Journal of Africana Articles, ISSN 0002-0281 4(57), 1-19, 25th September 2026
https://journalarticles.africanaarticles.co.ke

Citation: Kiptim, R. J., Obura, C., & Koros, P. (2026). Influence of teachers' emotional exhaustion on learners' academic performance in public junior schools in Baringo Central Sub-County, Kenya. *Journal of Africana Articles, 4*(57), 1-19, 25th September 2026. DOI: https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.22960826

Influence of Teachers' Emotional Exhaustion on Learners' Academic Performance in Public Junior Schools in Baringo Central Sub-County, Kenya

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Abstract

The purpose of the study was to examine influence of teachers' emotional exhaustion on learners' academic performance in public junior schools in Baringo Central Sub-County, Kenya. The study's research question was: To what extent do teachers' emotional exhaustion influence learners' academic performance in public junior schools in Baringo Central sub-county? The study is grounded on Maslach's Burnout Theory. A mixed methods research approach guided by a convergent design was employed. The quantitative component adopted a cross-sectional survey design, while the qualitative component was guided by a phenomenology design to capture participants' lived experiences. The target population comprised of 78 public junior schools, including: 78 heads of institutions, 274 junior school teachers, 3 quality assurance and standards officers, and one sub-county director of education. Sampling techniques used included stratified sampling for schools, stratified and simple random sampling for teachers, and criterion purposive sampling for heads of institutions, QASOs, and SCDE. This resulted to a sample of 8 schools, 8 heads of institutions, 74 junior school teachers, 3 QASOs, and 1 SCDE. Data collection instruments used were questionnaires for teachers, interview guides for heads of institutions, QASOs, and the SCDE, a document analysis guide, and an observation guide. Teacher burnout was measured using the Maslach Burnout Inventory-Educators Survey (MBI-ES). Findings were presented using tables. Instrument validity was ensured through face, content, criterion, and construct validity, while reliability was tested using Cronbach's Alpha (≥0.81). Qualitative data were analysed thematically using NVivo, guided by credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability, with ethical considerations observed. The study found that teachers' emotional exhaustion significantly influenced learners' academic performance in public junior schools in Baringo Central Sub-County, with highly exhausted teachers demonstrating reduced instructional effectiveness, limited learner support, and decreased classroom engagement. The study concluded that addressing teacher emotional exhaustion is essential for improving learning outcomes. It recommended strengthening teacher welfare programmes, providing psychosocial support, promoting manageable workloads, and enhancing school-based interventions aimed at improving teachers' emotional well-being and instructional effectiveness.

Key Words: Teachers' emotional exhaustion; Teacher burnout; Learners' academic performance; Instructional effectiveness; Teacher well-being; and Learner achievement

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Background to the Study

Teacher emotional exhaustion has increasingly become a critical concern in the education sector due to its potential influence on teachers' effectiveness and learners' academic outcomes. Emotional exhaustion refers to a state of emotional and psychological depletion that occurs when teachers experience prolonged occupational stress, excessive workload, and continuous demands associated with teaching responsibilities. According to Madigan and Kim (2021), emotional exhaustion is a central dimension of teacher burnout that manifests through feelings of being emotionally overextended, fatigued, and unable to cope effectively with professional demands. In teaching, prolonged emotional exhaustion may reduce teachers' motivation, commitment, and ability to provide effective instructional support to learners. Consequently, learners' academic performance, reflected through achievement levels, classroom participation, and learning progression, may be affected by the quality of teacher engagement and instructional delivery (UNESCO, 2022; UNICEF, 2024). Understanding the extent to which teachers' emotional exhaustion influences learners' academic performance is therefore essential, particularly in public junior schools where teachers operate under diverse institutional pressures.

Teacher emotional exhaustion and its relationship with learners' academic performance has attracted global attention among education researchers and policy organizations. The World Bank (2023) emphasizes that teachers' psychological well-being is closely associated with the quality of teaching and learning outcomes, as emotionally exhausted teachers may experience difficulties in maintaining effective classroom interactions and implementing learner-centred approaches. Similarly, UNESCO (2022) highlights that excessive workload, inadequate resources, and limited professional support contribute to teacher stress, which may negatively affect instructional effectiveness. The International Labour Organization (2021) further identifies challenging working conditions, occupational demands, and insufficient institutional support as factors contributing to teacher exhaustion and reduced job satisfaction. UNICEF (2024) notes that these challenges are particularly significant in education systems experiencing increased enrolment, resource constraints, and curriculum reforms. Therefore, examining teachers' emotional exhaustion provides important insights into factors that may influence learners' academic experiences and achievement.

Research conducted in developed countries demonstrates a relationship between teachers' emotional exhaustion and learners' academic outcomes. For instance, Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2020) examined teacher emotional exhaustion in Norway and established that emotionally exhausted teachers experienced reduced instructional effectiveness, which subsequently affected learners' learning experiences. The study further indicated that supportive school leadership played an important role in reducing the negative effects of teacher stress by enhancing teachers' motivation and professional commitment. Similarly, Madigan and Kim (2021) investigated teacher burnout-related factors in the United Kingdom and found that emotional exhaustion was associated with reduced teacher engagement and weaker teacher–learner relationships. Their findings suggested that when teachers experience persistent emotional strain, they may have

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limited capacity to provide individualized support and maintain positive classroom interactions, which are important for promoting learners' academic success.

Further evidence from developed countries highlights the influence of teacher emotional exhaustion on classroom practices and learner achievement. Collie (2021) examined teacher well-being and professional functioning in Australia and found that teachers experiencing psychological strain were less likely to employ innovative teaching strategies and demonstrate strong instructional commitment. The study emphasized that professional development and supportive working environments can enhance teachers' sense of effectiveness and improve learning outcomes. In the United States, Pressley (2021) examined teacher stress during the COVID-19 pandemic and reported that increased occupational demands contributed to emotional exhaustion, reduced teaching effectiveness, and challenges in maintaining learner engagement. However, schools that implemented teacher wellness initiatives reported improved teacher morale and more positive learning environments. These findings demonstrate that emotional exhaustion is not only an individual teacher concern but also an institutional issue requiring supportive interventions to enhance both teacher well-being and learners' academic performance.

In Africa, teachers' emotional exhaustion has become an increasing concern due to persistent challenges affecting the teaching profession, including inadequate resources, high workloads, large class sizes, and limited professional support. These contextual challenges may increase teachers' emotional demands and reduce their ability to effectively engage learners during instruction. Mahlobo (2022) examined the relationship between teacher emotional exhaustion and learner achievement in South Africa and found that teachers experiencing high levels of emotional exhaustion demonstrated reduced classroom management abilities and limited instructional effectiveness, which negatively influenced learners' academic outcomes. The study further revealed that schools providing mentorship and teacher support programmes experienced improved teacher resilience and learner achievement. This suggests that institutional support mechanisms may play an important role in reducing the effects of emotional exhaustion on educational outcomes.

Similarly, Adewale et al. (2021) investigated teacher emotional challenges and learner engagement in Nigeria and established that emotionally exhausted teachers were less likely to maintain positive classroom relationships and provide adequate academic support to learners. The study indicated that reduced teacher enthusiasm and limited interaction with learners contributed to lower levels of learner engagement and academic achievement. However, schools characterized by collaborative professional relationships and peer support systems reported improved teacher motivation and classroom effectiveness. These findings demonstrate that emotional exhaustion may influence not only teachers' psychological well-being but also their ability to create supportive learning environments necessary for improved learner performance.

Further evidence from African countries highlights the contribution of school-related factors to teacher emotional exhaustion and its consequences on learners' academic outcomes. Mugizi and Bakkabulindi (2020) examined teacher-related factors influencing instructional effectiveness in Uganda and found that teachers experiencing reduced professional confidence

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demonstrated lower commitment to curriculum implementation, which affected learners' learning outcomes. The study emphasized that continuous professional development could strengthen teachers' confidence and improve instructional practices. In Ghana, Amponsah et al. (2021) examined factors contributing to teacher stress and burnout and found that inadequate teaching resources, limited leadership support, and challenging working conditions increased teachers' emotional strain. The study established that schools with supportive leadership structures and adequate resources experienced improved teacher satisfaction and better learner achievement. These findings highlight the importance of examining emotional exhaustion within specific educational contexts where institutional conditions may intensify or reduce its effects.

In Kenya, recent studies indicate that teachers' emotional exhaustion is increasingly associated with challenges affecting instructional effectiveness and learners' academic performance. Mutai (2022) examined teacher emotional burnout and learner performance in Nairobi County and found that emotionally exhausted teachers experienced reduced motivation, decreased classroom engagement, and difficulties in providing effective learning support. The study established that schools offering counselling services and teacher welfare initiatives recorded improved teacher well-being and better learner outcomes. Similarly, Ochieng (2023) investigated teacher psychological challenges in Kisumu County and reported that prolonged work-related stress reduced teachers' professional commitment and negatively affected learner engagement. However, the study also noted that supportive school leadership, recognition programmes, and positive working relationships contributed to improved teacher morale and enhanced academic performance among learners.

In Baringo Central Sub-County, public junior schools continue to experience contextual challenges that may contribute to teachers' emotional exhaustion and influence learners' academic performance. The implementation of Competency-Based Education (CBE) has increased teachers' responsibilities through continuous assessment, learner monitoring, competency tracking, portfolio development, and individualized learner support. Unlike the previous curriculum system that largely emphasized content delivery and examination preparation, CBE requires teachers to adopt learner-centred approaches, conduct frequent assessments, provide timely feedback, and engage in professional development activities. These additional responsibilities may increase teachers' workload, emotional demands, and occupational stress, potentially contributing to emotional exhaustion among teachers in public junior schools.

Furthermore, teacher workload and teacher–learner ratios remain significant factors influencing emotional exhaustion in public junior schools in Baringo Central Sub-County. Inadequate staffing may result in larger classes, increased marking responsibilities, limited individual learner attention, and challenges in implementing competency-based approaches effectively. According to the Teacher Service Commission (TSC, 2022), workload distribution remains a concern in public schools, with some teachers handling extensive instructional and administrative responsibilities. Such conditions may contribute to emotional fatigue, reduced instructional enthusiasm, and limited capacity to provide personalized academic support to

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learners. Consequently, learners may experience reduced teacher engagement, which may affect their academic performance.

Additionally, inadequate instructional resources, limited professional support, and restricted opportunities for teacher development may intensify emotional exhaustion among teachers in Baringo Central Sub-County. When teachers lack sufficient teaching materials and institutional support required for effective curriculum implementation, they may experience frustration, reduced confidence, and declining professional motivation. The World Bank (2023) notes that teacher working conditions significantly influence instructional quality and learner outcomes. Therefore, investigating the influence of teachers' emotional exhaustion on learners' academic performance within the context of public junior schools in Baringo Central Sub-County is necessary to understand how teacher psychological well-being relates to educational outcomes.

Although extensive research has examined teacher burnout and occupational stress internationally and nationally, limited empirical evidence exists regarding the specific influence of teachers' emotional exhaustion on learners' academic performance in public junior schools in Baringo Central Sub-County. Many previous studies have examined teacher burnout as a general concept without isolating emotional exhaustion as a specific dimension and establishing its relationship with learners' academic achievement. Furthermore, limited studies have explored how contextual factors associated with public junior schools, including workload demands, CBE implementation, teacher shortages, and resource limitations, contribute to emotional exhaustion and subsequent effects on learners' academic outcomes. This study therefore seeks to address this gap by examining the influence of teachers' emotional exhaustion on learners' academic performance in public junior schools in Baringo Central Sub-County, Kenya.

Statement of the Problem

Teachers who are engaged, driven, and have low levels of burnout are necessary to improve students' academic performance (Madigan & Kim, 2021; UNESCO, 2022). However, depersonalisation, diminished personal achievement, growing emotional exhaustion, and work discontent continue to threaten teaching effectiveness both in Kenya and worldwide. Due to heavy workloads and insufficient resources, over 60% of teachers in Sub-Saharan Africa are said to suffer from moderate to severe burnout (World Bank, 2023). Concerns regarding declining teacher well-being have also been voiced by Kenya's Teachers Service Commission (2022), especially in light of the Competency-Based Education (CBE) implementation, which has increased teachers' administrative, instructional, and assessment responsibilities, increasing occupational stress and decreasing instructional effectiveness.

Education stakeholders in Baringo Central sub-county, including school administrators, teachers, parents, and Quality Assurance and Standards Officers, have voiced concerns about rising teacher stress, dwindling morale, and uneven student academic performance. The quality of teaching and learning in public junior schools may be influenced by burnout, according to reports of excessive workloads, teacher exhaustion, and decreased learner support. Despite these uncertainties, there is little empirical data connecting the sub-county's learners' academic

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performance to the aspects of teacher burnout, such as emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation, and diminished personal success. The creation of evidence-based therapies is hampered by this information gap. Thus, the purpose of this study is to investigate how teacher burnout influence students' academic performance in public junior schools in Baringo Central Sub-county, Baringo County, Kenya.

Research Question

To what extent do teachers' emotional exhaustion influence learners' academic performance in public junior schools in Baringo Central sub-county?

Theoretical Framework

The study was anchored on Maslach's Burnout Theory, developed by Christina Maslach and Michael Leiter in 1997. The theory explains burnout as a psychological response resulting from prolonged occupational stress, particularly among individuals working in human service professions such as teaching. According to Maslach and Leiter (1997), burnout consists of three interconnected dimensions: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment. Emotional exhaustion refers to feelings of being emotionally drained and unable to cope with continuous professional demands, while depersonalization involves developing detached attitudes toward learners, and reduced personal accomplishment reflects feelings of diminished competence and effectiveness. The theory is relevant to this study because it provides a framework for understanding how teachers' emotional exhaustion, arising from excessive workload, curriculum demands, and limited institutional support, may influence their instructional effectiveness and consequently learners' academic performance in public junior schools in Baringo Central Sub-County.

A key proposition of Maslach's Burnout Theory is that burnout develops through the interaction between individual experiences and workplace conditions. The theory identifies six areas of work-life mismatch that contribute to burnout: workload, control, reward, community, fairness, and values. When teachers experience excessive workload, limited autonomy, inadequate recognition, poor professional relationships, and insufficient support, they are more likely to experience emotional exhaustion, which may reduce their commitment and effectiveness in classroom practice. Recent studies have shown that supportive leadership, professional development opportunities, and collaborative school environments can reduce teacher burnout and enhance instructional quality (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2020). This perspective is applicable to the current study because public junior schools in Baringo Central Sub-County experience contextual challenges such as increased responsibilities associated with Competency-Based Education, high teacher workload, and limited resources, which may contribute to teachers' emotional exhaustion and affect learners' academic outcomes.

One of the major strengths of Maslach's Burnout Theory is its multidimensional approach to understanding teacher burnout. Unlike approaches that consider occupational stress as general fatigue, the theory explains burnout through specific psychological experiences, particularly emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment. This enables

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researchers to examine how emotional exhaustion specifically affects teachers' professional behaviours and educational outcomes. The theory also provides a strong connection between workplace conditions and individual psychological responses, making it useful in explaining how factors such as workload, institutional support, and teacher–learner relationships may influence teaching effectiveness. Studies have demonstrated that teacher emotional exhaustion is associated with reduced classroom engagement, lower instructional effectiveness, and decreased learner achievement (Fiorilli et al., 2021; Madigan & Kim, 2021). Therefore, the theory provides a suitable foundation for examining the relationship between teachers' emotional exhaustion and learners' academic performance.

Despite its strengths, Maslach's Burnout Theory has some limitations. One major criticism is that the theory largely relies on self-reported measures of burnout, which may be influenced by individual perceptions and personal circumstances. Teachers may interpret or report emotional exhaustion differently depending on their coping abilities, work experiences, and environmental conditions. Additionally, the theory primarily focuses on psychological and workplace factors but may not fully explain broader contextual issues such as educational policies, socioeconomic conditions, resource availability, and cultural influences that shape teachers' experiences. Furthermore, although the theory explains factors associated with burnout, it provides limited explanation of the long-term processes through which emotional exhaustion develops and changes over time. However, despite these limitations, Maslach's Burnout Theory remains appropriate for this study because it provides a comprehensive framework for understanding how prolonged occupational stress affects teachers' emotional well-being, instructional practices, and ultimately learners' academic performance in public junior schools in Baringo Central Sub-County, Kenya.

Review of Related Empirical Literature

Tikkanen et al. (2022) conducted a study in Finland to examine the relationship between emotional exhaustion and school outcomes and the effectiveness of pedagogical practices. The aim was to explore teacher burn-out trends and their impact on students' achievement. This study was done with a quantitative approach and longitudinal survey design. The target group were teachers from elementary and lower secondary schools. Stratified random selection was used to select a sample of 2312 teachers. The Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) and performance metrics at the school level were used to gather data. Excessive emotional fatigue was shown to significantly reduce the quality of teaching, and consequently negatively impact student performance. The study recommended the following: institutional support systems, reduced workload, and teacher wellness programs, to alleviate burnout and improve the teaching outcomes.

The study provides understanding information, but it is limited in its applicability to poor countries since the study was conducted in Finland, a well-resourced developed country and with well-resourced schools. Furthermore, in junior schools, it was not possible to measure learners' academic performance directly but a general focus was given on the quality of instruction. Additionally, the contextual factors such as teacher-workload in rural schools and limited resources were not considered. The current study, by focussing on emotional exhaustion among

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teachers in Baringo Central sub-county of public Junior Schools, closed these gaps by providing a direct link between emotional exhaustion and learners' academic performance in a local and resource-limited learning context.

Kraft, Simon, and Lyon (2021) conducted a study in the United States to assess the relationship between students' academic performance and teacher burnout. The goal was to ascertain how learner outcomes and instructional techniques are impacted by emotional tiredness. The data source was the national teacher data and the study adopted a quantitative correlational approach. The target population was the teachers in schools and the sample size consisted of approximately 1200 teachers selected at random. The data was collected using standardized student achievement data and validated burnout data. The findings indicated that classroom engagement and instructional efficacy were lower for those teachers who were emotionally exhausted and, in turn, negatively related to students' academic performance. In order to increase student outcomes and teacher well-being, the study suggested policy changes that would concentrate on workload management, teacher support, and mental health interventions.

The study took place in the US, where the teacher support systems and educational environments are very different from those in the developing world. It was based on secondary data and, therefore, did not possess depth in context and did not capture actual classroom dynamics. Further, the study did not focus on settings in the junior school as this is a different type of learner. The current study addressed these gaps by identifying the extent of teachers' emotional exhaustion and its impact on learners' academic performance in Baringo Central sub-county public junior schools through primary research.

The effect of teacher burnout (emotional exhaustion) on students learning performance and teachers' effectiveness was examined by Agyapong et al. (2024) in Ghana. The study's goal was to ascertain how student engagement and instructional delivery in schools are impacted by burnout. Targeting public school teachers, the study used a cross-sectional survey design and a quantitative methodology. Using stratified sampling procedures, a sizable sample of educators was chosen. Standardized burnout questionnaires were used to gather data, and reliability was verified by Cronbach's alpha coefficients more than 0.80. However, it was not clearly described in the study that the research design was comprehensive. The results showed that emotional exhaustion had a detrimental impact on academic achievement by drastically lowering student engagement and instructional effectiveness.

The study's exclusive use of a quantitative approach and the fact that it did not clearly specify an all-inclusive research design were also insufficient to give a more in-depth understanding of the contextual, geographical and cultural factors affecting emotional exhaustion and learner outcomes. To overcome this limitation, the present study incorporateed convergent parallel design and mixed methods approach. The study was entirely questionnaire based, without any specific mentioning of issues of ethics, validity and reliability measures such as piloting. Besides complete adherence to ethical research guidelines, the current study ensured piloting, content and face validity, and was triangulated with questionnaires, interview guide, observation guide and document analysis guide.

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In order to examine the connection between learner outcomes and teacher burnout, Padmanabhanunni and Pretorius (2023) carried out a study in South Africa with an emphasis on emotional exhaustion. The aim of the study was to examine the relationship between teachers' psychological health and the learning outcomes of students and teaching quality from the perspective of teachers. The study employed a survey research design and a quantitative technique as it focused on secondary school teachers. A random selection procedure was used to select a sample of teachers. Data were collected by using structured questionnaires that measured teaching ability and burnout level. Validity factors were not thoroughly investigated; however, reliability was reported as being above acceptable levels. The findings indicated emotional weariness negatively impacted the quality of teaching due to the loss of psychological well-being, which ultimately affected the learners' performance in their study.

The study's use of a single-method quantitative methodology limited its ability to examine teachers' actual experiences as well as the larger institutional and cultural settings that impact burnout. Current study was a mixed method study with convergent parallel design to understand both statistical relationships and qualitative sense of the situation across different geographical context. Second, the study failed to cover triangulation and validity techniques such as piloting and ethical issues sufficiently, due to the use of questionnaires. The current study used different data collection strategies including survey, interview and document analysis, and meet all the ethical guidelines for research, apart from ensuring content and face validity.

Koech (2022) examined the relationship between academic performance of students of public secondary schools and teacher burnout in Uasin Gishu County, Kenya. The aim of the study was to determine the impact of emotional tiredness of teachers on pupil's achievement and syllabus coverage. All of the county's public secondary school teachers were the focus of this quantitative study, which used a descriptive survey design. The number of teachers sampled was 310 teachers obtained by stratified random sampling. Data was collected through structured questionnaires while academic performance of the pupils was obtained through school records. Expert review was used to guarantee validity, and a Cronbach's alpha coefficient greater than 0.75 was used to assure reliability. Based on the results, it was concluded that emotional fatigue of the teacher greatly affected the ability of teachers in achieving curriculum coverage and caused the students' achievement to be low.

The study was only quantitative, which limited the extent of in-depth analysis of teacher experiences and contextual factors influencing academic achievement and emotional burnout. Moreover, it left out key actors such as school administrators and education officers who also have an impact on policy implementation and lesson delivery and focused only on teachers. By using a mixed methods approach to record both quantitative trends and qualitative insights, the current study filled up these gaps. To improve validity and application, it also used a representative sample, incorporate a variety of stakeholders, such as teachers, institution heads, quality and standards officers, and sub-county director of education, and follow ethical guidelines.

Research Design and Methodology

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The study adopted a mixed-methods approach using a convergent parallel research design to examine the influence of teachers' emotional exhaustion on learners' academic performance in public junior schools in Baringo Central Sub-County, Kenya. A research design provides a systematic framework that guides the collection, analysis, and interpretation of data to answer research questions effectively (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). The convergent parallel design was appropriate because it enabled the researcher to collect quantitative and qualitative data concurrently, analyze the two data strands separately, and integrate the findings during interpretation to provide a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). Quantitative data were collected from teachers through questionnaires to measure levels of emotional exhaustion and its perceived influence on learners' academic performance, while qualitative data were obtained from heads of institutions, Quality Assurance and Standards Officers (QASOs), and the Sub-County Director of Education (SCDE) through semi-structured interviews to explore contextual experiences related to teacher emotional exhaustion and learner outcomes.

The study was conducted in Baringo Central Sub-County, Baringo County, Kenya, which provided an appropriate context for examining teachers' emotional exhaustion within public junior schools. The sub-county comprises public junior schools operating under the Competency-Based Education (CBE) framework, where teachers are required to implement learner-centred approaches, conduct continuous assessments, monitor learner competencies, and provide individualized academic support. Baringo Central Sub-County was selected because public junior schools experience contextual challenges associated with increased teacher workload, resource limitations, and changing curriculum demands, which may contribute to teachers' emotional exhaustion. The area therefore provided a suitable setting for investigating how teachers' psychological well-being influences classroom practices and learners' academic performance. The study generated evidence on the relationship between teacher emotional exhaustion and educational outcomes within the local school context.

The target population comprised 356 respondents, including 274 teachers, 78 heads of institutions, three Quality Assurance and Standards Officers, and one Sub-County Director of Education in public junior schools in Baringo Central Sub-County. Teachers were included because they directly experience emotional exhaustion arising from teaching responsibilities and are responsible for implementing instructional practices that influence learners' academic performance. Heads of institutions participated because they provide school leadership, manage teacher welfare, and understand institutional factors contributing to teacher emotional exhaustion. QASOs and the SCDE were included because they provide supervisory and policy perspectives regarding teacher support, workload management, and educational quality assurance. Sampling involved stratified and simple random sampling for teachers, purposive sampling for heads of institutions, and census sampling for QASOs and the SCDE to ensure representation of different perspectives related to teacher emotional exhaustion and learner performance.

Data were collected using structured questionnaires for teachers and semi-structured interview guides for heads of institutions, QASOs, and the SCDE. The instruments were aligned

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with the study variables, particularly teachers' emotional exhaustion indicators such as emotional fatigue, workload-related stress, reduced teaching energy, and challenges in maintaining classroom engagement, alongside learners' academic performance outcomes. Validity of the instruments was enhanced through expert review and alignment with the study objectives, while reliability of quantitative instruments was established using Cronbach's Alpha, with coefficients of 0.70 and above considered acceptable for research purposes. Trustworthiness of qualitative data was ensured through credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability procedures. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics, including means, standard deviations, correlation, and regression analysis, while qualitative data were analyzed thematically. The integration of quantitative and qualitative findings provided a comprehensive understanding of how teachers' emotional exhaustion influences learners' academic performance in public junior schools in Baringo Central Sub-County.

Presentation, Interpretation, and Discussion of Findings

The first research question aimed to determine the degree to which learners' academic performance in public junior schools in Baringo Central sub-county was influenced by teachers' emotional exhaustion. Using a five-point Likert scale (5 = Strongly Agree (SA), 4 = Agree (A), 3 = Uncertain (U), 2 = Disagree (D), and 1 = Strongly Disagree (SD), teachers were asked to indicate how much they agreed with statements on emotional tiredness. The findings are displayed in Table 1.

Table 1

Teachers' Responses to Emotional Exhaustion and Learner Academic Performance (n=70)

Statement	SA	A	U	D	SD	Mean	Std. Dev.
I feel emotionally drained after teaching.	14 (20.0%)	27 (38.6%)	10 (14.3%)	11 (15.7%)	8 (11.4%)	3.40	1.29
Teaching workload leaves me exhausted.	16 (22.9%)	25 (35.7%)	9 (12.9%)	12 (17.1%)	8 (11.4%)	3.41	1.32
Fatigue influences my lesson delivery.	15 (21.4%)	17 (24.3%)	11 (15.7%)	14 (20.0%)	13 (18.6%)	3.10	1.44
Exhaustion reduces my learner support.	13 (18.6%)	29 (41.4%)	10 (14.3%)	13 (18.6%)	5 (7.1%)	3.46	1.20
Tiredness influences my lesson preparation.	17 (24.3%)	26 (37.1%)	12 (17.1%)	9 (12.9%)	6 (8.6%)	3.56	1.24
Fatigue delays my feedback to learners.	14 (20.0%)	23 (32.9%)	11 (15.7%)	12 (17.1%)	10 (14.3%)	3.27	1.35
Exhaustion limits my varied teaching methods.	13 (18.6%)	28 (40.0%)	10 (14.3%)	10 (14.3%)	9 (12.9%)	3.37	1.30
Fatigue reduces learner motivation.	15 (21.4%)	29 (41.4%)	8 (11.4%)	9 (12.9%)	9 (12.9%)	3.46	1.32

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Source: *Researcher (2026)*

According to Table 1, 27 (38.6%) and 14 (20.0%) teachers agreed that they felt emotionally exhausted after teaching, whereas 10 (14.3%) were unsure, 11 (15.7%) disagreed, and 8 (11.4%) strongly disagreed. The item showed moderate agreement but some heterogeneity in teachers' experiences, with a mean of 3.40 and a standard deviation of 1.29. The unfavorable conclusion is that 41 (58.6%) teachers reported experiencing emotional exhaustion, which could limit their ability to continue teaching effectively. Nonetheless, 19 (27.1%) disagreed or strongly disagreed, indicating that some teachers maintained their emotional fortitude. According to Maslach's Burnout Theory, a key element of burnout that depletes teachers' psychological resources is emotional exhaustion. This finding substantiates the findings of Tikkanen et al. (2022), who revealed that emotional exhaustion decreased the quality of instruction and, as a result, learners' academic performance.

Additionally, 25 (35.7%) teachers agreed that their workload left them fatigued, while 16 (22.9%) strongly agreed. By contrast, 8 (11.4%) strongly disagreed, 12 (17.1%) disagreed, and 9 (12.9%) were unsure. Teachers' responses varied, but the mean of 3.41 and standard deviation of 1.32 show moderate agreement. The negative finding is that 41 (58.6%) respondents reported feeling exhausted from their workload, which could reduce their enthusiasm for teaching and helping learners. On the other hand, 20 (28.6%) disagreed or strongly disagreed, suggesting that not all teachers were equally influenced by workload. According to the Self-Efficacy Theory, teachers who have greater confidence in their abilities may be better able to handle challenging workloads. The findings support the findings of Kraft, Simon, and Lyon (2021), who linked emotional exhaustion to lower learner engagement and instructional efficacy.

Table 1 show that 15 (21.4%) teachers highly agreed and 17 (24.3%) agreed that exhaustion influenced how lessons were delivered, while 11 (15.7%) were unsure. On the other hand, 13 (18.6%) strongly disagreed and 14 (20.0%) disagreed. The statement showed significant variations in teachers' opinions, with the lowest mean of 3.10 and the biggest standard deviation of 1.44. While 32 (45.7%) respondents said that exhaustion affected how lessons were delivered, 27 (38.6%) disagreed or strongly disagreed, resulting in a somewhat mixed response. While the opposing responses show resilience among others, the negative findings implies that a significant percentage of teachers may find it difficult to conduct teaching due to exhaustion. According to Maslach's Burnout Theory, emotional exhaustion is associated with a diminished ability to carry out work-related tasks efficiently. This finding validates the findings of Agyapong et al. (2024), who found that teachers' instructional efficiency and learner engagement were significantly lowered by emotional exhaustion.

Thirteen (18.6%) respondents strongly agreed and twenty-nine (41.4%) agreed that their capacity to support learners was diminished by fatigue. Thirteen (18.6%) disagreed, five (7.1%) strongly disagreed, and ten more (14.3%) were unsure. Overall agreement with comparatively less fluctuation when compared to other items is indicated by the mean of 3.46 and standard deviation of 1.20. As a result, 42 (60.0%) teachers admitted that weariness decreased learner support. This is a troubling finding since learners may receive less tailored support when teachers are worn out.

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However, 18 (25.7%) disagreed or strongly disagreed, indicating that some teachers persisted in helping learners in spite of their weariness. According to equity theory, teachers may be less inclined to put forth more effort if they see a disparity between their efforts and the incentives or assistance that are offered. Similar findings were made by Padmanabhanunni and Pretorius (2023), who discovered that emotional weariness impaired teaching quality by lowering psychological well-being.

Twelve (17.1%) teachers were unsure, whereas 17 (24.3%) definitely agreed and 26 (37.1%) felt that fatigue affected their class preparation. On the other hand, 6 (8.6%) strongly disagreed and 9 (12.9%) disagreed. The item with the highest mean (3.56) and standard deviation (1.24) showed that fatigue had a significant influence on lesson planning. In total, 43 respondents (61.4%) agreed with this influence, whereas 15 respondents (21.4%) disagreed or strongly disagreed. The unfavorable finding suggests that emotional tiredness could impede proper planning and eventually influence the quality of instruction. The observed disagreement, however, indicates that some teachers are able to continue preparing in spite of exhaustion. According to Maslach's Burnout Theory, chronic emotional tiredness is linked to decreased productivity and vitality in the workplace. In a similar vein, Koech (2022) demonstrated that instructor emotional exhaustion hindered curriculum coverage and resulted in lower student accomplishment.

Regarding feedback to learners, 11 (15.7%) teachers were unsure, whereas 14 (20.0%) strongly agreed and 23 (32.9%) felt that exhaustion delayed feedback. However, 10 (14.3%) strongly disagreed and 12 (17.1%) disagreed. The standard deviation of 1.35 and mean of 3.27 indicate significant variations in teachers' experiences combined with a moderate degree of agreement. The fact that 37 teachers (52.9%) reported delayed input is significant since prompt feedback helps students see their shortcomings and improve their academic work. However, 22 (31.4%) disagreed or strongly disagreed, indicating that not all teachers were prevented from giving criticism by exhaustion. According to the Self-Efficacy Theory, teachers who are more confident in their ability to manage their teaching obligations may continue to use effective techniques in spite of pressure from their jobs. This is somewhat consistent with the findings of Kraft et al. (2021), who revealed that emotional exhaustion influenced classroom involvement and instructional efficacy.

Thirteen (18.6%) teachers highly agreed and twenty-eight (40.0%) agreed that their capacity to diversity educational approaches was hampered by fatigue. Nine (12.9%) strongly disagreed, ten (14.3%) disagreed, and ten more (14.3%) were unsure. With a standard deviation of 1.30 and a mean of 3.37, the responses showed moderate agreement with minor variation. As a result, 41 (58.6%) respondents reported having trouble utilizing a range of teaching strategies. This is a negative finding because various learner requirements may require instructional variety. However, 19 (27.1%) disagreed or strongly disagreed, indicating that some teachers may continue to use flexible teaching methods. According to Maslach's Burnout Theory, the psychological energy needed for ongoing professional engagement is reduced by emotional exhaustion. Thus, the findings validate the findings of Tikkanen et al. (2022), who linked high levels of emotional exhaustion to decreased pedagogical practice effectiveness.

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Regarding learner motivation, 29 (41.4%) teachers agreed and 15 (21.4%) strongly agreed that their exhaustion decreased learner motivation. On the other hand, nine (12.9%) disagreed, nine (12.9%) strongly disagreed, and eight (11.4%) were unsure. With a mean of 3.46 and a standard deviation of 1.32, the item indicated broad agreement but discernible diversity among responders. A total of 44 respondents (62.9%) admitted that teacher fatigue decreased student motivation, suggesting that emotional exhaustion may have an influence on learners' involvement in the classroom in addition to teachers. On the other hand, 18 (25.7%) disagreed or strongly disagreed, suggesting that certain teachers may be able to protect learners from their exhaustion at work. According to equity theory, teachers' motivation and effort may decrease if they believe there is an imbalance between their professional inputs and outcomes. According to Agyapong et al. (2024), student engagement and instructional delivery were adversely influenced by teachers' emotional exhaustion.

The general trend across the eight statements shows that a significant percentage of teachers were clearly experiencing emotional exhaustion. Of the 560 item-level responses, 204 (36.4%) agreed and 117 (20.9%) strongly agreed, whereas 81 (14.5%) were unsure, 90 (16.1%) disagreed, and 68 (12.1%) strongly disagreed. While individual standard deviations varied from 1.20 to 1.44, the overall item mean was roughly 3.38, indicating moderate agreement but variance in the intensity of teachers' experiences. Because emotional exhaustion reflects the depletion of psychological and emotional resources brought on by extended work demands, Maslach's Burnout Theory offers a clear explanation. Overall, the findings are in line with those of Tikkanen et al. (2022), Padmanabhanunni and Pretorius (2023), and Agyapong et al. (2024), who linked teacher emotional exhaustion to lower educational outcomes, instructional quality, and engagement.

With a mean of 3.56 (SD = 1.24), fatigue's impact on lesson preparation was the biggest issue overall. Fatigue's impact on learner motivation and exhaustion's influence on learner support came in second and third, respectively, with means of 3.46. With a mean score of 3.10 (SD = 1.44), fatigue's influence on lesson delivery had the comparatively lowest agreement, indicating that the direct instructional influence was less frequently felt. Therefore, the findings show both positive and bad aspects: lesson planning, feedback, instructional variety, learner support, and motivation were all influenced by emotional exhaustion, while a significant percentage of teachers claimed that these areas were unaffected. According to Maslach's Burnout Theory, varying degrees of emotional weariness can result in varying degrees of professional damage. The findings mostly substantiate the findings of Koech (2022), Kraft et al. (2021), and Tikkanen et al. (2022), who connected emotional exhaustion to worse learner outcomes and less effective instruction.

According to the observation guide, some teachers showed symptoms of emotional weariness while teaching in the classroom. When dealing with learners, the researcher saw that some teachers were physically exhausted, employed few instructional strategies, and shown diminished passion. Teachers used teacher-centered approaches extensively, provided little one-on-one time, and took their time answering questions from learner. As a result, several students seemed less focused and eager to engage in class activities. Despite their burden, other teachers continued to be engaged, employed a variety of teaching strategies, and maintained constructive

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relationships with learners. These findings indicated that teachers were affected differently by emotional weariness, but when it was severe, it decreased classroom engagement, learner support, and instructional energy, all of which could have a detrimental effect on students' academic achievement.

The document analysis guide also demonstrated how teachers' instructional and evaluation records could reveal signs of emotional weariness. Lesson plans, work plans, student exercise books, assessment records, and academic progress records were all checked by the researcher. Certain documents revealed insufficient lesson preparation records, inconsistent marking of students' work, minimal written comments, and delayed syllabus coverage. There were occasionally fewer corrections and follow-up comments in the practice books of students who performed worse academically. Despite having rigorous teaching obligations, a number of teachers kept up-to-date professional records, regular assessments, and consistent feedback. The findings therefore demonstrated that although not all teachers were similarly affected by burnout, emotional weariness could interfere with class planning, evaluation, feedback, and curriculum covering, generating circumstances that could lead to poorer academic achievement for students.

Emotional exhaustion among teachers was reflected through reduced enthusiasm, inadequate lesson preparation, delayed marking, limited learner support, and decreased use of varied teaching approaches," according to the heads of institutions. They also linked fatigue to high workloads, demanding curricula, big class sizes, and extra administrative duties. According to Table 1, 42 (60.0%) teachers said that fatigue decreased student support, whereas 43 (61.4%) teachers agreed or strongly agreed that fatigue influenced class preparation. In a similar vein, 41 (58.6%) said that fatigue restricted the use of different instructional strategies. The heads of institutions noted that these challenges might lower learner involvement and ultimately have an influence on academic performance. However, they also clarified that some seasoned teachers maintained their productivity in spite of fatigue due to well-established coping strategies and dedication to their careers. One oof the heads of institutions noted:

> Teachers are handling many responsibilities at the same time, especially with the demands of junior school. Some instruct many classes, create tests, learners' work, and carry out other school-related tasks. You can tell that some people are truly worn out at the end of the day. Lesson planning, learner feedback, and one-on-one assistance may suffer as a result, which ultimately influences learners' understanding of the material being taught (HOI 3, Personal Communication, July 14, 2026).

This finding corroborates Table 1, especially the 43 (61.4%) teachers who stated that fatigue affected their ability to prepare lessons. It implies that extended fatigue may have an indirect impact on academic achievement by lowering the standard and regularity of instructional support.

"Teacher emotional exhaustion was becoming an important concern because teachers were expected to manage increased curriculum responsibilities while simultaneously meeting learners' academic and administrative needs," according to the SCDE. Persistent exhaustion was linked by the respondent to decreased motivation, delayed feedback, poor lesson planning, and a restricted capacity to give students individualized attention. This opinion was supported by Table 1, which

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showed that 44 (62.9%) teachers said that exhaustion decreased learner motivation and 37 (52.9%) teachers agreed or strongly agreed that fatigue delayed feedback. However, because individual resilience, school leadership, staffing levels, and task distribution varied among schools, the SCDE noted that emotional tiredness did not influence all teachers equally. Therefore, the findings imply that the effects of emotional weariness on teaching and learning may be exacerbated or lessened by institutional settings. The SCDE went on to say:

> Teachers' effectiveness is likely to decline when they continuously work under pressure without enough time to recover. Even if a teacher is exhausted, the quality of their interactions with students may not be the same. There might be less time for individual students, fewer follow-up, delayed marking, and less creative instruction. These problems have the potential to progressively affect student engagement and ultimately academic achievement (SCDE, Personal Communication, July 16, 2026).

The response supports the quantitative findings, especially the 37 (52.9%) teachers who reported delays in giving feedback and the 41 (58.6%) teachers who cited restrictions in using a variety of teaching approaches. It illustrates how emotional tiredness can influence performance not just through teacher absence but also through lowered instructional quality.

According to the QASOs, "emotional exhaustion could be observed through declining instructional preparedness, incomplete professional records, reduced classroom interaction, slow syllabus coverage, and limited follow-up of learners' academic difficulties." They clarified that teachers' emotional strain occasionally worsened due to ongoing pressure to meet curriculum goals and enhance exam results. Their findings were in line with Table 1, which shows that 41 (58.6%) teachers said they felt emotionally spent after teaching and another 41 (58.6%) said they were worn out by their job. They also noted that teachers' ability to maintain learner motivation may be influenced by weariness, a concern expressed by 44 (62.9%) teachers who agreed or strongly agreed that fatigue decreased learner motivation. Nonetheless, the QASOs stressed that reasonable job distribution and encouraging school leadership could lessen these effects. One of the QASO clarified,

> During school visits, we sometimes find teachers who are committed but clearly overwhelmed by the amount of work they are required to accomplish,". You may become aware of shortcomings in lesson planning, marking, feedback, and the application of various teaching strategies when fatigue persists. Learners who need more explanation are likely to be most influenced because an exhausted teacher may not have enough energy or time to give them individualized assistance According to (QASO 1, Personal Communication, July 18, 2026.

This viewpoint is in line with Table 1, where 41 (58.6%) teachers cited limits in a variety of teaching approaches and 42 (60.0%) instructors acknowledged decreased student assistance. The answer suggests that students who need more instructional attention may be disadvantaged by emotional exhaustion, which could lead to disparities in academic achievement.

The findings, both quantitative and qualitative, consistently demonstrated that teachers' instructional efficacy and learners' academic performance were adversely influenced by emotional

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exhaustion. In terms of numbers, 43 (61.4%) teachers said that fatigue had an influence on lesson planning, 42 (60.0%) said that it decreased learner support, and 44 (62.9%) said that it decreased learner motivation. Additional evidence of reasonable agreement across the items was provided by the means, which ranged from 3.10 to 3.56. These findings were documented by qualitative data from classroom observations, document analysis, heads of institutions, the SCDE, and QASOs, which showed that worn-out teachers had slower syllabus coverage, less varied instruction, limited learner attention, incomplete instructional records, and delayed feedback (Koech, 2022; Kraft et al., 2021; & Tikkanen et al. (2022). Nonetheless, other teachers continued to be productive in spite of their weariness, indicating that institutional support, experience, and resilience may mitigate the negative impacts of burnout on instruction.

Conclusion

The study concludes that teachers' emotional exhaustion significantly influences learners' academic performance in public junior schools in Baringo Central Sub-County, Kenya. Prolonged emotional strain arising from increased workload, curriculum implementation demands, inadequate resources, and limited institutional support may reduce teachers' instructional effectiveness, classroom engagement, and ability to provide individualized learner support. The findings suggest that teacher well-being is closely connected to educational outcomes, as emotionally exhausted teachers may experience reduced motivation and effectiveness in facilitating learning. Therefore, addressing emotional exhaustion among teachers is essential for improving teaching quality and enhancing learners' academic achievement. The study emphasizes the need to consider teachers' psychological well-being as an important component of educational

Recommendations

The study recommends that the Ministry of Education, Teachers Service Commission, and school administrators strengthen teacher support systems aimed at reducing emotional exhaustion in public junior schools. Schools should implement teacher wellness programmes, counselling services, workload management strategies, and supportive leadership practices to enhance teachers' psychological well-being. Additionally, adequate staffing, provision of instructional resources, and continuous professional development should be prioritized to reduce occupational stress associated with teaching responsibilities. School leaders should regularly assess teachers' emotional well-being and create collaborative working environments where teachers can share challenges and receive support. These interventions may improve teachers' instructional effectiveness and contribute to improved learners' academic performance in public junior schools.

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