the study for example unstructured qualitative interviews. The population consisted of 220 education stakeholders (Head teachers/ Teaching staff, School Inspectors District Education Officer, District Council members, School Management Committee (SMC), Parents and Teachers Association (PTA) and Civil Society Organizations' representatives) from 6 districts (Ngora, Luwero, Yumbe, Jinja, Tororo and Mbarara) in Uganda. These districts were selected because of their openness and stakeholders response during the transfers. A sample size of 140 stakeholders was selected based on the table for determining sample size (Krejcie and Morgan, 1970). A minimum of 20 stakeholders were targeted per district. The districts were divided into small strata (urban, peri-urban and rural). Both simple random sampling (taken from each stratum) and purposive sampling to select the respondents.

Data was collected using questionnaires and interview guide. The questionnaire was anchored on three Likert scale that is; 1=Agree (A), 2= Uncertain (U), 3= Disagree (D) so as to determine the intensity, feelings and combine attitudes of respondents regarding the study variables. The results in this sub section were computed using frequency and percentages that provided the overall attitude of the respondents. The 13 items yielded the Cronbach's Alpha Reliability Coefficient of 0.730 or 73.0% which indicates that the research instrument was very reliable, acceptable and good for decision making (Amin, 2005; Nunnally, 1978). Relationships between constructs were also tested in order to determine the correlation coefficients and related t statistics.

3. Findings of the Study

Three key findings were presented for this study. The response rant and critical respondent's bio data and the two study hypotheses.

3.1. Respondent's Bio Data

The present study attained a response rate of 79.3%. Overall, 111 questionnaires and interview transcripts were analyzed by researchers. Interestingly, after analyzing 111 questionnaires and 35 interview transcripts there were no new themes and trends that emerged from the research instruments. This is what (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) describe as the saturation point of the data. Hence, researchers, considered the first 111 questionnaires and 35 interview transcripts for data analysis and reporting. Notably, out of the 111 respondents 62 (55.9%) were male while 47 (42.3%) were female and 2 (1.8%) did not disclose their gender. The result shows good representation of all categories of the respondents in the study hence the results of the study can be relied on for decision making. The majority of the respondents 85 (76.5%) were between 26-45 years of age, 14 (12.6%) were above 55 years while 11 (9.9%) were below 25 and above 18 years. These implies that, the majority of the respondents had enough experience with 45% having been transferred before. This could be the reason why there is a significant positive relationship between age of respondents and education qualifications/ level ($r=.605^{**}$, $p<.01$).

The study also revealed that 60 (54.1%) of the respondents were married, 41(36.9%) were single while divorced, separated and widow respondents were 6 (5.4%) and 4 (3.6%) never indicated their marital status in the questionnaires for reasons that their status is not permanent so there is no need of knowing. This was observed among respondents of aged between 26-35 years. Further analysis also showed a significant positive relationship between marital status and respondents gender ($r=.289^{**}$, $p<.01$). This is the reason why they majority do not want to be transferred away from their family. The data were categorized and summarized in Tables 1 and 2 in order to enhance the interpretation and understanding of the narrative qualitative data presented.

Table 1. Involuntary Teacher Transfers in Primary Schools

Reasons		A	U	D
Conflict with Management	NR	70.0	00	41.0
	EP	63.1	00	36.9
Human Resource Distribution	NR	48.0	00	63.0
	EP	43.2	00	56.8
Misconduct (sexual harassment, gossips, defilement, corruption)	NR	88.0	00	23.0
	EP	79.3	00	20.7
Inter Conflict between Staff, Pupils and Community	NR	58.0	00	53.0
	EP	52.3	00	47.7
Drunkenness	NR	75.0	00	36.0
	EP	67.6	00	32.4
Poor Performance	NR	91.0	00	20.0
	EP	82.0	00	18.0
Political Factors	NR	35.0	00	76.0
	EP	31.5	00	68.5
Overstaying	NR	39.0	00	72.0
	EP	35.1	00	64.9

Key: A- Agree U-Uncertain D-Disagree EP-Equivalent Percentage NR: Number of Respondents

Conflict with Management was cited by 63.1% (70) respondents as one of the reasons for involuntary transfer while 36.9% (41) disagreed. One key informant echoed that; *“The transfers are not political or targeting individual but aimed at boosting performance in the district,” ADDEO015*. On the other hand, substantial number of respondents expressed their views during interviews that some teachers undermine authority and hence the top management finds it hard to work with ungoverned staff leaving them with no option except forcing them out of the place. This also has serious consequences on the transferred teacher and may lead to absenteeism, low engagement in staff/ school activities, and diminishing productivity in the new work place because of new work environment.

The findings show that 48 (43.2%) of respondents agree to the point that Human Resource Distribution was the major reasons for involuntary transfer of teachers in Uganda while 63 (56.8%) disagreed. One respondent who disagreed with the reason describes it as outdated and ‘colonial system’. The respondent explained that;

“When you are applying for a job in a rural area you have expressly agreed to stay there. If you don’t like it don’t apply because there are other people who would love to work and stay there for good. These transfers have nothing to do with improving standards. A bad worker in the rural area is not any different from one in the urban area,” NDCSO 001. In contrary one teacher reported that; *“Transfer is normal and it helps in balancing staff, increasing teacher-pupils contact time when more teachers are brought in school, motivate both the teacher and pupils,” NDMTR 009*

This implies that transferring a teacher because of human resource distribution does not improve the performance of the teacher but instead; it will disadvantage their families and future plans. Therefore, if a teacher is not performing then management should identify suitable remedy of either developing the teacher or terminating his/ her service instead of transfer because if the teacher is a problem in school A, s/he will also take the same problem to school B.

The result shows that misconduct such as sexual harassment, gossip, defilement and corruption are the major reason for involuntary transfer of teacher(s) in primary schools in Uganda. This was supported by 88 (79.3%) respondents while 23 (20.7%) disagreed. Those who disagreed were with the opinion that such reasons given to a staff are mere allegations because if for example the staff was caught in the act of corruption or sexual harassment that staff would be interdicted or fired but it has never happened. This

action interrupts teaching and affects learners since they may be used to their teacher hence when a certain teacher is transferred on such allegations it may also lead to transfer of some students if the transferred teacher was result oriented.

During the study 58 (52.3%) agreed that some teachers were involuntarily transferred due to inter conflict with staff, pupils and community while 53 (47.7%) disagreed. One respondent argued that;

"Transferring a teacher because of conflict with the community, pupils or fellow staff is very unhealthy because no school or organization can develop when there are wrangles since they (teachers) will be wasting teaching time on emotional confrontations instead of work," TDFTR 003. Similarly, one respondent reported that *"Some teachers have been mistreated by communities to the extent of burning down their houses due to rifts warranting their transfer," ADDE0015*

With such nasty behavior faced by teachers in the community, transfer will therefore be relieving to both parties and will make them focus on the quality of their work and reputation. In addition, it will prompt modification of policies and operation procedures in the organization/ school.

Drunkenness was another reason of involuntary transfer as agreed by 75 (67.6%) respondents while 36 (32.4%) disagreed. Some teachers drink to the level that they shout and urinate in their clothes which is very embarrassing and affects the school reputation. According to one Head teacher in the district, he noted that;

"Some of the teachers arrive at work with alcohol smelling on the breath while some will leave class and go and drink to the extent that some were canned in the neighboring district (Serere district) when they were found drinking during working hours," NDHTR 007

This problem is on the increase and is an aspect of serious misconduct. It affects both the teacher and the school in terms of; absenteeism, injuries, theft and low employee morale, health risks, legal liabilities, financial loss due to payment for no work done and lost productivity.

The study found poor performance as the major cause of involuntary transfer as suggested by 90 (82%) respondents while 20 (18.0%) disagreed. Many schools' management agreed that the exercise is done in good faith because such teachers are toxic to the work environment and can affect the entire school. One respondent from Tororo reported that;

*"...were supposed to have been effected last year after parents reached an extent of locking offices of head teachers and chasing them away and accusing them of being none performers. The district ignored because it was going to interrupt learning and teaching in the schools," TDDEO 017.*A respondent ADMTR018 had this to say; *"The transfer is timely and has given my children chance to attend better schools within town. He added that, his children were stuck in those rural poor schools for many years since he could not afford to send them to study in the town because of distance."*

Although some take it for unintended reasons, it's believed that this approach will give the transferred staff opportunity to improve in a new work place because they will report when work is allocated and will have pressure to deliver in order to disapprove his/ her critiques in the former school.

Furthermore, 35 (31.5%) respondents agreed that some teachers were involuntarily transferred due to political factors while the majority disagreed 76 (68.5%). Respondents reported that foundation body, political leaders, SMC, PTA and cliques play key role in the transfer because of interest especially if you have established a very good relationship with the community/ and having a prosperous business in the area. The head teacher will connive with school management or politicians to push you out of the place so that your objectives is not achieved. In an interview with one affected teacher he noted that; *"This is the punishment and hatred which retards personal development," TDMTR 004.* This behavior affects both the teacher and pupils for example a teacher may be taken to a school s/he does not like and so will lose the morale to teach which will affect pupils.

Finally 35.1% (39) respondents agreed that overstaying was also reason of involuntary transfer while 64.5% (72) disagreed. In an interview with one Inspector of Schools at the district, she noted that;

"Many teachers had overstayed at their work stations and there was need to transfer them to other stations for purposes of improving academic performance," NDSI 002. Some teachers disagreed with claims that they have not over stayed. One respondent explained that *"The policy is very clear and state that a new teacher shall stay at a station for a minimum of five years. However, I am surprised to see my name on the list and yet I did not request to be transferred hence I will stay unless my name goes off the payroll," YDFTR 020.* Contributing to the same debate YDDSS 024 commented that; *"The teachers don't have any authority to resist the transfers unless they have genuine reasons, which can be considered. He added that the district noted that some teachers don't want to move to the rural schools. They want to remain in the town schools and this is what the district team is fighting."*

However, it is assumed that transfers will give teachers opportunity to share their experience elsewhere as they learn from new environment, substantial number of them are against it especially those who have been transferred before finishing the minimum five years from a working station. In the

Table 2. Voluntary Transfer in Primary Schools

Reasons		A	U	D
Promotion	NR	19.0	00	92.0
	EP	17.1	00	82.9
Accommodation	NR	75.0	00	36.0
	EP	67.6	00	32.4
Illness	NR	21.0	00	90.0
	EP	18.9	00	81.1
Preparation for Retirement	NR	9.0	00	102.0
	EP	8.1	00	91.9
Distance from Family	NR	62.0	00	49.0
	EP	55.9	00	44.1

Key: A- Agree U-Uncertain D-Disagree EP-Equivalent Percentage NR: Number of Respondents

The majority of respondents 92 (82.9%) disagreed on promotion as one of the reasons/ determinant of voluntary teacher transfer in the district with only 19 (17.1%) agreeing to the statement. In an interview with one of the School Inspectors at the district regarding promotional transfer, she attested that:

“Few staff are transferred on promotion because there are few top positions available in schools at the district as a result district conducts regular lateral move which some stakeholders think it’s a promotion. On probing what lateral move is all about, she had this to say; lateral moves allow Office of the District Education Officer to advise District Accounting Officer to place teachers where they’re needed to improve their performance and school,” NDSI 002.

Lateral transfer therefore, enabled the transferred teacher to understand the value in which s/he is taken to the new work place. As a result, the transferred teacher will teach, impact and potentially influence different aspects of the workplace and organization since s/he has been successful in the past.

The result in [Table 2](#) indicates that lack of accommodation as a key factor to voluntary transfer of teachers in Uganda as thought by 75 (67.6%) respondents while 36 (32.4%) disagreed. Numbers of teachers have experienced difficulties in getting accommodation in new work stations as a result; they commute from their homes leading to time loss and frequent absenteeism due to fatigue caused by daily travel on a motor cycle or bicycle. According to the SMC Member from one school in the district,

“This is particularly true, where the school is situated in remote place(s) and a teacher is not willing to move, unless proper accommodation is available to him,” JDSMC 0010

This therefore leads to disruptions of teaching for some time until accommodation is provided or transfer being concealed hence affecting syllabus coverage. This could be one of the reasons why schools under PTA are constructing staff houses so as to attract and retain competent teachers.

Furthermore, 21 (18.9%) of respondents agreed that illness also contributes to voluntary teacher transfer in the district while 90 (81.1%) respondents disagreed. Further analysis shows that female teachers were most transferred due to sickness than male teachers in the district. This directly affects teachers’ productivity since teachers’ class engagement will reduce as the affected teacher seeks medical treatment. One PTA member noted during the interview that;

“Transferring a sick teacher is very costly to a new work station. The government has to pay salary for absentee worker(s), making other teachers to have extra workload hence causing stress to other teachers who have pressure in completing the additional task,” LDPTA 028.

This implies that sickness does not only affect productivity but also reduces motivation and morale from other teaching staff.

Preparation for retirement was also observed by few sections of 9 (8.1%) respondents as one of the factors contributing to voluntary transfers while 102 (91.9%) respondents disagreed with the opinion. This type of transfer is done in good faith and without any political interference so as to improve the academic performance of the staff and make the affected teacher be active in his community activities.

Finally, the majority of the respondents 62 (55.9%) agreed that distance from family also influence voluntary teacher transfer in the district hence affecting their performance. A female teacher in the district lamented that;

“Transfers have torn apart the teachers’ families,” LDFTR 006. Her view was supported by Male teachers as well. One male teacher noted that, *“Transferring a teacher away from his/her family retards family development, promotes sexual immorality, domestic violence and retarding teachers’ performance in schools for instance transferring the husband from a school in his home area (Eastern part of the district) to another school in (Western part of the district) while leaving his wife in the East. If you were to give your opinion, do you really expect hard work?” NDMTR 0011* In contrary the Representative from the CSOs echoed that; *“the transfer of teachers from one school to the other is aimed at reducing residence monotony for teachers that have overstayed in one school,” JDCSO 005*

These expressions show that transfers of teachers have serious effects on teachers’ social lives in terms of relationship with family, commitment to work, and adjustment to new working area /culture.

3.2. Test of Hypotheses

Two hypotheses were tested and findings were recorded as explained hereafter. Results show that there is a positive and significant relationship involuntary teacher transfer and teachers’ performance ($r = \beta = 0.263$, t -statistic 6.066, p value $< .01$). Therefore, hypothesis 1 was supported. This implies that as involuntary transfer increases, so does teachers’ performance and visa viz. The results also indicate that the amount by which a change in involuntary transfer leads to a change in teachers’ performance is 0.069 ($R^2=0.069$); which means involuntary transfer positively affects teachers’ performance by 6.9% while the remaining 93.1% variation is caused by other factors beyond teachers control like the school environment, government policy, school management / governance and learners attitudes.

Findings reveal that there is a positive and significant relationship voluntary teacher transfer and teachers’ performance ($r = \beta = .472$, t statistic 5.595, p value $< .01$). Thus, hypothesis 2 was supported. Results also indicate that the amount by which a change in voluntary transfer leads to a change in teachers’ performance is 0.223 ($R^2=0.223$). Hence, voluntary transfer affects teachers’ performance by 22.3% while the remaining 77.7% variation is caused by other factors such as teachers’ education level, teachers’ experience, teachers’ motivation to work, attitude, school environment, teaching facilities, salary and relationships with stakeholders.

4. Discussion of Findings

The results shown that involuntary teacher is positively and significantly related with teachers’ performance. This implies that increase in independent variable (involuntary transfer) leads to increasing in dependent variable (teachers’ performance) and visa viz. This result confirms [Hannay and Chism \(1985\)](#) studies who revealed that transfer improves teacher’s performance as a teacher gets familiarity with the new situation. Teachers’ conflict with management was reported to be serious in schools. The underlying factors was found to be that some teachers undermine authority as a result, top management finds it hard to work with them. It’s is important to note that some of these teachers are hard to change and whenever they are transferred they behave in the same way and hence they stay in one place for more than two years. [Noor et al. \(2012\)](#) reported that frequent transfer makes the syllabus move in a circle rather than in proper direction. These does not only affect syllabus coverage but also leads to absenteeism, low engagement with staff/ school activities, and diminished productivity in the new work place because of new work environment.

The findings revealed that some staff were transferred to new work places because of human resource re-distribution. Some staff embraced the approach because transfer is normal and it helps in balancing staff, increasing teacher-pupil contact time when more teachers are brought to a school, to motivate both the teacher and pupils. This is consistent with the MoPS Standing Orders 2010. The document states that *“public officers, including teachers, should be transferred after a continuous stay in his or her current posting for at least three (3) and not exceeding five (5) years.”* Under this case, transfer is used not as a punitive measure or a way of disciplining a public officer but to share resources. However, [Noor et al. \(2012\)](#) cautioned those responsible to transfer that frequent change of teacher during the session is harmful to academia and should be minimized if there is no urgency.

Misconduct in form of sexual harassment, gossip, defilement of pupil(s) and corruption was also revealed as a major reason for involuntary transfer of teacher(s) in primary schools especially in Luwero, Yumbe, Ngora and Tororo districts. Although some respondents claimed that management quite often makes quick and harsh decisions without thorough investigations regarding reports they (administrators) have received about a particular teacher for instance defilement of pupil(s), gossips, and corruption among others. This view is in agreement with [Simon \(1972\)](#) who lamented that administrators make irrational decisions because they have no time to trace for the problem hence they use their judgment to make

decisions. This action interrupts teaching and affects learners since they may be used to their teacher hence when a certain teacher is transferred on such allegations it may also lead to transfer of some students if the transferred teacher was result oriented.

Furthermore, the study also found that some teachers were involuntarily transferred due to inter conflict between staff, pupils and community. Since conflict damage the school reputation, sabotage of programmes, loss of work time and productivity and above all lower job motivation; the management will have to transfer the teacher for public interest. This is provided in the MoPS Standing Orders 2010 which clearly states that the transfer of staff shall be in the public interest. This will therefore relieve both parties as a result it will increase group cohesion, performance and provide the transferred teacher opportunity to learn. The study also observed that the district transfer some of its staff due to drunkenness. Respondents confessed that some teachers drink to the level that they shout and urinate in their clothes which is very embarrassing and affects the school reputation. This problem is increasing among rural teachers and some drink before the go to class and even escape from school during break time to sip and they call it '*one for the road*' meaning it is just a warm up. This is a very unique finding which has not been reported elsewhere in the world. However, the practice affects both the teacher and the school in terms of; absenteeism, injuries, theft and low employee morale, health risks, legal liabilities, financial loss due to payment for no work done and lost productivity.

Poor performance by teachers significantly contributes to involuntary transfer in primary schools in Uganda. Many schools management agreed that the exercise is done in good faith because such teachers are toxic to the work environment and can affect the entire school. This approach gives the transferred staff opportunity to improve in a new work place because he will report when work is allocated and will have pressure to deliver in order to disapprove his/ her critiques in the former school. Some scholars warned that excellent teachers transferred to worst performing schools can only perform better in new stations if other factors which may affect their performance are catered for (Komakech, 2017; Muyingo, 2010). Furthermore, some teachers were involuntarily transferred due to political factors. In many schools, the foundation body, political leaders, SMC and PTA members recommends for the teacher transfer to the Office of District Education Officer for reasons best known to them. Among other reasons are religious beliefs, drunkenness, abuse of office, absenteeism, poor performance, being uncooperative, and old age. Komakech (2017) echoed that the situation is not different with secondary schools where school leaders travel to Ministry to negotiate for transfer. Although the reason is supported by Uganda Public Service Standing Orders 2010 that staff/ teacher can be transferred in the public interest but it undermines the principal of justice. This contradicts with Howard (2006) studies which found that in developed countries teachers use collective bargaining agreement instead of school leadership. This is because the collective bargaining agreement restricts district leaders to transfer teacher's involuntarily especially more senior teachers.

The study also found that overstaying in one school also leads to involuntary transfer of primary teachers in Uganda. Some respondents reported some teachers have overstayed at their work stations. According to Noor *et al.* (2012) teachers are transferred according to the policy. In Uganda, Public Service Standing Orders 2010 provides that public officers should be transferred after a continuous stay in his or her current posting for at least three (3) years and not exceeding five (5) years. This is consistent with the findings. This approach has a positive effect on teachers because it gives them opportunity to share their experience elsewhere and gives opportunity to learn from new environment.

Furthermore, findings show that voluntary teacher transfer is positively and significantly associated with teachers' performance in primary schools in Uganda. This implies that voluntary transfer and teachers' performance (variables) are dependent in that increase in the levels of voluntary transfer will lead to increase in teachers' performance in primary schools in the country. Muyingo (2010) found that some individuals (employees) request to work in another organization in order to improve performance in such area of placement. These findings therefore form a firm foundation for further scholarly work since the existing literature shows that there was no empirical study done on establishing the relationship between voluntary transfer and teachers' performance in Uganda primary schools.

The results show promotion as one of the reasons of voluntary teacher transfer in Uganda. This finding is consistent with (Smylie *et al.*, 1994; Staub, 2004) results. The authors explained that promotional transfer gives the officers transferred opportunity to assert themselves on their enhanced status way from their juniors. Smylie *et al.* (1994) adds that transfer on promotion is an incentive to teachers. Transfer of that kind motivates other teachers to work hard in order to achieve their career goals. Although few teachers are transferred on promotion (Langseth, 1995) observed promotional transfers are sometimes enforced when the need for people in one job or department is reduced or increased. As a

result, the transferred teacher will reach, impact, and potentially, influence different aspects of the workplace and organization since s/he has successful in the past.

The study also revealed that some transfers are done because the school may have no accommodation for the deployed staff. This indicates that some teachers voluntarily request for transfer is they find it hard to get accommodation or other social amenities. The findings rhyme well with [Onsomu \(2014\)](#) study in Kenya who reported that the provision of social amenities such as accommodation and transport served as a motivator for teachers to leave for another school. This is a very common problem in rural primary schools in the district and has contributed to late coming and absenteeism by the affected teachers. Strand of literature suggested that majority of teachers have desire to work near home ([Nassali-Lukwago, 2000](#)) as cited by ([Komakech, 2017; Musingo, 2010; Noor et al., 2012](#)). However, some of the studied districts and school management committees have developed plans of constructing staff houses for every teacher in the school.

Illness was also noted to contribute to voluntary teacher transfer in the district. Although female teachers were most transferred due to sickness than male teachers in the district, the case is not so rampant. Therefore, sickness is one of the motivator of voluntary transfer as supported by ([Komakech, 2017; Noor et al., 2012; Onsomu, 2014](#)) studies. This directly affects teachers' productivity since teachers' class engagement will reduce as the affected teacher seeks medical treatment. Furthermore, results show preparation for retirement as another reason for voluntary teachers' transfer. This is a situation where the teacher would want to work near home so as to have a enough time with his/her family and community. This approach motivates the teacher and hence improves the performance of the staff and makes affected the teacher to be active in his community activities.

Finally, the study found distance from family as a major reason for voluntary teacher transfer in Uganda. Respondents highlighted that transferring a teacher away from his/her family retards family development, promotes sexual immorality, domestic violence and retards teachers' performance in schools. In simple it leads family break-ups. Scholars such as [Komakech \(2017\)](#) and [Noor et al. \(2012\)](#) observed that when a teacher(s) are moved away from their families or their area of residence they face challenges of distance, transport issue, socio cultural issue and delay in delivery of salary from his/her new work stations. [Mulkeen and Chen \(2008\)](#) adds that teachers are reluctant to relocate to an area where the first language is different from their own. This significantly affects teachers' social lives in terms of relationship with family, commitment to work, and adjustment to new working area /culture. This is contrary [Jackson K. \(2010\)](#) and [Musili \(2015\)](#) who reported that teacher effectiveness is higher after a transfer to a different school.

5. Conclusions

Achievement of excellent academic performance depends largely on the quality of the teachers deployed in the school. The study concludes that voluntary transfer factors are stronger than involuntary factors in accounting for a variation in teachers' performance in Uganda primary schools especially in Uganda. The findings also revealed high teacher transfer rate (16.2%) in the country with involuntary transfer 2.5 times and voluntary transfer standing at a rate of 71.2%. The findings present original results from Uganda context and points out unique reasons for involuntary transfer such as drunkenness, misconduct, overstaying, and conflict with management, political factors, and distance among others. Although transfers are normal, the majority of teachers do not like them and they perceive them as punitive by education leaders.

The analysed data also indicates that positive effects of transfer types on teachers' performance. For instance, human resource redistribution influence teachers' performance by 44.2%; while overstaying contributes to 33.6% and promotion by 28.9%. Therefore, each mode of transfer has a significant positive effect on the teacher's performance in Uganda and should be encouraged. The study also revealed that most affected staff during transfers were female teachers especially those who never welcomed their supervisors' sexual relationships, special needs teacher(s) and upper primary teachers. The study also confirmed that most teachers transferred on promotion had lobbied for it and paid bribes to district officials. Finally, the study showed transfer types (voluntary and involuntary transfer) are not the only factors contributing to teachers' performance in Uganda.

6. Managerial Implications

(MoES), District Education Committee, School Management Committee (SMC), Parents and Teachers Association (PTA) and founding bodies should consider the following Ministry of Education and Sports recommendations in order to have effective transfer that ultimately enhance teachers'

performance in new work place. Since the ultimate goal of transfer is to improve the performance of schools through better grades in national examinations and leadership, the researcher recommends that the district should classify/ grade all its school in terms of low, average and high performing school. This will help in transfer decision for example the appointing authority will identify the high performing teachers in high performing schools and send them to low performing school so as to enhance the performance of schools in the district. The identified teachers will be provided accommodation and modest rewards after producing good results. This approach may promote competition between schools since the high performing schools may have to maintain their status while the low performing school will have to strive to better level.

Although transfer is a government policy, the researchers found that there is a loophole in the policy for instance the policy does not provide formal discussion between the appointing authority and transferred teacher. The researcher therefore recommends that upon issuing the transfer letter, the appointing authority through the office of District Education Officer should organize a one day interview with affected teachers and ask them what they will do in the new work place and should also sign performance commitment form which can be used for further evaluation and promotion in future. This will help in giving feed-back to teachers regarding their commitment level in work and will also help leaders to know the kind of staff they have in the system when making decisions.

The Ministry of Education and Sports through the District Service Commission should bring indiscipline teachers to book instead of transfer. For instance, sexual harassment, sabotage and drunkenness during working hours is not acceptable by all standards in the public service but when some of the staff are caught in the act they are left court free. This practice encourages misconduct in the profession hence affecting the education standards of the country.

The researcher also recommends that transfer letters be given to the sending and receiving schools at least six (6) months earlier to give the transferred teacher(s) and receiving school ample time to prepare for transition. Furthermore, instead of relying on Head-teachers' Association recommendation transfer teachers and Head-teachers who are also transferable, the researcher recommends the district to establish ad hoc transfer committees who will work independently to avoid biasness from the Head Teachers Association who makes decision for only their interest.

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