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RESEARCH ARTICLE

SCHOOL FACTORS INFLUENCING BURNOUT AMONG HEAD TEACHERS' IN PUBLIC PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN KENYA: A CASE STUDY OF BUTULA SUB-COUNTY

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ABSTRACT

Studies have revealed that burnout inactivates workers reducing their performance at work place. School factors such as lack of physical facilities, human resource and insecurity increase level of burnout which has is linked to underperformance by head teachers and translate to poor performance in schools. In Butula Sub-county, preliminary survey involving five head teachers indicated that head teachers were experiencing high levels of burnout. The objective of the study was to determine school factors that influence burnout among head teachers in public primary schools in Butula Sub-County, Kenya. A conceptual showing the relationship between independent variable (school factors) and dependent variable (burnout among head teachers) was used to guide the study. The findings of the study were that school factors invariably influenced burnout among head teachers. The study concluded that indeed school factors do influence burnout among head teachers. The study recommended that head teachers should adopt methods of dealing with burnout by addressing school factors that influence burnout. The findings of this study are significant to stakeholders in education as they provide information that can be used in policy formulation that can minimize burnout among head teachers in schools.

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INTRODUCTION

Burnout is characterized by emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and low personal accomplishment. An administrator who suffers burnout experiences fatigue that inactivates them thereby reducing their achievement. For various reasons, head teachers undergo circumstances which they cannot control. Consequently, they feel unable to properly perform the tasks required of them as expected by stakeholders, as well as the serious negative effects on their teaching roles. The average hours spent at work by principals and deputies/assistants ranges between 51-60 hours per week during term time and 25-30 hours per week during gazetted holiday periods. Too many participants in the survey were working too many hours and it is taking a toll on their greatest support group; their families (Riley, 2017). In Kenya, public servants are supposed to work for 40 hours per week (Republic of Kenya, 2016). A lot of work that causes prolonged accumulation of stress is known to influence burnout (Ng'ang'a, 2012).

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In turn, burnout causes emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and low personal accomplishment (Sagara, 2012). Burnout is related to a situation in which a person feels overworked, confused about work expectations and priorities, concerned about job security, under-appreciated and over-committed with responsibilities that are immensurable with pay (Freudenberger, 1974; Maslach and Jackson, 1981). Emotional exhaustion is a chronic state of physical and emotional depression that results from excessive job, personal demand and / or continuous stress. It is a feeling of being emotionally overextended and exhausted probably by ones' work. Depersonalization on the other is a subscale of burnout. Thus it is an indicator of burnout. Depersonalization is described as a feeling of disconnected or detached from oneself. Individual experiencing depersonalization may report feeling as if they are an outside observer of their own thought or body and often report feeling a loss of control over their thought or action. Personal accomplishments are those that are attached to ones objectives and are achieved through hard work. Reduced personal accomplishment often indicate burnout. A school administrator is the most influential factor in the success of a school. Apart from teaching like the other teachers, the duties of the school administrator include teaching their subject of

specialization to enable them supervise curriculum implementation, implement government policies, be resourceful in attracting funding and prudently manage the same, supervise members of staff – teaching and non-teaching, they manage students' affairs as well as maintain good public relations and a sense of commitment to duty, hence a role model to teachers, students and the community in general. This is a major responsibility with many tasks. The demands of such tasks can place the school administrators at a risk of burnout (Ngari, Ndungu, Mwonya, Ngumi, Mumiukha, Chepchieng, and Kariuki, 2013). Head teachers as schools' chief executives, are charged with the daunting task of managing teachers among other school resources. With introduction of performance contract for head teachers and appraisal for teachers, the head teachers' duties have had immense increase eliciting a great concern by head teachers that burnout had significantly impaired their work performance. There was a gap on school factors that influence head teachers' burnout in Butula Sub-county therefore this study filled this gap.

A study on the relationship between leadership behaviour and occupational tedium among primary school teachers in Nyanza province, Kenya, by Otieno, Matanga, and Odera (2014) found that occupational tedium has significant detrimental consequences not only for those educators who, in all likelihood, will develop a more severe and intense form of tedium but also for the organizations, where the phenomenon of tedium adversely affects the student learning experience. This ultimately impacts on the academic achievement of the learners. This is echoed by Sagara (2012) in her study on impact of occupational stress on head teachers' tasks in secondary schools of Kisumu County, Kenya. She says there are negative consequences of stress on the head teachers' performance, other teachers' performance and the school in general.

Synthesis of literature on school factors that influence level of burnout among head teachers: Freudenberger (1974) associated burnout with people in helping positions that experienced a state of exhaustion and fatigue as a result of working too long, too much and too intensely with needy clients at the expense of their own needs. Twenty-first century educators are faced with more demands than teachers in any previous era (Kozol, 2008). Due to the break-down of families, they are expected to act as social workers, health care providers, and parents while continuing to educate the children about core content areas, technology, and the global community. Head teachers are also faced with a growing amount of paperwork, pressure to teach and administer standardized tests, and a constant need to defend themselves against the public belief that schools are failing the children of the nation. Career-related stress from difficult students, excessive work hours, new and additional demands, and negative relationships with co-workers or administrators takes a prolonged period of time to fix. Principals and deputies/assistants report very high demands, out of balance with available resources to buffer the demands. Burnout school leaders report 1.6 times the rate of burnout compared to the general population. It is noticeably higher in New South Wales and Tasmania than the other states. The average hours spent at work by principals and deputies/assistants ranges between 51-60 hours per week during term time and 25-30 hours per week during gazette holiday periods. Too many participants in the survey were working too many hours and it is taking a toll on their greatest support group; their families (Riley, 2017).

Previous studies indicate that there are various factors that influence burnout among educators. Factors leading to stress and burnout are often related to the characteristics of being effective or highly qualified and the pressures related to achieving those goals (Fisher, 2011). Apathy, as demonstrated in poor attitudes to studies, influences over 63% of American and Canadian teachers' burnout (Antoniou, Polychroni, and Vlachakis, 2006). Fisher (2011) examined stress, burnout, satisfaction, and preventive coping skills of nearly 400 secondary teachers in Kentucky to determine variables that contribute to these major factors influencing teachers. The outcome of the multiple regression analysis revealed that job satisfaction, self-acceptance, and stress are the significant predictors of burnout with number of students, years of experience, age, and gender not being found significant.

El-Omari and Freihat (2011) conducted a study aimed at highlighting the levels of burnout that Jordanian teachers of English have; and the effect of the variables of gender, students' school level, years of experience, qualification, and class size. They found no significant difference in the means of burnout levels for the variables (gender, qualification, class size, and years of experience), whereas there is a significant difference for the educational stage the teachers teach. Ozer's (2013) study was to determine the school principals' sense of self-efficacy, burnout and the relationship between principal self-efficacy and burnout. The participants of the study comprised a total of 119 (F=7, M=112) primary school principals in Turkey and Friedman school principal burnout scale was used to measure burnout level. The results indicated that principals with different levels of professional experience, experience similar degrees of burnout and principals' senses of experienced burnout differ significantly by school size. The results also suggested that principal self-efficacy in terms of management and instructional leadership is not significantly correlated with burnout of principals. However, self- efficacy for moral leadership has a negative and moderate level of correlation with principal burnout.

Abo and Salem (2012) report that teachers in Kuwait suffer teachers' burnout as a result of many reasons such as job burdens, lack of supporting educational services, administrative work overload, lack of enough time to perform tasks, lack of cooperation between teachers on one hand and both parents and school administration on the other, and lack of human relationships in the school environment.
In a synthesis of research, Amimo (2012) explains that in an analysis of the world education indicators, long working hours and work overload are significant influencers of teacher burnout. Compared to other professionals, this report indicates that teachers work more intensive hours. The work does not end with statutory teaching hours but extends to preparation of lessons, corrections of assignments and tests, counseling students, professional development, meeting with students, staff meetings and general school tasks. Some of the most affected teachers are in Philippines, Chile, Thailand, Tunisia, Egypt, India, Brazil, Mexico, Zimbabwe, and Jordan. In an analysis of burnout on Turkish elementary school principals Baş and Yıldırım, (2012) say that common stressors have been students' lack of poor academic

achievement, student discipline issues, declining resources, and the public's misunderstanding of the principal's role. Brouwers, Tomic, and Boulijt, (2011) in a study in Netherlands concluded that when attempting to explain burnout, it is plausible that workload and amount of control are variables that differ considerably from one group of subject teachers to the next. Work overload and role conflict were positively associated with emotional exhaustion. A study in Norway on principals indicates that job-related stressors such as workload and time pressure correlate highly with burnout (Federici and Skaalvik, 2012). Exhaustion is not only experienced as discomfort to the individual. It also prompts actions to distance oneself emotionally and cognitively from works most likely because of work overload. Stress was also attributed to time pressures, workload, role conflicts, and role ambiguity, (Skaalvik and Skaalvik, 2009). Likewise, research done in South Africa by Hall, Altman, Nkomo and Zuma (2005) shows that the expanded role of teachers contributes to heavy workload that is compounded by the growing student enrolments, time constraint, and complexity of work. In their study in Nairobi, Wangeri and Okello (2014) state that majority of teachers reported experiencing work overload as they taught more than 22 lessons per week over and above the other duties they performed. Moreover, a large section of the teachers studied reported having larger classes than the recommended national ratio of 1:40. This situation was likely to have a negative effect on both the teacher involved and their students. In a research on occupational tedium in Nyanza Province, (75%) Sub County Quality Assurance and Standards Officers reported that workload contributed to occupational tedium (Otieno, Matanga and Odera, 2014). For the teacher, this may lead to more stress which may compromise physical and psychological health resulting in lateness, absenteeism and tardy work.

While investigating causes of teacher burnout among secondary school teachers in Bungoma County, Kenya, Sichambo, Maragia and Simiyu (2012), found that teachers' workload makes work overwhelming. This causes stress and eventually burnout. From the interviews, 83.3% of the principals stated that secondary school teachers were having more than enough workload which can impact on teachers negatively. From the above studies, it is clear that although workload and stress are the common influencers of burnout among educators, issues that influence overload, stress and burnout were found to vary with environment and community. Head teachers spend most of their time at their workplace. Technically, they are supposed to be on duty 24/7. This is a clear indication that burnout among head teachers is influenced by factors from their institutions and therefore the researcher concentrated on school factors that influence level of burnout among head teachers.

Research Objective

The research objective was to: Determine the school factors that influence burnout among head teachers in public primary schools in Butula Sub-County.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The conceptual framework for this study is based on the premise that there are school factors that lead to burnout. Burnout in turn leads to illnesses, emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, low personal accomplishment and in extreme cases, leads to death (Sagara, 2012). This leads to loss of energy and reduction in productivity. Previous studies have associated burnout with health challenges for employees with serious implication(s) on their job satisfaction and commitment (Maslach and Leiter, 1996). The influence of a head teacher on a school's managerial environment cannot be overstated in view of the fact that they initiate policies that provide guidelines for action (Pugh, 1989). This study was conceptualized on the basis of school factors as independent variable and burnout among head teachers as dependent variable. The intervening variable is government policies. Head teachers who suffer from burnout may not perform their work as expected and therefore this study investigated school factors influencing level of head teachers' burnout and its influence on pupil academic achievement. The variables involved in this study are illustrated in Figure 1.

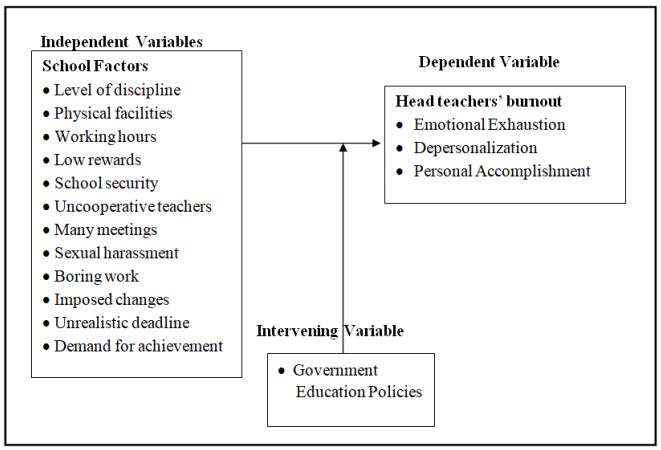

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework showing school factors influencing Burnout among Head teachers' in Public Primary Schools

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study adopted descriptive survey and correlational research designs. The target population was 61 head teachers and one Sub-county Quality Assurance and Standards Officer. Saturated sampling technique was used to select a sample size of 55 head teachers and one Sub-county Quality Assurance and Standards Officer. Data were collected using Maslach Burnout Inventory (Maslach et al, 1996; Maslach 2003) questionnaires, interview schedules and document analysis guide.

The validity of the research instruments were ascertained by experts in Educational Administration. Test-retest was conducted to determine reliability of the head teachers' questionnaire which had a coefficient of 0.87 for emotional exhaustion, 0.89 for depersonalization and 0.92 for personal accomplishment at p- value of 0.05. Quantitative data were analyzed using frequency counts, percentages, means and regression analysis.

RESULTS

Demographic Data of Head Teachers: Section one of the head teachers' questionnaire revealed the demographic information of the head teachers as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Demographic Information of the Head Teachers

Demographic Characteristics		F	%
Age	31 – 40 yrs	03	5.5
	41 – 50 yrs	27	49.0
	51 – 60 yrs	25	45.5
Total		55	100
Gender	Male	47	85.3
	Female	08	14.7
Total		55	100
Professional Qualification	Certificate	11	20.0
	Diploma	36	65.3
	B.ED	08	14.7
Total		55	100
Headship Experience	0 – 5 yrs	15	27.2
	6 – 10 yrs	17	30.8
	11 – 15 yrs	13	23.6
	16 – 20 yrs	05	9.2
	21 – 25 yrs	05	9.2
Total		55	100

Table 2: Head Teachers' Teaching Workload

No. of lessons	f	%
5 – 10	02	3.8
11 – 15	05	9.2
16 – 20	18	32.6
21 – 25	14	25.3
26 – 30	14	25.3
31 – 35	02	3.8

Data on Table 1 shows that the head teachers were in the age bracket of 31-60 years. Majority of the head teachers (49.0%) were in the age bracket of 41– 50 years and very few (5.5%) were between 31 – 40 years. A large percentage of head teachers (45.5%) were between 51– 60 years. There was gender imbalance in headship position since majority of the head teachers (85.3%) were male and only 14.7% were female. On educational qualification, majority of the head teachers (65.3%) were diploma holders, 20.0% certificate holders and only 14.7% had a university degree. There was no head teacher who had a post graduate degree. Majority of the head teachers had served in their position for less than 15 years. That is 0 – 5 years (27.2%), 6 – 10 years (30.8%) and 11 – 15 years (23.6%). A few head teachers (9.2%) had an experience of more than 20 years and between 16 – 20 years respectively. Table 2 indicates that all head teachers had a teaching subject and majority of them (32.6%) taught between 16 – 20 lessons per week. Very few (3.8%) taught between 5 -10 lessons and more than 30 lessons respectively, 9.2% taught between 11-15 lessons, 25.3% between 21-25 lessons and 25.3% between 26-30 lessons. The findings concur with those of Sagara (2012) who studied on secondary school principals in Kisumu County, Kenya and established that all administrators had a teaching subject. The revised scheme of service for non-graduate teachers state that head teachers' responsibility includes classroom teaching (Teachers Service Commission, 2007). Studies by Schaufeli, Taris and van Rhenen, (2008) and Emmanuel (2015) have shown that the more employees engage with their job the more the tendency of experiencing occupational burnout. The researcher then considered the number of hours spent by the head teachers at their work station and the results were as shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Average Hours Spent per Day by the Head Teachers at the Workplace

Daily hrs	f	%
6 – 10	25	45.5
11 – 15	29	52.6
16 – 20	01	1.8

Data in Table 3 shows that most head teachers (52.6%) were at their work stations for between 11 – 15 hours on a normal working day. According to Republic of Kenya (2016), a public servant is supposed to work for eight hours every working day. A large percentage of the head teachers (45.5%) spent between 6 – 10 hours a day at school while a very small percentage of the head teachers (1.8%) spent more than 15 hours at school in a day. This is higher than the official working time given as 8 hours a day.

Research Question: The research question responded to was: What school factors influence burnout among head teachers in public primary schools in Butula Sub-County?.

To establish the influence of school factors on head teacher's burnout, first the school factors were rated, that is: level of school discipline, physical facilities, working hours, inadequate rewards, school security, meetings, uncooperative teachers, sexual harassment, boring work, changes without consultation, unrealistic deadlines, demand for achievement and the results were as shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Ratings of school factors influencing level of burnout among head teachers

Ratings of school factors	Frequencies	Percentage
6 – 10	1	1.82
11 – 15	0	0.00
16 – 20	2	3.64
21 – 25	5	9.09
26 – 30	6	10.91
31 – 35	15	27.27
36 – 40	13	23.64
41 – 45	13	23.64

Table 4 shows that the ratings were high for 41 (74.55%) head teachers studied. Only one had a rating of less than 10. The correlation of school factors and level of burnout among head teachers were computed and the results were as presented in Table 5.

Table 5. School Factors Influencing Burnout among Head Teachers

Factors		Emotional Exhaustion	Deperson alization	Personal Accomplishment
Level of discipline	Pearson Correlation	.149	.239	.120
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.277	.079	.388
Physical facilities	Pearson Correlation	.320*	.263	-.163
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.017	.053	.239
Working Hours	Pearson Correlation	.280*	.201	.092
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.039	.141	.509
Inadequate rewards	Pearson Correlation	.491**	.275*	-.047
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.042	.735
School security	Pearson Correlation	.257	.255	-.071
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.058	.060	.610
Meetings	Pearson Correlation	.234	.161	.046
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.085	.240	.741
Uncooperative Teachers	Pearson Correlation	.157	.075	.041
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.254	.584	.766
Sexual Harassment	Pearson Correlation	-.019	.167	.035
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.890	.222	.801
Boring work	Pearson Correlation	.386**	.065	-.023
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.004	.638	.867
Changes without consultation	Pearson Correlation	.346**	.149	-.110
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.010	.277	.427
Unrealistic deadlines	Pearson Correlation	.199	.098	-.100
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.146	.476	.472
Demands for achievement	Pearson Correlation	.464**	.427**	-.011
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.001	.935

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed) *Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed) N = 55

Data in Table 5 implies that the relationship between school factors that influence burnout among head teachers and burnout subscales vary. For instance, 'inadequate rewards' as

a factor has a strong positive relationship with subscale of emotional exhaustion. The relationship is significant (r = .491, N = 55, P = 0). This means that inadequate rewards had a significant influence on level of burnout among head teachers. Other factors that had strong positive relationship and whose relationships were significant with emotional exhaustion were 'demand for achievement' (r = .464, N = 55, P = 0), 'boring work' (r = .386, N = 55, P < 0.05), 'changes without consultation' (r = .346, N = 55, P < 0.05) and 'lack of physical facilities' (r = .320, N = 55, P < 0.05). In the subscale of depersonalization, demands for achievement has the strongest positive relationship which is significant (r = .427, N = 55, P < .05). Others include inadequate rewards (r = .275, N = 55, P < .05) and lack of physical facilities (r = .263, N = 55, P > .05). Some had a weak positive relationship which was not significant. For instance, unrealistic deadlines (r = .098, N = 55, P > .05), changes without consultation (r = .149, N = 55, P > .05) and many meetings (r = .161, N = 55, P > .05). School factors that influence personal accomplishment vary from those that affect the other two subscales of burnout. Level of discipline among pupils has the greatest influence among the factors correlated although the relationship is weak, positive and not significant (r = .120, N = 55, P > .05). Other factors that have positive relationship with personal accomplishment are: working hours (r = .092, N = 55, P > .05), many meetings (r = .046, N = 55, P > .05), uncooperative teachers (r = .041, N = 55, P > .05), sexual harassment (r = .035, N = 55, P > .05).

Table 6. Correlation of School Factors in Relation to Burnout

		School Factors
Burnout	Pearson Correlation	.425**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001
	N	55

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

Table 6 above indicates that there was a strong positive relationship between school factors and burnout among head teachers. The relationship was significant (r = .425, n = 55, P < .05). This means that the school factors investigated had a strong positive correlation with head teacher burnout and it can be authoritatively stated that the school factors influence burnout among head teachers. The coefficient of determination was .18. This means that 18% of burnout among headteachers was accounted for by school factors. The other 82% was due to other factors that were not subject of this study. These factors could include social economic status of headteachers, political interference and Ministry of Education policies among others.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study on age bracket of head teachers concurred with that of Aujata, Simatwa, and Yalo (2014) in their research in Hamisi Sub-County, Kenya who found that majority of the deputy principals were in the age brackets of 40-49 years. It is a variation from studies done at secondary school level by Wasonga (2014) who found that the majority of principals were in the age bracket of 31 – 40 years. This indicates age variation depending on area of study. Male head teachers dominate the administrative positions in primary school sub-sector of education. This finding is consistent with studies in Kenya by Wasonga (2014), Kiumi (2008), Gachoki (2006) who researched on secondary school principals, Aujata, Simatwa, and Yalo (2014) who researched on deputy head teachers, Bas and Yildrim (2012) who researched on elementary school principals in Turkey and a study in the United Kingdom by Menaha, Amaratunga and Haigh (2008) who established that few women were administrators. It is an indication that women are generally fewer than men in administration at all basic school levels in the world. Abo and Salem (2013) established that despite teachers being competent and effective, they suffered burnout as a result of many reasons such as job burdens, lack of supporting educational services, administrative work overload, lack of enough time to perform tasks, lack of cooperation between teachers on one hand and both parents and school administration on the other, and lack of human relationships in the school environment. According to Amimo (2012), influencers of teacher burnout are discussed in the context of "Activity Theory" which factors three activity moments in a hierarchical order; namely the motive, condition and the operation. The theory implies that teaching as an activity is meaningful to the teacher when its motives and operational goals correspond sufficiently. However, this is influenced by supporting conditions such as supply of resources, learners' cooperation, administrative support and teachers' general wellness. Lack of satisfactory conditions precipitates burnout. Stress and dissatisfaction correlate highly with teacher burnout (Martin, Sass, and Schmitt, 2012). Job satisfaction and burnout are separate constructs, because one can be dissatisfied with multiple aspects of one's job (e.g., salary, hours, support from colleagues) without experiencing emotional exhaustion, depersonalization or lack of personal accomplishment (Farber, 2000). Ngeno (2007) singles out stress as a major factor in teacher burnout.

This is the daily experience of teachers who must face full classrooms, negotiate potentially eruptive interactions with parents, administrators and colleagues contend with relatively low pay and shrinking school budgets amidst the demand for high academic standards. These factors subsequently mingle up with time pressures, breakdown in discipline, parental factors, role conflict and ambiguity, poor work conditions, loneliness, loss of status and autonomy in decision-making leading to serious burnout. The findings of this study conflict with those of Alex (2011) who explored the relationship between ethnic identity, emotional empathy, multicultural sensitivity and dimensions of burnout among 227 school teachers from urban and suburban private elementary schools in the northeastern United States. He found that personal accomplishment and depersonalization were the two outcome variables strongly associated with all the predictor variables.

The Sub-County Quality Assurance and Standards Officer listed a number of factors that influence burnout among head teachers. The most significant was pupils' academic achievement that is reflected by Kenya Certificate of Primary Education mean scores. He explained by saying: "The Teacher Service Commission policy is clear to head teachers that in case the mean scores drop for three consecutive years, the head teacher is dropped from administration position. It is a sign that work is not going on well in the school. This has made all head teachers to prioritize academic achievement ahead of all other things in their schools." Apart from academic achievement by pupils in schools, the Sub-County Quality Assurance and Standards Officer indicated that education policies had changed and had made several head teachers worried.

"Signing of performance contract has also caused a lot of stress to head teachers since it is a new phenomenon and they are not sure of the outcome by signing it. Some of the head teachers are finding filling in appraisal forms for the teachers a big challenge since they claim it has added to their workload." He mentioned other factors that influence burnout as: financial management, collection of levies, pressure from education officers, understaffing, shouldering teachers' complaints, irresponsible teachers, pressure from community, low incentives especially responsibility allowance and maintaining discipline since caning was banned in schools and many teachers had not undergone any training in guiding and counseling.

Conclusion

School factors have influence on burnout among head teachers of schools. Different factors have different influence on the subscales of burnout. For instance, inadequate rewards has the highest influence of emotional exhaustion, demand for achievement has the highest influence of depersonalization and level of discipline among pupils has the highest influence of personal accomplishment.

Recommendations

Head teachers should be relieved of classroom teaching and be categorized as managers of the institutions. This is because it reduces the workload thereby reducing the burnout. Once burnout is reduced, effectiveness and efficiency among head teachers will improve. This on the whole will enhance internal and external efficiency of schools which is the ultimate objective of school administrators.

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