

# Burnout among Head Teachers of Public Primary Schools: The Existence of the Three Dimensions in Kakamega County, Kenya

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**Abstract:-** Research has shown that role conflict and role ambiguity are associated with burnout among head teachers of public schools and educators in general. Burnout has been documented to exist in three distinct dimensions-Emotional Exhaustion, Depersonalization and reduced Personal Accomplishment. A quantitative study of head teachers was done to establish the existence of different dimensions of burnout. The study was based on Role Stress Theory, Existential Theory, and the Sociological Burnout Theory. Descriptive and Correlation survey designs; simple random, stratified and purposive sampling techniques were used to carry out the study. Data was collected using the role questionnaire, Maslach Burnout Inventory-Education Survey and a semi-structured interview schedule. A pilot study was conducted prior to the main study to ascertain the validity and reliability of the instruments. The target population was 855 while the study sampled 261 head teachers. The head teachers completed the Eclectic Questionnaire and an in-depth interview was conducted among the head teachers and 12 Sub-County Quality Assurance Officers (SQUASO). Data analysis was guided by the study objective. Descriptive statistics were used to describe the study sample. A one-tailed sample t-test was conducted to establish the presence of the three dimensions of burnout. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26.0 was used to analyze the data. Data has been presented in tabular form and discussed. The three dimensions of burnout were found to be present and statistically significant. The recommendations made from the findings of the study may be useful in policy formulation on intervention strategies to burnout among head teachers of Public Primary Schools particularly in Kakamega County.

**Key Words:** Burnout, Emotional Exhaustion, Depersonalization, Personal Accomplishment

## I. INTRODUCTION

Compared to other professions, teaching is a sensitive and chanceful profession to burnout (Innstrand, Langballe, Falkum, & Aasland, 2011). It is perceived as the number one reason for the increased rate of premature retirement of teachers due to psychosomatic disorders and symptoms (Bauer, Stamm, Virnich, Wissing, Muller, Wirsching, & Schaarschmidt, 2006). Every year, thousands of teachers leave the field of education, stressed and disillusioned as a result of teacher burnout (Ingersoll, 2012; Morales, 2011). More still abandon the career early; as many as one quarter of beginning educators in the United States leave the field within three

years due to high levels of dissatisfaction (Matin, Kalali, & Anvari, 2012), and approximately half leave within the first five years (Pas, Bradshaw, & Hershfeldt, 2012). In Kenya, the introduction of Free Primary Education (FPE) in 2003 put enormous responsibility in the hands of an already overburdened head teacher. Since the introduction of FPE, performance of the pupils in the Kenya Certificate of Primary Education (KCPE) has gone declined. The poor performance is due to large classes that have made it impossible for teachers to assess, grade pupil's work and give feedback on their progress of learning, if any (Bold, 2011; Ojiambo *et al.*, 2009 & Somerset, 2009). Additionally, the Teachers Service Commission (TSC) introduced the Teacher Professional Appraisal Development (TPAD) tool to monitor teacher professional growth and service delivery. TPAD has been received by teachers and head teachers alike with negative feelings (Agesa, 2009). Since the head teachers have no option over the employer demands, the prolonged exposure to these negative feelings may precipitate to burnout.

Burnout is a multidimensional syndrome associated with role stress (Maslach & Leicester, 2008; Gloria *et al.*, 2013). It is an outcome of one's prolonged exposure to role stress (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2011). Maslach *et al.*, (2001), conceptualize burnout as emotional withdrawal from one's work and define it in relation to three intertwined and interrelated constructs: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and reduced personal accomplishment.

## Objective of the Study

The main objective of this study was to establish the presence of different dimensions of burnout among Public Primary School Head teachers in Kakamega County, Kenya.

## II. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Mixed study design and method approach was used. Both descriptive and correlational research designs were used to describe the phenomena and draw the relationships between the independent and dependent variables. Both probability and non-probability sampling methods were used. Simple random sampling technique was used to obtain one-third of the Public Primary School head teachers for the study. Sampling was made from a list of schools obtained from the office of the

County Director, Ministry of Education, at Kakamega County. Each school was assigned a random number from zero to the required  $n^{\text{th}}$  number for each Sub-County until the required number (257) for the County was obtained. Stratified sampling technique was used to obtain sample schools in their strata whose head teachers were included in the sample. The schools were arranged into homogenous strata.

Non-probability sampling was also done. It involved the use of purposive and saturated sampling techniques. In purposive sampling, the researcher purposely targeted the head teachers in public primary schools for study. Purposive sampling technique was used because the respondents were especially knowledgeable about the question at hand (Neuman, 2014, Denscombe, 2014; Krueger & Casey, 2015). Saturated Sampling technique was used to select a saturated sample of urban and sub-urban schools since they are fewer compared to rural schools. This was aimed at enhancing the degree of representativeness of this category in the overall sample.

Five instruments were used to collect data. These are the Head Teacher Demographic Information Questionnaire (HTDIQ), the Role Stress Questionnaire, the Maslach Burnout

Inventory-Education Survey (MBI-ES), the Intervention Strategies Questionnaire (ISQ), and Semi-Structured Interview Schedules. The first four instruments were combined to form an eclectic Questionnaire, while the interview schedules were used separately to collect corroborative information from the Head Teachers and the Sub-County Quality Assurance and Standards Officers (SCQASOs). The drop- and -pick approach was used in the administration and collection of the Questionnaire. Head teachers and Sub-County Quality Assurance and Standards Officers were individually interviewed in their offices. Data analysis was guided by the study objective. Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26.0 was used to analyze the data. A t-test was conducted to establish the presence of the three dimensions of burnout.

### III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study intended to establish the presence of different dimensions of burnout among head teachers of public primary schools in Kakamega County. The eclectic questionnaire was administered to the respondents and results are presented in Table 1.0

Table 1.0: Descriptive Statistics for Burnout among Head Teachers of Public Primary Schools in Kakamega County

(1= Never, 2= Few times a year, 3= Once a month or less, 4= A few times a month, 5= Once a week, 6= A few times a week, 7= Every day)

Statement	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Mean	SD
<b>Emotional Exhaustion</b>									
I feel emotionally drained from my work	4%	19%	12%	25%	8%	22%	10%	<b>3.19</b>	<b>1.762</b>
I feel used up at the end of the work day	5%	10%	7%	17%	11%	29%	22%	<b>3.91</b>	<b>1.824</b>
I feel fatigued when I get up in the morning and have to face another day on the job	11%	15%	7%	36%	5%	16%	10%	<b>2.96</b>	<b>1.797</b>
Working with people all day is really a strain for me	28%	18%	11%	19%	5%	13%	6%	<b>2.17</b>	<b>1.956</b>
I feel I am working too hard on my job	4%	13%	8%	17%	4%	9%	45%	<b>4.12</b>	<b>2.054</b>
I feel frustrated by my work	30%	27%	11%	18%	4%	5%	6%	<b>1.76</b>	<b>1.760</b>
I feel burned out on my job	7%	13%	9%	16%	5%	10%	41%	<b>3.91</b>	<b>2.124</b>
Working directly with people puts too much stress on me	26%	27%	7%	19%	4%	11%	6%	<b>2.07</b>	<b>1.911</b>
I feel like I am at the end of my rope	47%	22%	7%	13%	2%	4%	4%	<b>1.28</b>	<b>1.667</b>
<b>Average Emotional Exhaustion. Mean = 2.82 (40.28%), SD = 1.144, t= 39.274, P-value = 0.000</b>									
<b>Table 2.0: Depersonalization</b>									
I feel I treat some recipients as if they were impersonal objects	48%	26%	7%	11%	4%	2%	2%	<b>1.12</b>	<b>1.464</b>
I have become more callous to people since I took this job	31%	21%	11%	13%	7%	4%	13%	<b>2.07</b>	<b>2.058</b>
I worry that this job is hardening me emotionally	22%	23%	11%	14%	6%	8%	17%	<b>2.51</b>	<b>2.159</b>
I don't really care what happens to some recipients	53%	24%	7%	9%	2%	3%	2%	<b>1.01</b>	<b>1.456</b>
I feel recipients blame me for some of their problems	13%	42%	11%	15%	6%	7%	6%	<b>2.01</b>	<b>1.695</b>
<b>Average Depersonalization. Mean = 1.74 (24.9%), SD = 1.215, t= 22.888, P-value = 0.000</b>									
I can easily understand how recipients feel about things	2%	7%	6%	11%	9%	24%	41%	<b>4.54</b>	<b>1.688</b>
I deal very effectively with the problems of my recipients	1%	3%	4%	9%	11%	30%	42%	<b>4.85</b>	<b>1.402</b>
I feel I am positively influencing other people's lives through my work	0%	2%	1%	9%	11%	25%	51%	<b>5.08</b>	<b>1.245</b>

I feel very energetic	2%	4%	3%	8%	17%	30%	36%	<b>4.69</b>	<b>1.447</b>
I can easily create a relaxed atmosphere with my recipients	1%	2%	3%	9%	22%	32%	30%	<b>4.66</b>	<b>1.284</b>
I feel exhilarated after working closely with my recipients	4%	6%	4%	13%	19%	28%	26%	<b>4.28</b>	<b>1.626</b>
I have accomplished many worthwhile things in this job	2%	7%	4%	11%	8%	34%	35%	<b>4.59</b>	<b>1.595</b>
In my work I deal with emotional problems very calmly	2%	7%	5%	14%	24%	28%	21%	<b>4.2</b>	<b>1.505</b>
<b>Average Personal Accomplishment. Mean = 4.611 (65.9%), SD = 0.88034, t=83.480 P-value = 0.00</b>									
<b>Overall Burnout Mean score. Mean = 2.318 (46.36%), SD = 0.8122, t=45.469, P-value = 0.00</b>									

### *Emotional Exhaustion*

Data in table 1.0 shows that most (57%) of the head teachers had a feeling of being emotionally drained from work. This was indicated by 25%, 22% and 10% of the respondents who suggested that they had been feeling emotionally drained from their work, a few times a month, a few times a week and everyday respectively ( $M=3.19, SD=1.762$ ). From the data 29% of the head teachers felt used at the end of the work day a few times a week while 22% reported that they felt the same every day of the week, whereas 17% felt this a few times a month ( $M=3.91, SD=1.82$ ).

Majority (36%) of the respondents reported that they felt fatigued when they got up in the morning and had to face another day on the job- a few times a month while 16% indicated that they felt this a few times a week and 10% reported that they felt the same every day of the week ( $M=2.96, SD=1.797$ ). It is therefore evident from the foregoing that head teachers were generally more fatigued and the root cause of this may need urgent attention.

Majority (28%) of head teachers reported no strain while working with people, 19% reported that they strained working with people a few times a month while 18% of the respondents showed that this happened a few times a year ( $M=2.17, SD=1.956$ ).

Whereas 45% of head teachers reported working so hard on their job every day, 17% reported that they worked so hard on their job a few times a month while 13% reported working so hard on their job a few times a year ( $M=4.12, SD=2.054$ ). It is evident therefore that most of the head teachers worked hard on their job every indicating that they had less time for leisurely activities or social interaction. This may be a precursor to distress and burnout over time.

Majority (30%) of the head teachers reported as never feeling frustrated by the office work while 27% of the respondents indicated that they felt frustrated by office work a few times a year. A few (18%) of head teachers showed that they got frustrated by office work a few times a month while a paltry 11% of head teachers indicated this happened once a month ( $M=1.76, SD=1.760$ ). From the foregoing, it is evident that office work was generally less frustrating to head teachers.

Whereas 41% of head teachers felt burned out on their job every day, 16% reported that they felt burned out a few times

a month while 13% of the respondents indicated that they felt burned out a few times a year ( $M=3.91, SD=2.12$ ). It's therefore clearly evident from the findings that burnout is prevalent among head teachers and urgent mitigating strategies may need to be put in place to alleviate the menace.

From the data, 27% of head teachers reported that working with people directly, puts too much strain on them a few times a year, 26% of them reported having no strain when working with people directly, while 11% reported that they experienced strain a few times a week as a result of working with people directly ( $M=2.07, SD=1.911$ ). The results show that head teachers were generally less strained when working with people directly. This may suggest that they generally have the wherewithal skills to positively interact with their clients directly without much strain.

The results further showed that most (47%) of the respondents felt they were not at the end of their rope, while 22% reported that they were at the end of their rope a few times a year and 13% of the head teachers reported that they felt they were at the end of their rope a few times a month. Those who reported that they were at the end of their rope a few times a week and every day of the week accounted for 4% (each respectively), while a paltry 2% reported that they felt they were at the end of their rope once a week ( $M=1.28, SD=1.667$ ). Most of the head teachers were therefore not at the end of their rope though widely burned out. This means that majority of them were still actively attending to their daily duties and thus their condition was not irreparable but still needed attention to avoid the point of no return scenario.

From the above findings, it is evident that primary school head teachers in public primary schools in Kakamega County are emotionally overextended ( $M=2.82, SD=1.144$ ). This calls for urgent attention to address the situation.

The study sought to establish if the emotional exhaustion was significant among the head teachers in public primary schools in Kakamega County and the null hypothesis was that; the head teachers do not feel emotionally exhausted at workplace. The overall t-test model for Emotional Exhaustion ( $M=2.82, SD=1.144, t=39.274, p<0.05$ ), was significant; the null hypothesis was rejected and concluded that the level of emotional exhaustion among head teachers at work place was significant. This therefore means that head teachers were not working to the fullest due the impediment of Emotional Exhaustion. It therefore implies that service delivery to the

clients was impaired and this therefore calls for a speedy intervention (Ammo 2012; Matin 2012).

#### *Depersonalisation*

Data in Table 1.0, shows that 48% of the head teachers never felt that they treated some recipients of their service as if they were impersonal objects ; 26% reported that they treated the recipients of their service as impersonal objects a few times a year; whereas 11% of the head teachers reported that they treated the recipients of their service as impersonal objects a few times a month. Moreover, 7% of the head teachers reported that they treated the recipients of their service as impersonal objects once a month or less while 2% of the respondents treated the recipients of their service as impersonal objects a few times a week and every day of the week respectively ( $M=1.12, SD=1.46$ ). It is therefore evident that most of the head teachers treated the recipients of their service in a humane way. However, there are danger signs from the fraction of head teachers who reported that they treated their subject as impersonal object weekly and daily. Since the functionality of the entire institution is dependent on the administrative acumen of the head teacher, then the schools headed by this fraction of head teachers could suffer dysfunction if the malady is not quickly addressed.

The study found out that 31% of the head teachers had never become callous to people since they took their job, 21% had become callous to people a few times a year while 13% had done so a few times a month and every day of the week respectively. Whereas 11% of head teachers reported that they were callous to people once a month or less, 7% reported that they were callous to people once a week while 4% of them indicated that they were callous to people a few times a week ( $M=2.07, SD=2.06$ ).

Most (23%) of the head teachers reported that they worry that their job was hardening them emotionally a few times a year while 22% reported that their job was never hardening them emotionally. Whereas 17% of the head teachers reported a feeling that their job was hardening them emotionally every day of the week, 14% reported that their job was hardening them emotionally a few times a month while 11% showed that this was the case once a month or less. A further 8% of head teachers reported that their job was hardening them emotionally a few times a week while 6% of them reported that their job was making them to be emotionally hardened once a week ( $M=2.51, SD=2.16$ ).

Most (53%) of the head teachers reported that they care what happens to some recipients of their service, 24% reported that they don't really care what happens to some of the recipients a few times a year while 9%, 7%, 3%, 2% and 2% of head teachers reported that they don't care what happens to the recipients of their service a few times a month, once a month or less, once a week and every day of the week respectively ( $M=1.01, SD=1.46$ ). The result on this item show that majority of head teachers care what happens to their recipients and this was healthy in terms of service delivery to

the clients and for the general well being of their institutions.

Whereas majority (42%) of head teachers reported that they felt that their recipients blamed them for some of their problems a few times a year, 15% of them reported that they felt recipients of their service blamed them for some of their problems a few times a month while 13% felt that the recipients never blamed them for some of their problems. Additionally, 11% of the head teachers reported that their recipients blamed them for some of their problems once a month or less, 7% a few times a week while 6% felt the recipients of their service blame them for some of their problems once a week and every day of the week respectively ( $M=2.01, SD=1.70$ ).

The study sought to establish if depersonalization was present and significant among the head teachers in public primary schools and the null sub-hypotheses was that; the head teachers do not feel depersonalized at workplace. From the findings, it is clear that depersonalization was present and statistically significant in public primary schools in Kakamega County as revealed by a significant t-test model ( $M=1.74, SD=1.22, t=22.888, p<.05$ ). The null sub-hypothesis was rejected and concluded that depersonalization was present among head teachers of public primary schools in Kakamega County and was statistically significant. Urgent intervention was therefore necessary in order to restore the luster of the one-time noble profession. It seems from the interview responses and the descriptive responses on the questionnaire that much needs to be done to reverse this trend.

#### *Reduced Personal Accomplishment*

The study sought to establish the presence and level of reduced personal accomplishment. High scores on personal accomplishment indicated a positive outcome. Data in Table 1.0, shows that most (41%) head teachers reported that they could easily understand how recipients felt about things every day of the week, 24% of them reported that they did this a few times a week while 11% indicated that they could easily understand how recipients felt about things a few times a month. Whereas 9% of the head teachers reported that they easily understood how recipients felt about things once a week, 7% of them reported that that they did this a few times a year while 6% showed that that they easily understood how the recipients felt about things once a month or less and a paltry 2% of them, reported that they never understood how recipients felt about things ( $M=4.54, SD=1.69$ ).

When asked whether they influenced other people's lives positively through their work, 51% reported that they did this every day of the week, 25% of the head teachers reported that they did that a few times a week while 11% influenced the lives of their clients positively once a week. Moreover, 9% of head teachers indicated that they influenced the lives of their clients positively a few times a month, 2% of them did this few times a year while 1% of them reported that they did this once a month or less and none (0%) of the head teachers reported not having positively influenced their clients' lives positively



( $M=5.08, SD=1.26$ ). It appears that most of the head teachers influenced the lives of their clients positively. This probably was the case since this item was stated in the positive. However, this is an indicator that the head teachers valued their work as being important.

The head teachers were asked whether they felt very energetic and 36% reported that this was true of them every day, 30% of them reported that this was true of them a few times a week while 17% reported that they felt energetic only once a week. A further proportion (8%) of head teachers reported that they felt energetic a few times a month, 4% of them felt energetic a few times a year, 3% of them felt energetic once a month or less while a paltry 2% reported never feeling energetic at all ( $M=4.69, SD=1.45$ ).

Whereas the number of head teachers who never felt energetic at all was small, the impact of their decisions was enormous on their clientele. This proportion of head teachers since their impact spreads beyond their stations.

Most (32%) of the head teachers reported that they could easily create a relaxed atmosphere with their clients few times a week, 30% did this every day of the week while 22% of the head teachers were able to create a relaxed atmosphere once a week. A smaller percentage (9%) of head teachers reported that they were able to create a relaxed atmosphere a few times a month, 3% of them did this once a month or less, 2% once a year while a negligible percentage (1%) indicated that they were not able to create a relaxed atmosphere with their clients ( $M=4.66, SD=1.29$ ). Though the number that was not able to create a relaxed atmosphere with their clients was negligible, their impact on their clientele was quite enormous and therefore need urgent attention.

On feelings of exhilaration after offering service to clients, 28% of head teachers indicated that, it was true of them a few times a week, 26% of them daily while 19% of them reported feeling this only once a week. Moreover, 13% of the respondents indicated that they felt exhilarated after working closely with their recipients a few times a month, 6% of them few time a year while 4% of them felt this once a month or less and 4% reported never feeling this at all ( $M=4.28, SD=1.63$ ).

Majority (35%) of head teachers felt they had accomplished many worthwhile things daily in their job while ,34% felt they had done this a few times a week and 11% of the head teachers reported that they did this a few times a month. A further 8% of head teachers reported having accomplished many worthwhile things once a week, 7% few times a year while 4% of them reported having done this once a month or less and 2% reported never having accomplished many worthwhile things in life ( $M=4.59, SD=1.595$ ).

Lastly, majority (28%) of the head teachers reported that they calmly dealt with emotional problems a few times a week, 24% of them reported that they dealt with the emotional problems calmly once a week while 21% calmly dealt with

emotional problems a few times a week. Whereas 14% of the respondents reported having dealt with emotional problems calmly a few times a month, 7% of them did this once a year ,5% of them once a month or less while 2% reported to never having dealt with emotional problems calmly ( $M=4.2, SD=1.51$ ).

The study sought to establish if personal accomplishment was significant among the head teachers in public primary schools and the null sub-hypothesis was that; head teachers do not experience a reduced personal accomplishment at workplace. The overall t-test model ( $M=4.61, SD=.880, t=83.48, p<.05$ ), was significant, the null sub-hypothesis was rejected and conclude that the level of Personal Accomplishment among head teachers in public primary schools in Kakamega County was significant. The findings showed that head teachers were experiencing reduced level of Personal Accomplishment.

The findings also show that the overall burnout among head teachers was significant though moderate ( $M=2.38, SD=.812, t=45.469, p<.05$ ). Since the burnout level was moderate, it means that most of the head teachers in Kakamega County can still carry out their duties, since it's level had not reached debilitating proportions.

#### IV. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The conclusions and insights provided by this study were derived from analyzed data. The objective was to establish the existence of different dimensions of burnout among head teachers of public Primary schools in Kakamega County and the null hypothesis was that head teachers do not suffer from different dimensions of burnout. The findings on Emotional Exhaustion revealed that this dimension of burnout was present. and it was reasonable to conclude that the occurrence of Emotional Exhaustion among head teachers in the County may lower their role efficacy.

The analyzed results on Depersonalization revealed that it was present and significant and it may be therefore reasonable to conclude that the occurrence of depersonalisation among head teachers may lower their efficacy in the performance of their roles.

The findings showed that reduced Personal Accomplishment was present and significant and it may therefore be reasonable to conclude that the presence of reduced Personal Accomplishment in the County may interfere with the effectiveness of head teachers in dealing with their clients.

It is recommended that the Teachers Service Commission (TSC) and the Ministry of Education (MOE), invest in both preventive curative burnout mitigation strategies. They should include prior training to assumption of office, in-service courses to head teachers on emerging issues related to job demands, development and upgrading of recreational facilities in all the public primary schools in the County. This should include facilities for physical exercises such as pitches, cyber cottages for surfing and internet chatting as proposed by some

head teachers and tracks for running to alleviate stress which may culminate into burnout. Along with recreation facilities are centres of worship as reported by a large fraction of head teachers. Chaplaincy services should be introduced and enhanced in all public primary schools in the County in order to foster a closer relationship with God. Prayer and reading of scripture and any other religious creed are therapeutic and therefore may be mitigating to burnout. Unlike in Psychotherapy, God is open to listen to any concerns with all the power to handle them. When head teachers pray, they release their problems to God and therefore feel relieved of role distress which is a precursor burnout. As is always correctly put, “a problem shared is a problem half-solved”. Thorough training of Guidance and Counselling staff and setting up Guidance and Counselling rooms in all public primary schools where guidance and counselling can be done in privacy may be a step in the right direction.

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