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Abstract

The outbreak and spread of COVID-19 caused among other happenings the closure of schools as an infection and spread-preventive strategy. This came with a pedagogical shift from face to face to on-line teaching and learning which had to be home-based. This shift did not affect only learners but the teachers too. The purpose of the study was thus to explore the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic's inevitable and resultant schools' closure on teachers in Uganda, with special emphasis on both threats and opportunities. The study adopted a qualitative and explorative design. The respondents were 12 in number selected using purposive and convenience sampling. The data from the focus group discussion was analysed using thematic analysis. From the discussions, it emerged that the teachers were affected by the COVID-19 schools' closure psychologically, socially, economically, instructionally and career-wise. From these findings, it becomes imperative that psycho social support be availed to teachers in all schools through the establishment of <https://doi.org/10.53819/81018102t5035>

counselling departments to assist teachers cope with unpredictable events such as pandemics. It is recommended that teachers identify additional sources of income in addition to teaching to enable them earn survive in such unpredictable circumstances. Schools may also need to have income generating plans for their teachers to enable them to earn a living through circumstances that cause schools' closure. It is imperative for schools to train teachers in educational technology to achieve blended learning such that in times such as these, online learning becomes an easy way of proceeding with teaching and learning.

Keywords: *Covid-19, Teacher, Schools, Closure, Opportunities, Threats, Uganda*

1.0 Introduction

Since December, 2019, the COVID-19 pandemic has been spreading right from its origin in China to almost all over the world (Cao et al., 2020). This pandemic has resulted into worldwide psychological pressure and impact (Duan & Zhu, 2020). The COVID-19 effects have been seen in several sectors, education inclusive (Ayithey et al., 2020). Policies such as social distancing have made it impossible to conduct classes normally, hence the necessity for other teaching and learning alternatives (Longhurst et al., 2020). The global pandemic of COVID-19 has had adverse effects on all categories of human beings, that is, the old and young, the rich and poor, the employed and unemployed, the sick and healthy, to mention but a few. COVID-19 has been a universal health challenge whose effects have stretched far and beyond just health-related ones. However, it has also been noted that this pandemic has impacted certain sections of the global population more than it has impacted on others. Ironically, whereas its effects have been beneficial, specifically economically, to some sections of the population, it has been negatively impactful on certain other sections of the population in Uganda. For example, those involved in hotel businesses have benefitted as providers of quarantine facilities and services.

Other beneficiaries of the dreaded pandemic have been manufacturers of hand sanitizers, face masks, temperature measuring guns, among others. However, the pandemic has affected teachers as an essential category of professionals in ways more than one. With the worldwide closure of schools (since March, 20th, 2020 in Uganda) as a measure of control of the pandemic's transmission due to challenges of failure to effectively achieve social distancing in schools, it has been noted that this has affected teachers whose livelihood solely depends on schools that are operational through active teaching. The COVID-19 pandemic has led to the closure of educational institutions worldwide too hence affecting the teaching and learning process (OECD Policy Responses to Coronavirus, 2020). Although these closures have partly been eased, one cannot ignore the fact that their effects will still exist for a long time (Gouedard, Pont & Viennet, 2020). In Uganda, the earliest that schools might re open is January, 2021. It is against this background that the study sought to explore the ways in which this pandemic and its widespread and countrywide consequence of schools' closure affected the Ugandan teacher, based on both psychological and non-psychological threats and opportunities.

According to UNESCO (2020), educational institutions around the world have faced closure due to the COVID-19 pandemic and this has been across all levels of education. From mid-March, 2020, physical face to face teaching and learning faced indefinite suspension (RTE, 2020) in favour of alternatives such as on-line teaching and learning. Some teachers have also contemplated

leaving this noble profession, as New Vision (2020) asserts that when teachers leave teaching because of economic hardships, they surprisingly do well at other jobs. Such hardships have been caused by the involuntary unemployment they have had to endure and the uncertainty caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, but have been eye-opening and influential in seeking for alternative survival alternatives.

Pedagogically, teachers have transitioned, not only personally level, but professionally too, especially through the rapid switch to e-learning as a medium of instruction for sustained learner engagement (Allen, Rowan & Singh, 2020), a learning that is new to teachers who have previously been exposed to purely face to face pedagogical methods. According to Karp and McGowan (2020), the closure of schools due to the COVID-19 pandemic was eye-opening to teacher-related realities especially those related to digital teaching and learning. How people in the education sector have been affected by COVID-19 has pre-existing factors at play and it cannot be denied that the pandemic has had major effects such as anxiety and stress among teachers (Duraku & Howska, 2020; NCIRD, 2020) emanating from the pedagogical shift from face to face to online teaching alternatives (UNESCO, 2020). With a need to adjust to and cope with the new online teaching (Wang & Zho, 2020), yet they lacked educational technology knowledge, tools and skills for practical use. Most teachers are admittedly not well trained for online teaching, learning and assessment, as these are not yet part and parcel of the teacher training syllabus in Uganda. Coupled with instructional outcomes are career-related effects. Career directions also evolved and changed since the closure of schools due to the COVID-19 pandemic's outbreak (Zhang et al., 2020) as characterized by job exodus and turn over, both voluntarily and involuntarily due to the resultant underemployment, unemployment work overload caused by the exodus by some teachers.

The cognitive, that is, psychological effects of the pandemic have been immense and immeasurable on teachers as one of the most hit categories of professionals, characterized by uncertainty and stress which affected their mental health (Aperribai et al., 2020). These mental disturbances coupled with the instructional challenges worsened these uncertainties. The schools' resultant closure gave birth to a pedagogical shift from physical to virtual teaching approaches, which consequently led to a change in the teacher-student and teacher-teacher relationships, with immense psychological and mental implications. Emotionally, according to Amundson and Taylor (2020), the COVID-19 pandemic had an emotional perspective too. The affective consequences may include worry, panic, anxiety, depression and distress (Bao et al., 2020 & Rodriguez-Rey et al., 2020). This pandemic is also associated with social outcomes due to the resultant quarantine restrictions that it came with (Zhang et al., 2020) and the lockdown or home-based confinement (Liu et al., 2020). Therefore, the general effects emerge as psycho social as well as affective in nature. In order to explore the effects of the COVID-19-related schools' closure on the Ugandan teacher, the research was guided by the research question, "what were the effects of the COVID-19-related schools' closure on you as a teacher?"

2.0 Research Methodology

The study was purely qualitative and explorative to enable the researchers achieve a deeper picture of what is being investigated. It took on the phenomenology design, with COVID-19 and its consequent schools' closure as the phenomena being studied (Martons & Booth, 1997; Smith &

Flowers, 2009), and the experience whose effect was not clear before the inquiry (Cohen et al., 2007) and dug deeper into how it was being experienced (Pring, 2000).

The study respondents were professional and practicing teachers selected using purposive and convenience sampling. Purposively, they were a homogenous sample, that is, teachers, irrespective of the level of students under their tutorage (Cohen & Manion, 1994; Lavraska, 2008; Gay, 1981; Ndeskoi, 2016). They were teachers in primary (4), vocational (4) and secondary (4) schools. Conveniently, they were teachers pursuing a Masters' degree in Educational Psychology. With convenience sampling (Leed, 1980), the respondents were available through their telephone contacts to achieve an online focus group discussion. Purposively too, they were male respondents facing the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic-related schools' closure not only as teachers but also as students, heads of families with unique coping mechanisms as individuals with all the attributes required by this inquiry. The respondents were 12 in number (Milward, 2006).

Data was collected using asynchronous online (WhatsApp voice) focus group discussions because the respondents possessed similar traits (Silverman, 2010) and enhanced response interaction (Bryman, 2004) at their preferred and convenient availability. The researcher used an open-ended research question exploring how the closure of schools as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak affected them as teachers, which gave the respondents an opportunity to discuss in depth. The responses were transcribed and categorized into themes that guided the data analysis and presentation. The emerging themes were identified and used to describe the teachers' experiences during the schools' closure, that is, psychological, social, economic, career and instructional; and threats and opportunities and henceforth linked and integrated. Data were analysed manually using thematically using integrative (Leedy, 1987) and narrative approaches (Smith, 2003). Special emphasis was also put on negative/threats and positive/opportunities effects of the COVID-19 related schools' closure too. Through the use of narratives, description of the phenomena under study were done, accompanied by the respondents' assertions. Data analysis, discussion and recommendations were done separately.

3.0 Results

Out of the submissions from the teachers, five main themes emerged to explain the effects of the COVID-19 related schools' closure on teachers as important stake holders in education, that is, psychological, social, economic, instructional and career-related effects. It was noted that these effects were not only negative (threats) but positive too (opportunities) which also emerged as psychological, social, economic, instructional and career related.

The first theme that emerged out of the discussion revealed that indeed, psychologically, the closure of schools due to the COVID-19 pandemic presented with effects related to stress, anxiety and depression as a result of change of environment due to relocation from urban areas to the rural settings, as one teacher asserted, *"the lockdown has forced me to change the environment from the teachers' quarters and school to the village which has stressed me since I now have to live with people I am not used to living with."* Another secondary teacher, who referred the schools' closure as a lockdown also asserted that, *"the lockdown has caused me a lot of stress and I am very anxious about the future since, being a teacher in a private school, I don't know what will happen after the lock down, if I will be able to retain my job, I don't know if I will be among the teachers that will*

be retained.” In response to the previous teacher’s submission, another teacher argued that his stress and anxiety emanates from the fact that being a graduate student at the same time put him in a more stressed situation due to the fact that possible loss of a job after the lock down would potentially have financial implications which would jeopardise his academic progress, *“I was a little bit depressed because by the time the schools were closed, I had not yet been paid my salary arrears which meant that I am lagging behind on payment of my university tuition fees. I did not receive my salary from the month of March, 2020 up to today and even when online teaching was introduced, I was demotivated to participate in the teaching since the arrears that the school owed me were not mentioned or paid.”* Hence, depression as a psychological manifestation was presented as one of the teachers’ lived experiences that emanated from the closure of schools due to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic.

It was interesting to discover that the COVID-19-related closure of schools also had affective or emotional effects on the teachers that can also be categorized as psychological, that is, psycho-emotive/affective, as another teacher asserted, *“my emotional state has never been the same ever since COVID 19 broke out and led to the closure of schools. I have gone through a state of emotional suffering which is associated with some stressors, being confused all the time because we do not know when COVID-19 will go away, when schools will re-open, when we shall go back and meet our students. Psychologists may have to do a lot regarding the restoration of people’s lives especially after the COVID-19 era. You here on the news how a man burnt and killed himself due to such stress.”* This teacher did not only present how he has been affected by the pandemic but goes ahead to suggest the need for psychological interventions for teachers as a result of how they have been negatively affected, to address the psychological and affective effects encountered as one of them charged, *“psychologists may have to do a lot in regards to restoring peoples’ lives especially after the COVID-19 era.* This emerged as a projected and essential psychological intervention.

The psychological effects of the schools’ closure due to the COVID-19 were noted to have been not only negative but positive too. According to the teachers, this pandemic which has been viewed as a disaster to the psychological wellbeing of most teachers, has had some surprisingly positive outcomes. Problem solving has been given enough time as well as opportunity for rest from mental exhaustion caused by the hitherto heavy teaching load that most teachers suffered before the schools’ closure. This much needed rest, according to the teachers, has led to improved moods, stronger immune systems and less exhaustion-related illnesses such as high blood pressure as one teacher asserted, *“I remember I used to move from school to school, I was also supposed to attend lectures at the university so I remember at times I would dose (fall asleep) while on the boda boda (commercial motorcycle transport), but I have been able to get enough rest and sleep which has also improved my body’s immune system.”* The reduced pressure related to teaching, assessment and their related deadlines and time lines reduced the anxiety that had hitherto become part and parcel of the teaching profession.

In addition, a teacher who teaches in more than one school while pursuing further studies also re-echoed the positive psychological effect by saying, *“some of us have got time to rest at least and we have learnt to re think about future goals, something we didn’t get an opportunity to do before due to the busy teaching schedules and their related responsibilities.”* Yet another teacher, in

<https://doi.org/10.53819/81018102t5035>

response to the former teacher linked the psychological opportunity from the COVID 19-driven schools' closure to its ability to enable teachers to exercise mental preparedness, as he asserted, *'in addition to what he has said, I feel that the closure of schools in my view, has opened my mind to prepare for future uncertainties. We should think outside the box as teachers.* Therefore, as noted, the psychological effect of the COVID-19 pandemic and its consequent schools' closure on teachers was, though largely negative, positive too.

From the discussion with the teachers, it emerged that the schools' closure due to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic led to social effects that can be also viewed and interpreted as both threats and opportunities. Negatively, the closure of schools led to a decline in self-worth and social recognition since it implied that teachers became and began to view themselves as non-essential workers, as one teacher argued, *"as a teacher I feel my self-worth has reduced because compared to the medical workers, garbage collectors, motorcycle transporters, I am now regarded as a non-essential worker. To me I feel like my importance to society is less because the market worker and shop keeper are better than me."* It should be noted that when the lockdown was introduced in Uganda, hospital employees, garbage collectors and motorcycle transporters were exempted because to the Ugandan government, these categories were considered as essential workers. It was also noted that the change in the social setting and environment inevitably happened among teachers due to the COVID-19-related schools' closure, that is, from the school setting to a home setting which brewed and escalated conflicts, disputes and domestic violence in the teachers' families as a result of living together with their spouses for longer periods of time, coupled with financial hardships.

Further, away from the psychological effects, interaction with the community was also restricted due to the introduction and implementation of curfews by the Uganda government. One teacher said, *"at a time like this, this is when I have been pushed back to live with my family, it turns to a challenge because I am not used to it especially as a married man, my partner will need provisions such as essential needs which I am not able to provide due to the temporary and most probably permanent unemployment. This causes social friction and violence in the long run. The lockdown has detached me from my normal social circles, the fellow teachers that I am used to interacting and living with. This is a whole new experience since I have been forced to learn to live with certain people.* This was re-echoed by another teacher who argued that, *"violence and more especially domestic violence is the order of the day in teachers' families and actually, people are not dying of COVID-19 but rather, of fights and killings in homes due to the social implications of COVID-19 and its consequent schools' lockdown."* The same teacher attributed the social strife to the curfew, as he asserted, *"curfew has caused a lot of restrictions on our movements, there is no access to some family members and friends. Some people had been used to social gatherings in the evenings but this has been interrupted and now it is very hard to meet people."* These views can indeed suggest that social tensions and challenges were indeed widely experienced by the teachers as social beings due to the closure to schools that emanated from the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Positively from the social perspective, the teachers presented some social opportunities caused by the schools' closure that happened as a result of the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. Whereas social strife became the order of the day, in some homes, it presented an opportunity for some

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teachers to mend broken and strained relationships especially those that had negatively been strained by the busy work schedule before the emergence of COVID-19 as one teacher asserted, *“I have been able to interact with people that I had become too busy to interact with. I have talked to my brothers, sisters, parents and friends. I have been able to interact with my neighbors, some of who I had never met. I have walked around the village and I now understand the people with who I share a locality.”* as another teacher added, *“the closing of schools helped me to have access to ample time to amend ways with my family, children and monitor their progress especially in terms of behavior, discipline and survival skills, something I was not able to achieve with my busy and heavy teaching load and long distance from home to the school where I teach.”* The schools’ closure also gave teachers an opportunity to experience the out of school life as one teacher vividly said, *“it has given me a chance to experience new life outside the teaching career. Since I left university, I have been teaching but the lock down gave me a chance to see what life lies beyond teaching and students and this has been good for me because I have not been on pressure and other things related to teaching.”* Therefore, from these arguments, it can be concluded that from the social effect perspective, the effects of the COVID-19-related schools’ closure was largely positive compared to the psychological effect, an indication that teachers’ social lives and desires are suppressed when schools are operational, hence, teaching can be viewed as a socially restrictive profession.

Economically, it was discovered through the on-line focus group discussions that the closure of schools due to the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic caused financial hardships due to the fact that salary payment to the teachers in most schools was halted and eventually stopped. This came with implications, like, failure by teachers to service their bank loans and to pay for things like house rent. Some teachers have resorted to dubious ways of earning a living such as involvement into drug deals. Basic needs have become hard to provide for their respective families. One teacher asserted that, *“the closing of schools has drained me economically because I am not earning but spending, it has basically been about survival. Most teachers in private schools were either receiving no pay or half of what they used to receive.”* In agreement with the sentiments of the previous teacher, another teacher retorted, *“my bosses last paid me in March,2020.”* It can therefore be asserted that Ugandan teachers’ economic livelihood was adversely affected by the pandemic especially due to the inevitable closure of schools.

However, another teacher who seemed to defend the action of schools to suspend teachers’ pay by arguing that, *but it is unrealistic for teachers to expect pay in these unfortunate circumstances and one wonders why we expect to be paid despite the fact that we are not working. Therefore, I don’t blame the school directors for taking that action.”* The financial hardships that have come as a result of the schools’ closure have got teachers who double as parents to worry that their own children will not be able to go back to school after the pandemic since most of the former have spent all they have earned and saved, as one of them asserted, *“it is sad that whereas I may be re-employed when the schools finally re open, but since I have not been receiving pay, I doubt that my own school-going children will be able to return to their respective schools. I won’t afford it. There is no doubt about that.”* The economic hardship has surprisingly also pinched the government school teachers despite the fact they still receive their pay during the closure, due to the fact that some of them depended on the open schools for additional income, as one teacher

argued, *“yes, I am a government school teacher and I still receive my salary but I can assure you that this can never be enough to sustain my family. Most teachers you see around, including myself, have some small scale businesses which they are running. Some deal in stationery, shops and the like within the schools, and all these came to a standstill because of the schools’ closure.”* Hence the economic survival of teachers was threatened in ways more than one, that is, from loss of official pay and loss of income that they earned indirectly from the schools being operational.

The economic effect was not only negative but positive too since it indirectly led to some opportunities among teachers. Some teachers, due to the closure of schools have had to re think and re direct their life goals, as one of them argued, *“personally, I have been forced to think and review my goals and plans. I have been able to invest in a certain project related to education and psychology, and that is an education app called Bminds.”* A similar sentiment was also presented by another teacher who asserted that, *“it has given me an opportunity to venture into other projects such as agriculture and business because by the time I was teaching, I was unable to do any other work while teaching at the same time but I have finally come up with these projects and this is an achievement for me as a teacher as it will boost my income.”* Such economic ventures and projects are proof that circumstances have forced some teachers to think outside of the box so that in future when such disasters strike again, there is a safe and sustainable fallback position, as another teacher added, *“one thing I have learnt out of this whole situation is that apart from teaching, one can still do something else to earn a living.”* Hence, economically, the effect of the closure of schools due to the COVID-19 pandemic was both financially challenging but also, eye-opening.

The teachers also presented the effects the COVID 19-driven schools’ closure that can be termed as instructional or pedagogical. From an aversive dimension, the teachers admitted that the close down on schools gave birth to alternative methods of teaching and learning that had expertise, time-related and adjustment challenges, among others. According to the teachers, the new online alternative teaching methods led to less teacher-student interaction, reduced student engagement, challenged traditional assessment methods and minimized supervision possibilities and was undoubtedly financially expensive for both teachers and parents (who may be parents at the same time). One teacher asserted, in confirmation, that, *“I tried the online teaching platforms but they were not user friendly for the students. In fact, one student made a joke that voice notes cannot be used to teach. With online teaching and learning, the facial expressions are limited compared to face to face teaching and learning and yet all of us appreciate the value of facial expressions in the teaching and learning process in terms of judging if learning is taking place or not. In conclusion for sure, online teaching and learning is for more mature learners who have a high attention span.”* Another teacher, in confirmation with the previous one also argued that, *“I got to use online teaching as an alternative instructional method in the new normal period, it became difficult to supervise learners especially in terms of attention and this also became costly as many families could not afford the stable internet availability for a full lesson and some learners were located in remote areas where electricity and internet availability was impossible.”* Another teacher also retorted, in agreement with the former, *“yes, with online platforms, you need internet, a smart phone and a computer especially in a season like this where everybody does not have money. Online platforms for teaching and learning cannot cover everyone as some learners hail from remote parts of the country where internet is only a dream.”* The practicality of on-line

teaching did not therefore seem to act as a perfect substitute for physical lessons due to gaps in the accessibility and affordability of online teaching tools.

It was also noted, from the teachers' admissions that online teaching did not perfectly apply to all subjects as the one teacher argued, *"it is hard to teach practical subjects. Being a teacher of Mathematics and Physics, I can tell you practical means being hands on which is hard to achieve with online teaching and learning platforms. There are learners who need close monitoring on whether they have written and balanced the equations properly and correctly, and this is not easy to achieve with online teaching and learning."* This same teacher further argued that online teaching and learning works best with adult students, *"online teaching platforms are best suited for adult students who known what they want. It is a big challenge because some of the young people are forced to go to school, to take down notes, to write, revise and submit class work for assessment."* It was also noted that with the new instructional changes due to schools' closure, teachers faced challenges associated with learner assessment as one of them asserted, *"it is hard to test the progress of learning and learners. It may be easy to evaluate teaching and base on the lesson objectives to gage if it has been achieved, but assessing learning and drawing conclusions to ascertain if effective learning has taken place has not been easy with online teaching and learning platforms. There is uncertainty whether leaning is taking place."* This is indicative that all aspects of learning, right from instruction to assessment and evaluation are not fully achievable with online teaching and learning, which basically leaves the teacher as the instructor with doubts about the effectiveness of the new pedagogical approach.

From the positive perspective, the teachers hardly presented any constructive and appetitive instructional effect of the schools' closure apart from one teacher who argued, *"online teaching and learning is a good innovation corresponding with modernity. It is good to embrace online teaching because at a time like this, a person is able to carry on with his education. It trains the learners to be self-driven and do things at their own pace and enables continuous learning."* Therefore, to this teacher, online learning as an instructional effect of the COVID-19-driven closure of schools is an opening to modern teaching and offers learners an opportunity to be autonomous and self-initiating, attributes that are vital in achieving learning goals.

Last but not least, the teachers forwarded effects of the schools' closure due to the COVID-19 pandemic that can be categorized as career-related. According to the Ugandan teachers, the closure of schools at the onset of the pandemic in Uganda led to job insecurity, high labor turn-over and both voluntary and involuntary job exodus among teachers due to demotivation after a realization that teaching was no longer an essential but a seasonal career. This change in how teachers view their profession affected their level of commitment too. One teacher asserted, *"the closing of schools has caused change in my perception about teaching in secondary schools. I don't have any space in secondary schools. I don't think I will be a good teacher after the lock down. I will go back to teaching because I only need to pay my tuition fees and get capital to venture into other businesses. At a certain time, I felt I made a mistake joining the teaching profession but then I had to re think and say no to such thoughts. Private schools will lose many teachers when they re-open or some teachers will only go back to teaching just to accumulate capital to do other jobs where they will be made to feel essential and valuable."* To date, it can be said with confidence that a good number of teachers might not go back to the teaching profession after the "eye-opening"

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experience of schools' closure led to a realisation that there are other career and income generating alternatives that exist, and moreover with self-supervision and higher economic returns.

Moreover, another teacher echoed an almost similar sentiment, *"I am beginning to doubt my profession and career. The problem with private institutions is that you are always insecure about your job. Right now when we complain about our unpaid salary, our bosses feel bad and respond to us in a negative way."* From a different but related perspective, another teacher added, *"it is good to love your job but it is not good to love your company because you never know when the company will stop loving you. As teachers, most of us have put our efforts and energies towards a particular company. The closing of schools is putting a test on the teaching sector and this will demotivate the number of students enrolling for Education as a course at the university and in colleges."* while another teacher pondered, *"I ask myself a question concerning my chances of being retained at school, will I be retained at my school after the lockdowns, or will I be sacked? In the long run, the teaching profession starts to lose admirers as some teachers are thinking of something else to do. The current COVID-19 situation has put the jobs of teachers at risk. As a result, some teachers are now on the lookout for alternative survival avenues, to keep a coin in their pocket."* Therefore, this is indicative that careers might have to change due to the frustrations caused by the closure of schools and the outcomes of this closure.

From a constructive point of view however, the teachers admitted that the closure of schools due to COVID-19 has given them time and opportunity to do other jobs which they hitherto had no time to so as one asserted, *"there has been diversity in career. Some of us have got the opportunity to advance in other areas that will help our teaching profession to improve. For example, I got a chance to concentrate on my Masters' proposal writing and by the time schools re-open, I will have completed my dissertation, and to me, that will be a huge achievement.* For some teachers, it was time for them to focus on reading and understanding the new Uganda Secondary School curriculum and as they say, one person's bad luck could be someone else's break through as some teachers were able to get jobs in better schools due to the exit of some teachers from those particular schools, as another teacher added, *"in addition to getting time to work on my research proposal, I even got a chance to peruse through and grasp what the new curriculum for secondary schools is all about. So, when the schools re open, I will be aware of what to teach in my respective subjects."* Hence, in terms of career effects, it is evident that the teachers experienced both positive and negative circumstances.

4.0 Discussion and Recommendations

Basing on the objectives of the study and the consequent results, it is evident that the closure of schools due to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic had diverse effects on the teacher in Uganda. From the research conducted on teachers in primary, secondary and vocational schools, it emerged that the COVID-19 pandemic and its consequent closure of schools affected teachers in ways that are related to distress, depression, limited social interaction, financial challenges, pedagogical dynamics, job turnover and changes, to mention but a few. These findings are consistent with related studies already conducted by other researchers outside the confines of Uganda's teachers and on the effects of the pandemic on the general population and other specific professionals. This study could be one that is new in terms of its focus on specifically threats and opportunities caused by the pandemic and its resultant closure of schools, encompassing specific

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unique traits, that is, teachers in different categories of schools, and more importantly, teachers pursuing graduate studies. This formed the major strength and uniqueness of the study. This study can however be criticized for its lack of gender balance as different genders cope differently to cataclysmic situations such as pandemics. Basing on this weakness, readers need to take caution when attempting to generalize the study's findings to the general teacher population. These findings are hence indicators of effects of the COVID-19 schools' closure on teachers but should not be taken as conclusive for all teachers.

Diverse effects emerged under psychological, social, economic, career and instructional themes. Teachers' lives became characterized by worry, anxiety (Duraka &Howska, 2020), distress (Bao et al., 2020) and general mental disturbances (Apperribai et al., 2020; Duan & Zhu, 2020). This can be linked to the unforeseen projected future worse than their existing circumstances. Teachers need a fall-back plan for such events, such as additional income sources and counselling services to help prevent cases of hopelessness and suicide among them as a result of distress and desperation. Teachers asserted that teacher-teacher and teacher-student interaction was adversely affected by the seemingly indefinite schools' closure due to the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak. These concur with Zhang et al., (2020) due to quarantine restrictions and Liu et al., (2020) and confinement, conditions that teachers were unfamiliar with. From the findings, it can be argued that teachers need to socialize beyond their confines for social survival.

COVID-19 outbreak's outbreak hit teachers in a unique manner. They were affected economically due to the fact that their pay was halted due to the closure of schools, as New Vision, (2020) argues. It is imperative that teachers forge ways for economic survival through efforts to work and earn on additional jobs. Additional funds to assist teachers in such circumstances are needed. Teachers argued that the COVID-19 pandemic and the resultant schools' closure introduced new and alternative methods of teaching. As Longhurst et al., (2020); Allen, Rowan & Singh, (2020) and Mc Gowan, (2020) discovered, online teaching became the new normal. There is a dire need for training in EdTech tools usage as part of the new teaching syllabus for teacher trainees. Schools' relevant adjustment through offering skills in online teaching and assessment for teachers. Last but not least, teachers admitted that they have, as a result of the current closure of schools, contemplated leaving the teaching profession. This rhymes with findings researchers such as Zhang et al., (2020) found out. This then calls for enrichment of teaching through offering job security for teachers especially those in private schools who were most affected than those in public schools that continued to get paid despite the closure of schools.

5.0 Conclusions

In conclusion, to reduce the negative effects and motivate the positive effects of calamities such as pandemics on teachers, there is need for a concerted effort from stakeholders such as Ministry of Education, school administrations, parent associations and teachers themselves to reduce the gravity of these effects so as to eliminate burn out, demotivation and distress. The past studies focused more on threats/negative effects of the pandemic than on opportunities/ positive effects of the pandemic. This would be a good ground for further research on the positive effects of COVID-19 schools' closure on teachers in Uganda. The sample size, that is, 10 teachers was small and hence the findings cannot be generalized as overall teachers' experiences. Future studies could study teachers from specific but uniform levels.

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