

# Relationship between Sociodemographic Factors and Teacher Burnout Syndrome in International Schools in Nairobi County

Joan Mukami

University: Kenyatta University ,Phd student

## Background to the Study

Teaching can be very demanding, as teachers must cope with an array of academic, personal, and social challenges. When the demands persist and the coping strategies are insufficient to address the challenges, stress is eventually provoked. In the international schools set up, burnout is regarded as a state of emotional and physical depletion that results from conditions that are attributable to teaching. Burnout is characterized by three symptoms – depersonalization, emotional exhaustion, and reduced personal accomplishment. According to the cognitive activation theory of stress, health is dependent on how well individuals can adapt to physical, psychosocial, and environmental challenges (Ursin & Eriksen, 2004). Undoubtedly, teaching in international schools is characterized by various job demands that underpin the feeling of the heavy workload that ranges from regular meetings, administrative paperwork to being subjected to constant reforms to meet high-performance demands. Sociodemographic factors could be attributed to the surging levels of teacher burn out syndrome in international schools.

Sak's (2018) study compared job satisfaction, job burnout, and organizational cynicism of early childhood teachers with special attention to gender differences. The study findings revealed that significant differences exist between male and female teachers with regard to three variables of interest. Males were found to have a higher level of organizational cynicism and lower job satisfaction levels. However, the males job burnout was higher than that of females. A further study by Useche et al (2017) revealed that the complex work environment and increasing time pressure contribute to reduced job control that is a predisposing factor for teacher burnout. Teaching is a profession that involves high-level face-to-face interactions with learners, who may often show poor attitudes, behavior, motivation, and performance. Coping with pressure from parents and often unrealistic expectations from society are further stressors that push teachers to burnout. In the face of these challenges, teachers are required to display their own emotions with restraint, forcing them to hide their emotions. The situation is emotionally sapping.

In the United States, a plethora of studies in the teacher burnout realm demonstrates that the syndrome is influenced by varying factors that in turn can create emotional depletion among teachers (Ghanizadeh & Jahedizadeh, 2015). According to these researchers, that teacher burnout originates from unmet expectations linked to sociodemographic factors. Teachers have a glimpse of what their work entails, but the reality may be different resulting in the cognitive dissonance that is manifested as emotional exhaustion. In this situation, teachers tend to feel tired, sad and lose morale. As a result, teachers develop physiological problems that include headaches, insomnia, or intestinal problems (Buettner et al., 2016). Low personal fulfillment is also a precursor to teacher burnout syndrome since teachers tend to feel dissatisfied with their work. The dissatisfaction translates into feelings of failure and the belief that one is

powerless in the classroom. Further, the sense of failure may extend to the other facets of the teacher's life, consequently generating problems in personal relations. Moreover, teachers who suffer from depersonalization have feelings of helplessness and worthlessness, therefore, passion for teaching decreases.

A study that was done in Italy by De Stasio et al (2017) established that teachers' job satisfaction and happiness at school incrementally predicted variance in personal and work-related burnout. Given the demanding teaching conditions in international schools, social support and teacher's personal resources are important to counter the effects of the stressful working situation. The researchers argue that one personal resource is self-efficacy that is invaluable in protecting international school teachers from workplace incivility and related burnout and turnover intentions.

Hoglund et al (2015) study sought to determine the effect of gender, marital status, school type, seniority, and educational status on teacher burnout. The results conducted with a random-effects model demonstrated that gender, marital status, and educational status had a low effect on teacher burnout. On the other hand, the variance among the variables - study-type and grade-level did not significantly differ apart from the variable of gender.

In Western Kenya, Wanyonyi (2019) study concluded that burnout behavior has a negative influence on the productivity of teachers. The study gave a recommendation that the Ministry of Education Science and Technology should coin policies that are geared at curbing burnout behavior and increasing awareness creation to school administrators, teachers, and stakeholders to enhance teachers' productivity. The study gave a proposal that similar research is carried out in other counties to elicit a national perspective.

Although prior research has focused on the role job demands play in teacher well-being, few studies have targeted to examine the relationship between sociodemographic factors and teacher burnout syndrome in international schools. It is on this premise that the current study sought to examine how sociodemographic factors influence teacher burnout syndrome in international schools in Nairobi County.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Teacher burnout characterized by mental and physical conditions hurt teacher productivity and effectiveness. Teacher burnout syndrome could be a result of a mismatch between the sociodemographic factors, job demands, and coping strategies. The teaching staff in the international schools report the highest rates of work-related stress, depression, and anxiety because of the high-level performance demands. Well-being at work has been identified by scholars as one of the most critical dimensions of an individual's well-being. However, teachers in international schools report elevated levels of teacher burnout that could be attributable to sociodemographic factors, therefore, the need for conducting the current study with the view of recommending suitable coping strategies.

### **Purpose of the Study**

This study examined how sociodemographic factors influence teacher burnout syndrome in international schools in Nairobi County. The study will also seek to develop a predictive model for teacher burnout syndrome.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The study sought to:

- i. Determine the relationship between sociodemographic factors and teacher burnout syndrome in international schools Nairobi county
- ii. Determine a predictive model of teacher burnout syndrome in international schools in Nairobi county

### **Review of Related Literature**

A study by Garcia-Arroyo et al (2019) examined teacher burnout (effect size) and its variation across countries by testing the effects of gender, gender egalitarianism, and national learning assessments (NLAs). To collect data, a systematic literature search was done. In total, 156 studies were accessed from 36 countries. Studies that had only used quantitative methodology were included. A meta-analytical procedure was used to estimate the effect sizes of the three dimensions of burnout - depersonalization, reduced personal accomplishment, and emotional exhaustion. Results revealed that gender was negatively significant for personal accomplishment. It was also established that gender egalitarianism and the significant linear, curvilinear, and interaction effects of NLAs explained variations in teacher burnout. Since teacher burnout, a health issue varied across countries significantly, the study recommended that programs to prevent the problem should consider the educational system and cultural conditions for a greater impact to be realized. Different from this study that used secondary data, the current study used primary data.

In Ghana, Addison and Yankyera (2015) investigated how female teachers in Asamankese Circuit II in West Akim Municipality of Ghana Education Service manage stress and teacher burnout. The study further explored the causes, effects, and ways of improving work-related stress to attain better standards of education. A qualitative research approach was used to collect data. Purposive sampling was used to select 25 female teachers from 18 Primary and Junior High Schools who participated in the study. A descriptive cross-sectional design. The study results revealed that female teachers had high-stress levels. Interpersonal relations and work over-load were attributed to the upsurge in stress levels among female teachers. The current study will, however, use a quantitative approach in data collection.

A study by Muriungi et al (2015) done in Kenya examined whether prolonged work durations may lead to chronic fatigue that is a precursor to burnout syndrome among the academic staff at the Kenya Medical Training College, Nairobi Campus. Through a cross-section sample survey, 139 academic staff were recruited. Notably, a Social Demographic (SDQ) questionnaire developed by the researchers on the general personal particulars and work-related information and Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) were administered to the participants. To analyze data, both descriptive and inferential statistical tools were used. The results indicated that the greatest risk factor for developing burnout syndrome was being a lecturer, being 41

years and above, having worked at KMTC for more than 6 years, not going annual leave, being married with children between one and five, working more hours than normal, and absence of social support among the teaching staff. This study was, however, done in a public institution. Conducting a study in private institutions is necessary to compare findings.

## **Methodology**

### **Research Design**

In this study, a correlational research design was adopted. Ogutu and Mukabi (n.d) assert that a correlational research design involves the collection of two sets of data and determining the extent to which they are co-varying.

### **Sampling**

Homogeneous purposive sampling was used in the identification of the six international schools that took part in this study. A sample was then stratified proportionately in all the six international schools by gender. Simple random sampling was used to identify the 156 teachers who formed the sample size.

### **Procedure**

Two questionnaires - Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) and Social Demographics (SDQ) questionnaire were administered online. It was explained to participants that their participation in the study was completely voluntary. Participants were required to use 30 minutes on average to fill the questionnaire. The survey was carried out during the lockdown period of COVID 19 when all the teachers were at home. This was critical in ensuring that the obtained results were reliable and valid. In the survey, the questionnaires were posted online for volunteers to fill out. To ensure confidentiality of the survey, a specific and secure internet link was developed and shared with the respective participants only. A total 80 male teachers (mean age = 45 years, SD = 1.602) and 76 female teachers (mean age = 43 years, SD= 1.864) took part in this study.

### **Research Instrument**

The Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) coined in 1996 was completed by all teachers to measure their levels of burnout. The three dimensions of burnout - emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced feelings of accomplishment were measured. The scores on each scale were considered separately. Responses were based on a 7-point Likert-type scale from 0 (never) to 6 (every day). Cronbach's alphas for emotional exhaustion 0.840; depersonalization was 0.783, the reduced accomplishment was 0.791, and the overall burnout scale alpha value was 0.845 across cohorts in this study. To obtain sociodemographic data, the researcher developed a Social Demographic (SDQ) questionnaire that assessed general personal particulars.

### **Data Analysis**

Pearson product-moment and simple linear regression were used in data analysis.

**Results and Discussion**

**Table 1: Correlation**

Variable	Age		Gender		Marital Status		Work duration	
Statistic	sig.	Statistic	sig.	Statistic	sig.	Statistic	sig.	
Emotional exhaustion	-.584	.001						
Depersonalization	.863	.000	.694	.000	-	-	-	
Reduced Personal Accomplishment	.790	.001	.528	.000	.493	.001	-	

From table 1, it was established that a negative relationship exists between age and emotional exhaustion. Consequently, age does not influence emotional exhaustion. On the other hand, there is a positive relationship between depersonalization and age. An increase in age has a direct link to feelings of worthlessness especially when the teacher perceives that the working conditions are stressful. Further, it was established that there is a positive relationship between reduced personal accomplishment and age.

**A predictive model of teacher burnout syndrome in international schools in Nairobi County**

**Table 2: Linear Regression**

**Model Summary**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.757 <sup>a</sup>	.574	.553	.987

There is a positive correlation ( $r_{xy} = .757$ ) between sociodemographic factors and teacher burnout syndrome. 55.3% of the sociodemographic factors account for variations in teacher burnout syndrome.

**Coefficients**

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	1.613	.687		-2.348	.021
Age	.499	.097	.562	4.749	.000
Gender	.421	.219	.235	1.928	.057
Marital Status	.039	.046	.037	.634	.528
Work duration	.083	.098	.062	.841	.000

Predictive linear model

$$\begin{aligned}
 Y &= \alpha + \beta_1X_1 + \beta_2X_2 + \beta_3X_3 + \beta_4X_4 + \dots \\
 &= 1.613 + .562X_1 + .235X_2 + .037X_3 + .062X_4 \\
 &= 1.613 + .000 + 0.0134 + 0.0248 + 0.0245 \\
 &= 1.6757
 \end{aligned}$$

Premised on the predictive model, age, gender, marital status, and work duration predict teacher burnout syndrome.

**Conclusion and Recommendations**

The study established that advanced age, working for a long duration without leave, and gender are positively related to emotional depletion among teachers of international schools. Often, it affects work-life balance subjecting teachers to emotional distress. Weekly, full-time schoolteachers reported working more than 51 hours on average. Further, teachers acknowledged spending less than half of their time on teaching, while marking, lesson planning, and administrative tasks took a large portion of their non-teaching time.

Findings also demonstrated that most of the international schoolteachers are not receiving enough psychosocial support in resolving work-related issues - heavy workload, job recognition, and support in career development. Premised on the findings, this study recommends that teachers in international schools should be given more support from the line administrators. Additionally, school administrators should positively contribute to the career progression and well-being of teachers.

It was established that a positive working environment is a precursor to staff well-being. Schools' administration should, therefore, create an enabling environment that seeks to improve teacher well-being and enhance retention.

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