



KWASU INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF ARTS AND SCIENCE EDUCATION

ISSN: 0795-820X (ONLINE)

Journal homepage

ASSESSMENT OF INTERDEPARTMENTAL TRANSFER AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF KWARA STATE UNIVERSITY UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS

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ARTICLE INFO

ABSTRACT

Article History

Accepted on July, 2025

Keywords: Assessment,
Interdepartmental transfer,
Academic performance, Kwara State

This study investigated factors determining undergraduate interdepartmental transfer and academic performance in Kwara State University, Malete. It examined the relationship between interdepartmental transfers and academic performance before and after. The study adopted a descriptive design in which one hundred twenty (120) students were purposely selected from 100 to 400 level students of KWASU in the second semester, 2024/2025 academic session. The findings of the study showed that the majority of undergraduate students at the prestigious Kwara State University, Malete, transfer from one department to another due to their academic struggles with the programme offered or reality of labour markets or interest shift, especially first-year students. Furthermore, there is no statistically significant correlation between students' interdepartmental transfer and academic performance before which was attributed to some factors such as lack of interest in the first programme offered or no better guidance before enrolment into the program that might cause poor performance and a change of departments. In addition, this study found a significant positive correlation between students' interdepartmental transfer and their academic performance due to some factors, such as keen interest in the second programme offered or proper guidance that brings about very good academic performance and preference to stay in the second programme transferred from the side of the students. Finally, the study recommended among other things, provision of counseling services before and during studying, having more than one study advisor or course advisers with adequate training and supportive welfare services to ensure commitment to guiding the students rightly based on their ability and letting students decide on their selves which program they will study matches their ability and interest that will make them become a functional member of the society.

Introduction

The academic performance of university students is a multidimensional construct influenced by various factors, including personal, institutional, and socio-economic variables. One such institutional factor is interdepartmental transfer, where students change from one academic department or program to another within the same university. In Nigerian universities such as Kwara State University, Malete (KWASU), interdepartmental transfers are often initiated due to a disparity between students' interests and their initial program of study, academic struggles, or as a result of administrative restructuring (Ogunlade & Akinyemi, 2020). While such transfers are intended to improve students' academic satisfaction and performance, they may also introduce transitional challenges that affect learning outcomes. Academic performance remains a central concern for stakeholders in the educational sector, particularly at the tertiary level, where students are expected to make significant academic and professional decisions that shape their future careers. It is widely acknowledged that a student's performance in university is determined by a multifaceted interplay of individual, environmental, psychological, and institutional factors. Among the institutional factors, interdepartmental transfer, defined as the movement of a student from one academic department or program to another within the same institution, emerged as an area that warrants closer scrutiny due to its potential impact on academic outcomes.

At KWASU, interdepartmental transfer has become increasingly common, especially after the first or second year of study. Students often transfer to departments perceived as less demanding or more aligned with their career goals. However, this transition is not without consequences. Adebayo and Salami (2019) reported that differences in departmental academic culture and the need to adapt to new learning environments can disrupt academic progression and performance. Adebayo et al. (2019) further added that transferred students may encounter courses they have not previously taken but are essential in the new department, which may leave them struggling to catch up with their peers. Furthermore, adjustment difficulties such as unfamiliarity with departmental culture, lack of mentoring, and limited peer support can hinder their academic integration. Ibrahim (2021) maintained that the academic performance post-transfer may not always improve as expected; in some cases, it stagnates or worsens due to a lack of adequate academic advising and poor preparatory support. Some students seek to change departments due to a lack of interest or passion for their initially assigned course of study, often a result of admission constraints or administrative placements during the university entry process (Ogunlade & Akinyemi, 2020). Others may struggle academically in their original departments and believe that a change to a different program could offer better opportunities for success.

Okoli and Nwafor (2018) examined the impact of program switching on students' performance in a Nigerian university and found that students who transferred to new departments often had mixed academic outcomes. While some experienced academic improvement due to better alignment with their interests and strengths, others underperformed due to adjustment difficulties and a lack of prerequisite knowledge. Similarly, Ibrahim (2021) explored how academic advising affects students who have changed departments and concluded that personalised academic support plays a critical role in the post-transfer success of students.

It was further observed that the success of interdepartmental transfer policies depends not only on the reasons for transfer but also on the availability of academic and psychosocial support systems. Students who are adequately guided during the transfer process through academic advising, peer mentoring, and course mapping are more likely to succeed in their new departments. Ogunlade et al. (2020) reported that students who transfer without adequate preparation or support may find themselves overwhelmed by new academic challenges, which could ultimately affect their cumulative grade point averages (CGPA) and overall academic standing. Moreover, the psychological implications of interdepartmental transfers should not be underestimated. Students often experience stress, anxiety, and feelings of uncertainty as they navigate new academic terrains. These emotions, if not properly managed, can lead to reduced motivation, low self-esteem, and poor academic engagement (Adebayo & Salami, 2019). This reinforces the importance of institutional support mechanisms to help students manage both the academic and emotional aspects of departmental transitions.

Accordingly, several factors, such as wrong placement, have been identified to influence students' performance and department changes that, if not properly addressed, may result in the loss of the university's reputation and industries may lose confidence in graduates from the university (Khumalo & Utete, 2023; Algalga, 2016).

This study aimed at assessing factors influencing the interdepartmental transfers on the academic performance of undergraduate students at KWASU. It sought to answer the relationship between students' departmental change and their performance trends before and after transfer to fill the educational vacuum in making an informed decision for proper placements for students' academic success and the university at large.

Statement of the Problem

Academic performance is a central indicator of student success in higher education and remains a major concern for researchers, institutions, lecturers, and policymakers. At Kwara State University (KWASU), a growing trend among undergraduate students is the practice of

interdepartmental transfer, where students change their course of study or academic department after initial admission. While this practice is often motivated by a desire for better arrangement with academic strengths, career aspirations, or relief from academic difficulties in their initial departments, the academic consequences of such transfers remain largely undocumented and poorly understood. Despite its increasing prevalence, there is limited empirical evidence at KWASU to determine factors influencing students' interdepartmental transfers positively or negatively and to investigate the relationship between interdepartmental transfers and the academic performance of students. Some students report improved performance after switching to departments they find more suitable, while others struggle to cope with new curricular demands and unfamiliar academic environments. The lack of a standardised policy or support system to guide and monitor students through this transition further complicates the issue, potentially putting students at risk of academic decline.

Moreover, most existing studies on academic performance in Nigerian universities focus broadly on factors such as socioeconomic background, motivation, and learning habits, with little attention given to the specific dynamics of departmental changes. This creates a significant knowledge gap, particularly in considering how such transfers affect cumulative grade point averages (CGPA), graduation timelines, and overall academic outcomes.

Therefore, the problem this study seeks to address is the lack of comprehensive data and understanding regarding the major factors determining interdepartmental transfers and the relationship between interdepartmental transfers and the academic performance of undergraduate students at KWASU. Without such knowledge, the university may be unable to implement effective policies or provide adequate support to ensure that students who transfer departments are positioned for academic success.

Objectives of the Study

1. To investigate the factors that influence undergraduate students' decisions to transfer from one department to another.
2. To examine the relationship between interdepartmental transfer before and academic performance among undergraduate students.
3. To assess the relationship between interdepartmental transfer after and academic performance after among undergraduate students.

Research Question

1. What are the major factors influencing students' decisions to transfer departments at KWASU?

Research Hypotheses

- H₀₁:** There is no significant relationship between interdepartmental transfer and academic performance before among KWASU undergraduate students
- H₀₂:** There is no significant relationship between interdepartmental transfer and academic performance among KWASU undergraduate students

Methodology

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design with a quantitative approach. The design is appropriate because it allows researchers to collect data from a sample of the population to describe and analyse existing conditions, opinions, and patterns regarding interdepartmental transfers and students' academic performance at KWASU. The target population of the study comprised all undergraduate students of Kwara State University (KWASU) who had undergone interdepartmental transfers between 100 to 400 levels across all faculties in the second semester, 2024/2025 academic session. A sample size of **120** students was selected using a purposive sampling technique, focusing on students who have successfully transferred from one department to another and have available academic performance records before and after the transfer. This technique was justified as it ensures that only students with relevant experiences were selected to provide accurate and meaningful data for the study.

A questionnaire and an academic performance data sheet were used to obtain data. The questionnaire used was on a 4-point Likert scale. The questionnaire was validated by experts in educational measurement and evaluation for content and face validity. A pilot study was conducted with **15** students who had transferred departments but were not part of the final analyses of this study. The reliability of the instrument was established using the Cronbach Alpha, with a reliability coefficient of **0.78**. For final analyses, questionnaires were administered electronically to the selected students via WhatsApp. In order to ethically obtain respondents' academic performance, inquiry was made to submit their CGPA records willingly directly to the researchers as obtainable before and after their transfers based on their results printout from their portals themselves. These academic data were corroborated by their academic performance spreadsheets available to the researchers. Data collected were fetched into SPSS and analysed using Descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation, frequency count, and percentage) to analyse factors influencing students' decisions in answering the research question, and Pearson correlation was used to test the formulated hypotheses.

Results

Research question: *What are the major factors influencing students' decisions to transfer departments at KWASU?*

The descriptive statistics table 1 shows major factors influencing students' decisions to transfer departments at KWASU.

Table 1: Factors Influencing Students' Decisions Departmental Transfer

S/N	Items	Frequency % of D/SD	Frequency % of A/SA	Mean	St.D	Decision
1	I got transferred from my previous department because I didn't understand what was being taught there	12 (10%)	108 (90%)	66	1.00	Moderate
2	I don't meet my course level adviser regularly	28 (23.3%)	92 (76.6%)	74	2.00	Strong
3	I sought a transfer from my previous department because my CGPA is very low	53 (44%)	67 (55.8%)	86.5	2.00	Strong
4	My parents asked me to transfer to another department	30 (25%)	90 (75%)	75	2.00	Strong
5	I sought a transfer to another department to copy my friends	19 (15.8%)	101 (84%)	69.5	1.00	Moderate
6	My level of education is not strong	9 (7.5%)	111(92.5%)	64.5	1.00	Strong
7	I made a wrong decision to join the programme of my interest	16 (13.3%)	104 (86.6%)	68	1.00	Moderate
8	I transferred from my previous department because I am from a poor family background	27 (22.5%)	93 (77.5%)	73.5	2.00	Strong
9	I do come late for lectures	33 (27.5%)	87 (72.5%)	76.5	2.00	Strong
10	I transferred from my previous department because of my future career	25 (20.8%)	95 (79.1%)	72.5	2.00	Strong

Table 1 shows that the major factors influencing students to make stern decisions on interdepartmental transfer are that, majority of students decided to transfer from one department to another because they cannot grasp their field of specialisation ($M = 66$, $SD = 2$) ($n = 108$; 90%). Some of them make strong decisions to transfer because they don't regularly meet the level of advisers assigned to them for academic advice ($M = 74$, $SD = 2$) ($n = 92$; 76.6%). Others agreed that they have low grades ($M = 86.5$, $SD = 2$) because they don't regularly attend lectures. The

percentage of those who decided personally due to family or peer decisions was 75% ($M=75$, $SD = 2$) and 84% ($M=69.5$, $SD = 1$), respectively. Some are of the view that they erroneously chose their programme ($M=68$, $SD = 1$). The proportion of those who strongly agreed to coming late for lectures was 72.5% with ($M=76.5$, $SD = 2$), while others decided to transfer due to their future career opportunities after collegiate lives ($M=72.5$, $SD = 2$). The next tables 2 and 3 of Pearson correlation explain the relationship between students' interdepartmental transfer and academic performance/

Hypotheses Testing

H₀₁: *There is no significant relationship between interdepartmental transfer and academic performance before among KWASU undergraduate students.*

Table 2: Pearson Correlation Showing the Relationship between Interdepartmental Transfer and Academic Performance Before

	Interdepartmental transfer before	Academic Performance Before
Interdepartmental transfer before	1	0.032**
Sig. (2-tailed)		.433
N	120	1
Academic Performance Before		

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

Table 2 shows that there is no statistically significant correlation between respondents' interdepartmental transfer before and their academic performance before ($r = 0.032^{**}$, $p = .433$).

This hypothesis was accepted, indicating that there was no relationship between students' interdepartmental transfer and their academic performance before applying for transfer. This could be as a result of some factors, such as a lack of interest in the first programme offered or a

lack of seeking better guidance on the first programme, which might be one of the causes for the respondents' low academic performance, leading to the decision to change departments.

H₀₂: *There is no significant relationship between interdepartmental transfer and academic performance among KWASU undergraduate students.*

Table 3: Pearson Correlation Showing the Relationship between Interdepartmental Transfer and Academic Performance After

	Interdepartmental transfer After	Academic Performance After
Interdepartmental transfer After	1	0.461**
Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
N	120	
Academic Performance Before		1

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

Table 3 shows that there is a statistically significant positive correlation between respondents' interdepartmental transfer after and their academic performance after ($r = 0.461^{**}$, $p < .000$). This hypothesis was rejected as there is a strong relationship between students' interdepartmental transfer and academic performance after applying for transfer which could be due to some factors such as keen interest in the second programme offered and having better guidance on the second programme that bring about very good academic performance from the side of the students to prefer staying in the alternate department.

Discussion of the Findings

The findings of this study indicated that the majority of undergraduate students at the prestigious Kwara State University, Malete, transfer from one department to another due to the limited intellectual capability of their programme offered or labour markets, especially for first-year students. These findings are in agreement with the findings of Ogunlade et al. (2020), who found that many students hopped from program to program due to their interest or academic struggles. This may be attributed to the improper placement of students without considering their capabilities. Also, there is no statistically significant correlation between students' interdepartmental transfer and their academic performance before as low performance is traced to some factors, such as lack of interest in the first programme offered, which might cause them to

perform poorly. These findings are in tandem with the study of Adebayo et al., (2019), students' adaptation to new learning environments can disrupt their academic progression and performance. In addition, Gravetter and Wallnau (2004) revealed a lack of relationship between respondents' interdepartmental transfer before and their academic performance before was weak. Moreover, this study found a significant positive correlation between students' interdepartmental transfer and their academic performance due to some factors, such as keen interest in the second programme offered, which brings about very good academic performance from the side of students. These findings were congruent with those of Okoli et al. (2018) that some students experienced academic improvement due to better alignment with their interests and strengths. Based on the findings, the following conclusions and recommendations were made.

Conclusions

The study concluded that students transfer from one department to another due to struggles with the academic programme offered or an interest shift, especially first-year students. The study concluded that there is no statistically significant correlation between students' interdepartmental transfer and their academic performance before, due to a lack of interest in the first programme. But a significant positive correlation between students' interdepartmental transfer and their academic performance after due to their keen interest in the second programme offered, which brings about very good academic performance from the side of the students.

Recommendations

This study made the following recommendations in light of its findings:

1. Students should be provided with counselling services before choosing a program of interest in any Nigerian university
2. There should be more than one level adviser for students after course registration and while studying.
3. Since students are to embark on studying, parents' influences or other external influences are to be limited so as to allow students to decide on their own.
4. Level or course advisers should be motivated by providing the needed welfare to remain committed to guiding students as expected.

5. The lecturer-student relationship should be created to make teaching and learning a lovable thing and fun.

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