

# Role Ambiguity, Role Conflict and Different Dimensions of Burnout Among Head Teachers of Public Primary Schools in Kakamega County

Ambunya Lawrence Omollo\*, Dr. Samuel N. Maragia\*\*

\*Research Student, Department of Educational Psychology, Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology

\*\* Department of Educational Foundation, Psychology and Management, Kaimosi Friends University College.

DOI: 10.29322/IJSRP.9.10.2019.p9448  
<http://dx.doi.org/10.29322/IJSRP.9.10.2019.p9448>

**Abstract-** Research has shown that role conflict and role ambiguity are associated with burnout among head teachers of public schools and general educators. However, there is scanty literature from previous studies examining the relationship between role stressors and burnout among head teachers of public primary schools in Kakamega County, Kenya. The relationship between, role stressors and head teacher burnout was examined. A quantitative study of head teachers was done to determine the relationship between role stressors and different dimensions of burnout. The study was based on Role Stress Theory, Existential Theory, and the Sociological Burnout Theory. Descriptive and Correlation survey designs; systematic random, stratified and purposive sampling techniques were used to carry out the study. Data was collected using the role questionnaire and Maslach Burnout Inventory-Education Survey, in eclectic form and interview schedules. 261 head teachers and 12 Sub-County Quality Assurance and Standards Officers (SQUASO) were sampled. Eclectic Questionnaires and interview were used to collect data. Correlation and Multiple regression analysis were conducted to examine the relationships between the variables. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 22.0 was used to analyze the data. Data was presented in tabular form. The relationship between role stressors and different dimensions of burnout was found to be statistically significant. The findings of the study may add facts to the body of knowledge on burnout among head teachers in public primary schools. The information may be useful for further research and policy formulation on intervention strategies by relevant stake holders.

**Index Terms-** Burnout, Emotional Exhaustion, Depersonalization, Personal Accomplishment

## I. INTRODUCTION

Burnout is perceived as the number one reason for the increased rate of premature retirement of teachers due to psychosomatic disorders and symptoms (BauerJ, 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 fact, 40 to 50% of new teachers leave the profession after 5 years (Amos, 2014). Matin *et al.*, (2012) examined relationship between demographic variables and job burnout. The study revealed that burnout of employees in organizations may lead to the intention to leave the job.

New teacher evaluation reform measures are not without controversy. Some have gone so far as to include public humiliation as a criticism through published lists of “ineffective” teachers. One such publication subsequently resulted in a teacher suicide in California (Pathe & Choe, 2013).

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.

Demerouti defined emotional exhaustion as “a consequence of intense physical, affective and cognitive strain such as long-term consequences of prolonged exposure to certain job demands” (Demerouti *et al.*, 2010, p210). Anbar & Eker (2007) described emotional exhaustion as depletion of mental energy and devouring emotional resources. This dimension is characteristic of head teachers who suffer burnout. Naring *et al.*, (2012), found out that the most significant predictor of emotional exhaustion in teachers is emotional job demands. Humwi *et al.*, (2011), gave other source of emotional exhaustion as either or organizational conflicts while Haines & Saba (2012), mentioned retention of perceived identity in the company and environment as factors that can increase the exhaustion. According to these definitions, head teachers suffer emotional exhaustion as a result of depletion of their mental energy due to higher emotional job demands.

Cordes and Douherty (2012), describe depersonalization as a process in which an individual creates a psychological distance and sets boundaries when it comes to interaction and involvement with others. This is done as a defensive coping strategy as individuals want a buffer between themselves and the job. Pinz (2011), states that depersonalization emerges in the form

of cynical and negative attitudes towards recipients of the service. Demerouti and Baker (2007), elaborate the MBI's depersonalization component: individual is becoming indifferent and alienates oneself from recipients of their services while simultaneously developing cynicism towards meaningfulness of their job. On the other hand, Ting Yu (2014), described reduced personal accomplishment as lack of achievement and productivity at work accompanied by evaluating oneself as incompetent. Reduced Personal accomplishment denotes the tendency to hold diminished feelings of achievement (Maslach & Leicester, 2008). Zolnierczyk-Zreda (2005), described it as the tendency to evaluate oneself negatively regarding one's competence and productivity and a lowered sense of self-efficacy.

## II. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Mixed study design and method approach was used. Both descriptive and correlational research designs were to describe the phenomena and draw the relationships between the independent and dependent variables. 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 study. The selection was made from a list of schools obtained from the office of the County Director, Ministry of Education, and Kakamega County. Each school was assigned a random number from zero to the required  $n^{\text{th}}$  value for each Sub-County until the required number (257) for the County was obtained. Stratified sampling technique was used to obtain a random sample of head teachers for study. The schools were arranged into homogenous strata.

In non-probability sampling, purposive and saturated sampling techniques were used. Purposive sampling enabled the researcher to purposively target the head teachers in public primary schools for study. Purposive sampling technique (Neuman, 2014), was used because the respondents were especially knowledgeable about the question at hand (Denscombe, 2014; Krueger & Casey, 2015). Saturated Sampling technique was used to select a saturated sample of urban and sub-urban schools to increase their representativeness in the overall sample, since they are fewer compared to rural schools. The Role Stress Questionnaire, the Maslach Burnout Inventory-Education Survey (MBI-ES) and Semi-Structured Interview Schedules were used. 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 Questionnaires. Head teachers and Sub-County Quality Assurance and Standards Officers were privately and individually interviewed in their offices. Data analysis was guided by study objective. Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26.0 was used to analyze the data. Correlation and Regression analysis were conducted to establish the relationship between role stressors and the three dimensions of burnout. Analyzed data was presented in tabular form discussed and recommendations made.

## III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study intended to establish the relationship between role stressors and different dimensions of burnout among head teachers of public primary schools in Kakamega County. The results are presented in Table 1.0

### IV. CORRELATION BETWEEN ROLE STRESSORS AND DIFFERENT DIMENSIONS OF BURNOUT

Correlation analysis was done to determine the strength and direction of the relationship between role stressors and different dimensions of burnout. To determine the correlation between role stressors and dimensions of burnout, all the variables were converted to the same scale. The findings were as shown in Table 1.0

**Table 1.0: Correlation Matrix for Role Stressors and different Dimensions of Burnout**

Role Stressor		Emotional Exhaustion		
		Personal Accomplishment	Depersonalisation	Emotional Exhaustion
<b>Role Ambiguity</b>	Pearson Correlation	.232**	.311**	.237**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000
	N	254	254	254
<b>Role Conflict</b>	Pearson Correlation	.328**	.240**	.102
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.105
	N	254	254	254

From the results in table 1.0, it is evident that Role Stressors (Role ambiguity and Role Conflict) had a significant positive relationship with the three dimensions of burnout (Emotional Exhaustion, Depersonalisation and Personal Accomplishment), except for the correlation between Role conflict and Personal accomplishment which was given as  $r = .102$ ,  $p = 0.105$ . Lyndsey (2009) posits that a coefficient between  $+1.0$  and  $+0.5$  or  $-1.0$  and  $-0.5$  indicated a strong relationship,  $+0.5 > r \geq +0.3$  or  $-0.3 \geq r > -0.5$  revealed a moderate relationship,  $+0.3 > r \geq +0.1$  or  $-0.1 \geq r > -0.3$  highlighted a weak relationship while  $+0.1 > r > -0.1$  indicates very weak relationship between two variables. We can therefore conclude that Role Ambiguity has a moderate positive relationship with the Depersonalization and a weak positive relationship with Emotional Exhaustion and Personal Accomplishment respectively. Role Conflict has a moderate positive relationship with Emotional Exhaustion and Depersonalization and a weak positive relationship with Personal Accomplishment respectively. A research conducted in Kenya, on occupational tedium among primary school teachers in Nyanza Province, found Emotional Exhaustion to be positively correlated with Role Ambiguity ( $r = .75$ ,  $p = .01$ ). The researcher also found a positive correlation between Depersonalization and Role

Ambiguity ( $r=.87$ ,  $p= 0.05$ ).He concluded teachers who experience role ambiguity tend to be callous towards pupils (Otieno, 2011). He however found that Personal Accomplishment was negatively correlated with Role Ambiguity( $r=-.67$ ,  $p=.01$ , showing that the higher the role ambiguity among teachers, the lower their perception of reduced personal accomplishment (Otieno, 2011).

V. REGRESSION ANALYSIS TO DETERMINE THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ROLE STRESSORS AND DIFFERENT DIMENSIONS OF BURNOUT

Simple linear regression analysis was conducted to determine the relationship between role stressors on different dimensions of burnout. The findings are shown in Table 2.0.

**Table2.0: Simple Linear Regression Analysis to determine the Relationship between Role Stressors and different Dimensions of Burnout among Head Teachers**

Model		ANOVA			Regression Coefficients			
		F	Sig.	R <sup>2</sup>	$\beta$	Standardized Beta	t.	Sig
<b>Emotional Exhaustion</b>								
Model 1	Constant	F(1,252)=14.346	0.000	0.054	4.421		10.316	.000
	Role Ambiguity				.287	.232		
Model 2	Constant	F(1,252)=30.445	0.000	0.108	1.688		7.819	.000
	Role Conflict				.269	.328		
<b>Depersonalization</b>								
Model 1	Constant	F(1,252)=0.902	0.000	0.096	1.167		8.779	.000
	Role Ambiguity				.408	.311		
Model 2	Constant	F(1,252)=15.465	0.000	0.058	.865		3.672	.000
	Role Conflict				.209	.240		
<b>Personal Accomplishment</b>								
Model 1	Constant	F(1,252)=15.040	0.000	0.056	4.931		50.086	.000
	Role Ambiguity				.226	.237		
Model 2	Constant	F(1,252)=2.646	0.105	0.010	2.119		12.107	.000
	Role Conflict				.064	.102		

The regression analysis results show that both Role ambiguity and Role Conflict had a statistically significant relationship with Emotional Exhaustion dimension of burnout among head teachers of public primary schools in Kakamega County(  $R^2=.054$ ;  $F(1, 252) =14.346$ ,  $\beta = 2.87$ ,  $p <.05$  for Role Ambiguity and  $R^2=.108$ ;  $F(1, 252) =30.445$ ,  $\beta = 0.269$ ,  $p< .05$  for Role Conflict respectively). The findings reveal that Role ambiguity and Role Conflict explain 5.4% and 10.8% of the variance in the Emotional Exhaustion as indicated by  $R^2 = 0.054$  and  $R^2 = 0.108$ . The standardized beta coefficient,  $\beta= 0.232$  indicate that a unit change in Role Ambiguity leads to a 23.2% increase in the Emotional Exhaustion experienced by head teachers while, $\beta= 0.328$  indicates that a unit change in Role Conflict leads to a 32.8% increase in the Emotional Exhaustion among head teachers. Some earlier researchers also found role conflict and role ambiguity strong predictors of burnout among human service providers.

The findings agree with those of Cassandra (2015), who showed that role ambiguity and role conflict were significantly related with burnout among special and general educators. The study was based on Role Stress Theory in relation to the construct of burnout and multiple regression analyses performed to examine the relationship of role ambiguity and role conflict to each of the burnout scales. The regression analyses indicated that role ambiguity was significantly related to personal accomplishment in both special and general education co-teachers while emotional

exhaustion was significantly related to role conflict in both special and general education co-teachers. Thus the two role stressors showed a significant relationship with two dimensions of burnout- personal accomplishment and emotional exhaustion. Findings by Roohangiz *et al.*, (2014), in a quantitative and correlational study on the influence of Role Overload, Role Conflict and Role Ambiguity on occupational stress among nurses in selected Iranian Hospitals using a sample of 135 randomly selected nurses and analyzed using multiple regression analysis, showed that there was a significant, linear and positive relationship between role conflict, role ambiguity and occupational burnout. The results also showed that Role conflict was the strongest predictor to the occurrence of burnout.

Concerning Depersonalisation among head teachers in the County, the significant regression analysis results (  $R^2=.096$ ;  $F(1, 252) =26.902$ ,  $\beta = 0.408$ ,  $t = 5.187$ ,  $P< 0.05$  for role ambiguity and  $R^2 =.058$ ;  $F(1, 252) =15.465$ ,  $\beta = 0.209$ ,  $t = 3.933$ ,  $p<.05$  for role conflict) as shown in table 2.0, indicate that both Role Ambiguity and Role Conflict had a statistically significant relationship with Depersonalisation among head teachers of public primary schools in the County. The standardized Beta coefficient,  $\beta= 0.311$  indicates that a unit change in role ambiguity leads to a 31.1% increase in Depersonalization among head teachers in the County, while  $\beta = 0.240$  shows that a unit change in Role Conflict leads to a 24% increase in Depersonalisation among head teachers studied. Another earlier quantitative study

of 562 teachers in 9 primary state schools in Greece, using the Burnout Inventory (MBI) and multiple regression analysis, revealed that of the dimensions of burnout, Emotional Exhaustion showed a statistically significant (positive) correlation with role conflict. Similarly, positive affect and degree of role clarity (Role conflict and Role ambiguity scale) showed statistically significant (negative) correlation with emotional exhaustion. Regression analysis performed with personal accomplishment as the dependent variable showed that the factors of Role ambiguity and positive affect contributed significantly to burnout (Amada, 2013).

The regression analysis results on role stressors and Personal Accomplishment as shown in Table 2.0, reveal that role ambiguity had a statistically significant relationship with Personal Accomplishment among head teachers as indicated by a significant regression model;  $R^2 = 0.056$ ;  $F(1, 252) = 15.040$ ,  $\beta = 226$ ,  $t = 3.878$ ,  $p < .05$ . The findings highlight that Role ambiguity explains 5.6% of the variance in Personal accomplishment;  $R^2 = 0.056$ . From the regression analysis results in Table 2.0 on role ambiguity and Personal Accomplishment, the standardized beta coefficient,  $\beta = 0.237$  points out that a unit change in role ambiguity leads to a 23.7% increase in Reduced Personal Accomplishment among head teachers. Thus Role Ambiguity significantly predicted the occurrence of reduced accomplishment among head teachers in Kakamega County. Moreover, an earlier study by Cassandra (2015), revealed that role ambiguity and role conflict predicted burnout among teachers. The study examined the relationship between role stressors and the three dimensions of burnout and a multiple linear regression analysis was conducted to determine the relationship.

However, role conflict had no significant relationship with reduced Personal Accomplishment among head teachers of public primary schools in Kakamega County. This was indicated by an insignificant regression model;  $R^2 = 0.010$ ;  $F(1, 252) = 2.646$ ,  $\beta = 0.064$ ,  $t = 1.627$ ,  $p > .05$ . The findings revealed that Role conflict explained 1% of the variance in the Personal accomplishment as indicated by  $R^2 = 0.010$ . The standardized Beta coefficient,  $\beta = 0.102$  indicate that a unit change in Role conflict leads to a 10.2% increase in the Personal Accomplishment among head teachers in the County.

An earlier quantitative study found that Personal Accomplishment was negatively correlated with Role Ambiguity ( $r = -.67$ ,  $p = .01$ ), showing that the higher the role ambiguity among teachers, the lower their perception of personal accomplishment (Otieno, 2011).

## VI. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

From the correlation and regression analysis results it may be prudent to conclude that Role Stressors (Role ambiguity and Role Conflict) significantly predicted the occurrence of the three dimensions of burnout (Emotional Exhaustion, Depersonalisation and Personal Accomplishment), except for the relationship between Role conflict and Personal accomplishment which insignificant. This means that Role Conflict could not satisfactorily explain the occurrence of Reduced Personal Accomplishment among head teachers in the County.

It is recommended that the Teachers Service Commission (TSC) invests in both preventive curative burnout mitigation strategies. These should include prior training before 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 and upstaging of the guidance and counselling services in schools.

It is recommended that the employer thoroughly trains the head teachers on emerging roles. These include and are not limited to finance management and procurement, online registration of terminal examination candidates and teacher progressive evaluation.

## REFERENCES

- [1] Amada, D (2013). Combating the Downward Spiral: Burnout 'Support Networks and coping strategies of TESOL teachers at private language schools in Johannesburg, South Africa: Unpublished Doctoral Thesis. University of South Africa.
- [2] Bauer, J., Stamm, A., Virnich, K., Wissing, K., Muller, U., Wirsching, M. and Schaarschmidt, U. (2006). Correlation between burnout syndrome and psychological and psychosomatic symptoms among teachers. *International Archives of Occupational and Environmental Health*, 79, 199-204
- [3] Bold, T. (2011). Does abolishing fees reduce school quality? Evidence from Kenya. Unpublished manuscript. Retrieved from Burnside, R. (2012). Stepping into someone else's shoes: The effects of empathy development on student behavior *Rising Tide*, 5, 1-14.
- [4] Gloria, C.T., Fawik, K. E and Steinhard, M.A. (2013). Positive affectivity predicts successful and unsuccessful adaptation to stress. *Motivation and Education*, 37, 185 – 193.
- [5] Ingersoll, R. (2012) Beginning teacher induction: What the data tell us. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 93(8), 47-51. doi:10.1177/003172171209300811.
- [6] Innstrand, S. T., Langballe, E. M., Falkum, E., and Aasland, O. G. (2011). Exploring within and between gender differences in burnout: 8 different occupational groups. *International Archives of Occupational and Environmental Health*, 84(7), 813-824.
- [7] Maslach, C., Schaufeli, W.B. and Leiter, M.P. (2001). Job burn-out. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 52(1), 397-422.
- [8] Matin, H.Z., Kalali, N.S., and Anvari, M.R.A. (2012). Do demographic variables moderate the relationship between job burnout and its consequences? *Iranian Journal of Management Studies*; 5(1), 47-62.
- [9] Morales, A. I. R., (2011). Factors that foster Latina English language learners. Nontraditional student resilience in higher education and their persistence in teacher education. (Doctoral dissertation, Kansas City State University).
- [10] Otieno, K. (2011). "Leadership Behaviour and Occupational Tedium Among Primary School Teachers in Nyanza Province, Kenya". Unpublished thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in conflict resolution and management of Masinde Muliro University, Kenya.
- [11] Pas, E. T., Bradshaw, C.P., and Hershfeldt, P.A. (2012). Teacher- and school-level predictors of teacher efficacy and burnout: Identifying potential areas for support. *Journal of School Psychology*, 50, 129-145. doi: 10.1016/j.jsp.2011.07.003
- [12] Roohangiz, K., Zoharah, O., Farhad, A., Zainab, K. (2014). The influence of role overload, role conflict and role ambiguity on occupational stress among nurses in selected Iranian Hospitals. *International Journal of Asian Social Science*, 4(1):34-40.
- [13] Skaalvik, E. M., and Skaalvik, S. (2011). Teacher job satisfaction and motivation to leave the teaching profession: Relations with context, feelings of belonging and emotional exhaustion.

## AUTHORS

**First Author** – Ambunya Lawrence Omollo, Research Student, Department of Educational Psychology, Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology

**Second Author** – Dr. Samuel N. Maragia, Department of Educational Foundation, Psychology and Management Kaimosi Friends University College.