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Experience, Age, and Burnout: Implications on Motivation and Retention of Student Affairs Personnel (SAP) in Kenyan Universities

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Abstract

The core mandate of the Student Affairs Personnel (SAP) in Kenyan universities is to work with students right from admission to graduation. The SAP are often required to spend considerable and intense time with students facing psychosocial and physical problems. Such an environment can easily lead to burnout among the SAP if not checked. Burnout is a state of mental, physical and emotional exhaustion resulting in job dissatisfaction, lowered productivity, absenteeism and high turnover at the workplace. This article addresses how burnout levels vary based on age and experience of the SAP and the implications this has on their motivation and retention in Kenyan universities. The Maslach Multidimensional theory conceptualizes burnout in three core components; emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and reduced personal accomplishment. The findings indicate that a higher percentage of the younger SAP and those who had worked for less than five years are more affected by burnout than the other categories. This is evident when they become exhausted, and finally become less interested in personal development or they quit their job. Burnout is a reality among the SAP in Kenyan Universities and is highly influenced by institutional culture, the culture within the Student Affairs department and the day-to-day experiences of the SAP. Majority of SAP as human service providers do not recognize when they are burning out, therefore creation of burnout awareness, coupled with adoption of relevant interventions is necessary among the affected staff. This will lead to a productive work environment and motivated personnel. At the end of this article, there is a proposed model for burnout mitigation suitable for the SAP and any other human service provider in Kenya and beyond.

INTRODUCTION

Burnout is a behavioral response of people who experience constant stress from working in occupations that require continued and intensive interaction with people (Cardenas, 2007). According to Grunfeld (2000), burnout results from constant or repeated emotional pressure associated with an intense involvement with people over long periods. When it comes to therapists, Cardenas (2007) adds that burnout is the therapists' painful realization that with such intense involvement, they have nothing left to offer to those in need of their services. According to Blood, Cohen and Blood (2007), burnout is a product of an interaction between overzealous helpers and clients who are in serious psychological need. Within the context of the student affairs profession, Palmer, Murphy, Parrott, and Steinke (2001) defined burnout as a lack of motivation, mental concentration, physical and emotional energy that result in poor job performance (p. 36). Symptoms of burnout according to Palmer et al (2001) include poor sleep, fatigue, a poor attitude, lack of satisfaction; weight changes, mood changes, and frequent illness. This indicates that the condition of burnout occurs most frequently in dedicated and committed workers, those who regard their own needs and wants as secondary, and therefore feel the pressure to give. Burnout therefore results from excessive striving to reach unrealistic expectations and values imposed by oneself, others or the society. It therefore stems from an individual's perception of a significant discrepancy between efforts (input) and reward (output).

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In most universities in Kenya, the office of student affairs takes the lead in identifying critical needs of students, and in providing the appropriate support services to students as well as to faculty (Vice Chancellor's Committee Report 2000). In support of the above Amy (2002 p. 246) says this;

To be maximally effective, however, student affairs personnel must know the needs and expectations of the many student sub-populations on campus, and must be able to anticipate potentially problematic mismatches between what students bring to the table and what will be required of them to succeed. This may well require more comprehensive assessments of students' "motives and desire to learn," their "reason for coming to college," and the "challenges and barriers" they may face as they immerse themselves in the college environment. It may also require increased cooperation with faculty and other academic personnel. Indeed, noting that student' academic learning and personal development are "inextricably intertwined and inseparable. The student affairs personnel are therefore called upon to work closely with faculty to foster student learning."

Demand for university education is on the increase in Kenya. Currently there are thirty-one public universities in Kenya (rising from one at independence-1963) and a higher number for chartered private universities. Though there is rapid expansion in universities, the provision of corresponding facilities and resources are inadequate (Vice Chancellor's Committee Report, 2000). Admission to the university marks the beginning of one's career preparation and hence requires one to make mental, physical and emotional adjustments (Adeli, 2013). The personnel in student's affairs department help students make the necessary adjustments to university life. According to the Vice Chancellors' Committee Report (2000), the SAP need to be well trained in basic principles of guidance and counseling in order to respond appropriately to students' anxieties and conflicts. Most universities in Kenya however are marked with insufficient staff in these departments, some with inadequate training to meet the needs of students and lack of infrastructural facilities like office space. Such conditions are likely to cause stress amongst the SAP, which in turn lead to inadequate service provision.

Among the student population in universities, there is a growing demand for counselling services. This is because of the upsurge of HIV/AIDS, life threatening sicknesses, psychologically related medical conditions, traumatic experiences, depression, criminal behavior, marital and family dysfunctions which all affect the students' academic and social life making the SAP to give more in terms of time, effort, skill and flexibility (Adeli, 2013). Cheruiyot et al. (2019) for instance state that according to the Kenya Aids Indicator Survey (KAIS 2012) HIV prevalence in universities stood at 2.2% with the 15-24 age group being the most vulnerable. Youths at university are therefore among the priority populations in HIV/AIDS programs. The student Affairs department handles such programs. Efforts to better prepare students for the varied demands of the college environment, such as ensuring the completion of the student program, managing expectations from parents and guardians' vis-a-vis possible barriers to success largely depend on the SAP who design mentoring programs and other support mechanisms to engage and sustain the at-risk students (Friedman, 2000). The SAP in Kenya are on call even after working hours just in case of any urgent issue that needs attention. This leads to 50 hours per week or 24-7 culture, which can easily lead to burnout. When people are available to work 24-7, the boundary between work and personal time dissolves and serious cases of workplace burnout can result. Saleh et al. (2007) notes that there are two big trends all over the world that cause burnout; the move to a 24-7 culture and the tightening bottom lines of companies. Globalization has also put pressure on everyone to increase productivity and this has led to job insecurity because to make this work, people must work harder, faster and longer than before and the SAP are no exception. Given the ever increasing student populations in universities in Kenya, this study established that burnout among the SAP is a progressive reality.

The challenge of burnout cannot be ignored in institutions of higher learning and specifically among the SAP who also vary in the expectations that they bring to their workplace. Secondly, the experience of burnout is unique to each individual and is specific to the work context in terms of the nature of work and the likelihood of achieving success. This article brings out the idea that it is important to value the role of the SAP and that their function of engaging students in the process of learning legitimizes their role as a partner in both higher education and the overall development of

college students. In trying to make the university environment conducive, the SAP provide counselling, chaplaincy, orientation, career placement and welfare services to students (Adeli, 2013). Unlike other people-oriented professionals, the SAP typically work under norms that expect them to invest continuously in emotional, cognitive and physical energy. The SAP are also faced with the demands to work for extra hours, the need for continuous retraining in the wake of accelerating pace of information technologies and the blurred line separating work and home life. These changes are likely to create a process of emotional exhaustion, mental weariness and physical fatigue. According to Ren and Hodges (2007), in such circumstances if self-care is ignored burnout is likely to set in. Burnout in the workplace is therefore becoming increasingly a critical problem for workers, employers and society as a whole (Ren & Hodges, 2007). The purpose of this study was to analyze the effects of burnout on productivity, motivation and retention of the SAP in Kenyan universities. The study specifically set out to establish the implication of personal attributes like age and experience in moderating and explaining burnout among the SAP. The main research questions that this study set out to answer were; in what ways does burnout levels based on the age and work experience of SAP in Kenyan Universities affect service provision to students? What should individuals and universities adopt to minimize burnout among the SAP?

METHOD

In this study, the instruments used for data collection were questionnaires and interviews. The SAP responded to the Burnout Questionnaire for Student Affairs Personnel (BQSAP) while the Deans of students responded to the Deans Interview Schedule (DIS). The BQSAP adopted from the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI), is a widely used tool to measure workplace burnout because of its strong psychometric properties when testing burnout. The MBI was modified to suit the objectives of this study. Stratification of the universities was done using the following criteria: They had to be chartered public or private universities, be distributed in different Counties within the country, and have a student population of more than one thousand, offering more than six-degree programs and a functional Student Affairs department. Purposive sampling was used to constitute the sample for the SAP. Only the SAP who were directly involved with students on a daily basis in the provision of psychological, spiritual, vocational and recreational services were selected to participate. Only 149 SAP met the inclusion criteria and participated in the study. Each SAP who participated filled a questionnaire while all the six Deans of students who participated were involved in face-to-face interviews. Percentages and frequencies aided in the analysis of descriptive statistics while the ANOVA test was employed in establishing differences in burnout levels across particular groups. The Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) aided in data processing and analysis. Data from the interview schedules was analyzed thematically and presented verbatim.

The Maslach's Multidimensional Theory of Burnout (Maslach, 2003) guided this study. The theory conceptualizes burnout in terms of its three progressive core components; emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and reduced personal accomplishment. Emotional exhaustion according to Maslach (2003) is a feeling of being emotionally over-whelmed and depleted of one's emotional resources because of work overload and personal conflict at work (Maslach, 2003). This leads to workers feeling drained and used up without any source of replenishment which paves way for depersonalization. Depersonalization in this case refers to a negative, cynical or excessively detached response to other people's needs, which often includes a loss of idealism. Depersonalization paves way to reduced personal accomplishment, which refers to a decline in feelings of competence and productivity at work. According to Foschi (2000), lowered sense of self-efficacy has been linked to depression and an inability to cope with the demands of the job and which is exacerbated by a lack of social support and of opportunities to develop professionally. In discussing burnout as a progressive problem, Fiadzo, Golembiewsky, Luo, Bradbury and Rivera (2007) as quoted in Adeli (2013, p. 28-29) state that for one to move from Maslach's burnout attitudes of emotional exhaustion to reduced personal accomplishment, one passes through five burnout levels, namely;

- A. **Normal:** Feeling a compulsion to prove self and neglecting own needs for the sake of the job.

- B. **Moderate:** Experiencing inner conflicts and physical symptoms and revising one's beliefs – no time for friends, play and any form of leisure.
- C. **High:** Denying emerging problems e.g. depersonalization and cynicism instead blame it on time pressure, and work - not recognizing change in behaviour but experiencing resentment leading to withdrawing from others.
- D. **Very High:** Becoming walled off as well as behaving differently and people get concerned.
- E. **Dangerous:** Experiencing inner emptiness and feeling low / depressed mood.

Unless there is an intervention for burnout, individuals gradually progress through these stages, and finally approach the dangerous level. At the dangerous level, they have totally burnt out and have no enthusiasm to do anything new. If such a professional offers any kind of human service, s/he is likely to do more harm than good (Fiadzo et al., 2007). In this case, as one progress through the mentioned five stages, they experience emotional exhaustion, which if not addressed leads to cynicism and finally to reduced personal accomplishment.

RESULTS

Based on the universities that participated in this study, staff in student affairs departments in both public and private universities in Kenya normally experience burnout. Results indicate that the SAP experienced all the five levels of burnout as earlier discussed. The levels might vary, but it is a reality that burnout occurs among the staff in the student affairs departments. In public institutions, more than half of the SAP (55.8%) had high levels of burnout compared to 49.2% in private institutions. Whereas 2.3% of the SAP in public institutions indicated suffering from dangerous levels of burnout, there was none from the private universities. This could be because of the high student population in public universities as compared to the private ones. One of the deans of students from a public University had this to say:

We all suffer from high burnout levels because of the student numbers. We only have 4 counsellors on main campus and one in each satellite campus. We are talking of over five thousand students per semester. These numbers are just too high! There are times you enter your office with a student in the morning and you cannot leave your seat because as you finish with one another one enters. We try to have schedules but what do you do with emergency cases that require immediate attention? You keep attending to them and before long, and without realizing, you have burnt out. You actually just become so emotionally exhausted that at times the work you loved doing or the students you looked forward to meeting do not excite you anymore.

The SAP were found to suffer from all levels of burnout ranging from 'normal' to 'dangerous' levels as shown in figure 1.

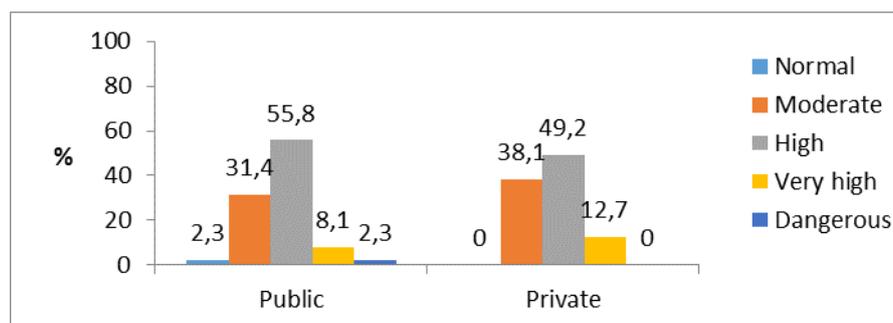


Figure 1. Burnout Levels among the SAP

In both public and private universities, majority of the SAP experience high and moderate burnout levels. A total percentage of 8.1% SAP for public universities and 12.7% private respectively experience very high burnout levels. When compared to the other levels, it might appear small but

concern comes in given that this is a very high burnout level bound to harm not only the SAP but their clients as well. Such high levels also negatively influence the motivation and retention of the SAP. In fact, the bar graphs for both public and private universities in figure 1 are quite similar implying that burnout can affect any SAP irrespective of type of university. According to Fiadzo et al. (2007), people experiencing moderate levels tend to be cynical and avoid company, those with high burnout levels are cynical and depersonalized while those with very high levels have reduced personal accomplishment. When one has a dangerous level of burnout, it implies that one has reached a level where one can no longer bother about self-care or even caring for others.

Causes of Burnout

In developing the background for understanding burnout among the SAP, the study sought to find out the SAP's level of awareness on causes of burnout. The details on the responses are in figure 2. The highest percentage of the SAP (32.1%) felt that too much work was the major cause of burnout followed by inadequate staff and personnel feeling that they lack the skills to do the job (each at 13.6%).

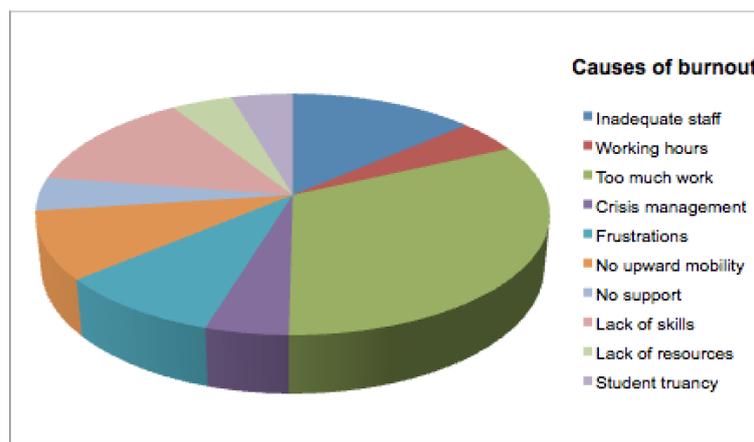


Figure 2. Causes of Burnout

Given that workload was the major cause of burnout as indicated in figure 2, it was important to establish the workload parameters that lead to burnout. From the findings presented in figure 3, it is clear that the student –SAP ratio is a leading cause of burnout, followed by the unscheduled workload (as represented by intense involvement, long hours, pressure, and deadlines when working with students). The ratio of student to the SAP is a major cause given that it appears in all the burnout levels as indicated in figure 3.

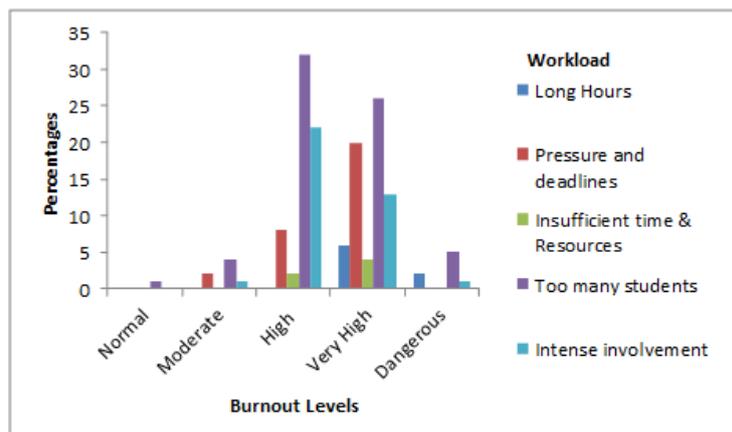


Figure 3. Common Causes of Burnout

Excerpts 1 and 2 from the Deans' interviews support the fact that majority of their staffs burnout as a result of too much work with about four of them referring to the student Affairs department as a 24/7 department. Majority of the Deans also cited inadequate staff as a cause to burnout because the lean staffs that they depend on tend to be overworked.

Excerpt One

One of the male respondents aged over 50 years who had worked for more than 15 years in one public university had this to say:

Our department engages in high-pressure jobs making us do crisis management most of the time and this wears us down. Students on campus know the student affairs as the only place to get help. Too many students rely on the merger staff and resources in the department. Personnel in my department therefore do everything that their customers (the students) put on the table- you know how students behave. In fact, students feel that the Dean of Students' place has all the answers so they keep coming to us for answers to everything, I mean everything. The Dean of students place is always the first stop in times of problems. You will never see such students unless things go wrong for them then they come rushing.

Excerpt Two

I think for us insufficient staff; long working hours, large clientele, lack of basic resources and sometimes role confusion because of insufficient staff are the major causes of burnout. I talk of role confusion because sometimes some students do not know the exact roles of my staff and so sometimes my staff find themselves attending to some issues not directly related to their job description. For example before you re -direct a student who comes to your office crying, you will need to do some psychological first aid before sending such a student to a counsellor. Our university also has a lot of bureaucracy leading to delays and frustrations. Though I am involved in decision making, many of my staff feel that additional causes could be due to being left out of the decision-making process,

Majority of the Deans were of the view that since there is a thin line between stress and burnout it is difficult for the SAP themselves to notice when they are actually burning out. This makes them not to be aware when they are exhibiting symptoms of burnout unless someone points it to them. Creation of awareness is therefore necessary.

Age and Burnout Levels of the SAP

This objective sought to establish the relationship between the SAP's age and their burnout levels. The study results indicated that 55% of the respondents were aged between 30-49 years, 30.9% were those of 50 years and above while the minority who were 14.1% were 29 years and below. This study considered those below 29 years to be the youthful workers, 30-49 to be the adults while those who were 50 years and above were in middle adulthood. This therefore implies that most student affairs departments have the adult and middle adult workers. Of interest is why the younger population does not find the student affairs department attractive enough to work or why the universities do not employ such age groups in this department. The findings indicate that those aged between 30-49 years were the majority (55%). Out of this percentage, 2% had very high burnout while 28% suffered from high burnout levels. Table 1 elaborates on this further.

Table 1. Age and Burnout Levels

Age	Burnout level and %					Total
	Normal	Moderate	High	Very High	Dangerous	
<29	0	6	7	1	1	15
30-49	5	20	28	2	0	55
>50	1	12	16	1	0	30
Total %	6	46	43	4	1	100

These results indicate that all the age groups experience moderate, high and very high burnout levels. Whereas 5% of the 30-49 and 1% of the 50 and above age groups experience normal burnout levels, there is none among those aged 29 and below. Most of the youthful SAP experience high burnout levels. Of all the age groups, the youthful were the only ones experiencing dangerous burnout levels. According to Maslach, Schaufeli and Leiter (2001), young employees view motivation in terms of higher salaries and quick financial returns, explaining why few of them work at the student affairs department. Age here is confounded with the work place so burnout appears to be more of a risk among the young SAP and those who burn out early in their careers are likely to quit their jobs hence few SAP are young. Early career burnout is therefore because of youthful employees have unrealistic expectations that are difficult to fulfil in a real working situation. One-way ANOVA tested the statistical relationship between the ages of Student Affairs Personnel and their burnout levels. The test indicated that there was no significant variation in burnout levels of the student affairs personnel by age ($F=2.683$, $P=0.072$). The qualitative results however had a slightly different view because all the participating Deans said that one's age had a relationship to burnout levels.

Excerpt Three

The younger employees tend to burnout faster than mature ones. This is because the mature ones are more experienced and able to cope but the younger ones get frustrated very easily and give up. They are also always on the run to make wealth and are likely to burnout faster. They carry the office to home and the home to office. It is a crazy group to work with but I find them very handy in the department.

One of the deans said that the 30 – 49 age group (who are considered the most productive) tend to be interested in improving their workplace and this can in the process make them burnout. The 50 plus on the other hand have an interest in recognition and long term monetary gains, they therefore experience moderate to high levels of burnout. They can also burn out when they realize that they are soon exiting employment but have not achieved what they intended to or have stagnated in some job group. According to Maslach et al. (2001), age is one variable that is consistently related to burnout but age does not have a significant impact on burnout levels unless it is confounded with work experience.

Working Experience and Burnout

In this study, experience was the number of years one had worked in the student affairs department. In the study, 1-5 years represented less experience while 20 years and above were those with most experience. Majority (51%) of the SAP had less experience because they had worked for less than six years in the student affairs department. Only 6.7% had worked for more than 20 years in the department. Burnout affected the SAP differently depending on the years of experience. Results show that only 1% of the respondents who had worked for less than 5 years and another 1% of the 6-10 cohort suffered from dangerous levels of burnout. No SAP who had worked for more than 10 years experienced dangerous levels. Majority (40%) in the 1-5 years category experienced moderate burnout levels while the rest of the categories had their peak at high burnout levels. Results in figure 4, indicate that the SAP with less experience burn out very fast as indicated by the sharp line graph

followed by those who have worked for 6-10 years. This could be because of the high expectations that this category come with as they take up employment. Those with high experience who have worked for over 20 years hardly have normal burnout but rather high and very high. Results from the interview schedule explain this as stemming from workload and anticipated stress that accompanies retirement given that majority in this category could be facing retirement. Generally, majority of the personnel in student affairs departments in both public and private universities were new since they had only worked there for five years or less, making them to have less experience hence more susceptible to burnout.

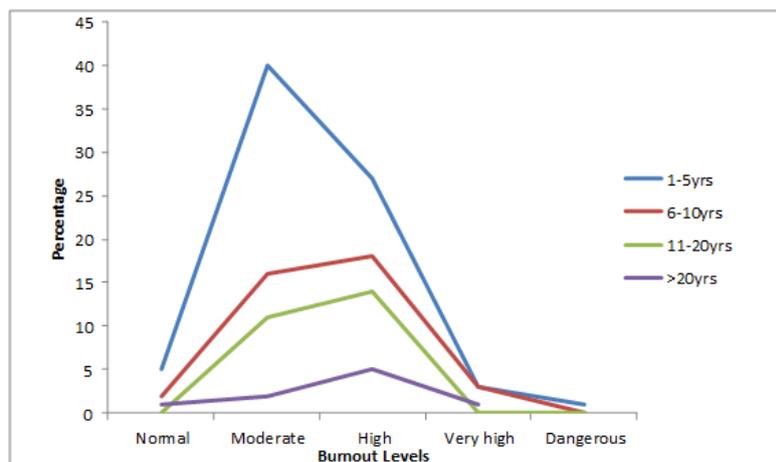


Figure 4. Working Experience and Burnout Levels

Results indicates that majority of the personnel have a working experience of less than five years in the student affairs department. Majority of these personnel also suffered from moderate burnout levels. The same group also experience very high and dangerous levels. An interaction on very high burnout level occurred among those whose experience was less than five years and those of 6-10 years implying that these are the groups that burnout faster. Results from the two way ANOVA test indicated that there was no significant variation in burnout levels of the student affairs personnel by working experience ($F=1.326$, $P=0.268$). Results from the interview schedules however revealed that 55.6 % of the respondents felt that new employees burnout faster while 22.2% felt that the adults as well as the middle aged adults similarly burn out, implying that experience did not act as a buffer in burnout levels of the SAP. Like in age, burnout appears to be more of a risk earlier in one's career but as one progresses, they seem to settle down and have lesser work related stressors .One of the deans had this to say ;

Excerpt Four

The younger team and those newly employed work so hard to make a name and they learn on the job, this process can lead to burnout. The younger staffs are like the students whom they serve. Students therefore access them very easily on phone making them to be occupied all the time and this can make them to burn out faster. Those who have worked for a longer period in the student affairs department have over the years understood their clientele and have set some boundaries. They know how to handle the students and it is not easy for the more experienced to burn out.

The findings of this study agree with a study done by Friedman (2000) who found that 30% of teachers employed each year abandoned their jobs in the first year of teaching because of the “reality shock”. He says that those with less experience normally come to the “reality shock” when their job expectations do not match the reality within the first years of employment, making them burn out and quickly leave the job. Lorden (2008) also noted that most entry-level positions in student affairs are quite stressful, unstable, confusing and unpredictable because as Renn and Hodges (2007) say, while some focus on the oversight of the entire department or programs, most new staff serve in the new

entry-level roles to gain experience. New professionals according to Ren and Hodges (2007) are the full-time staff who are brand new to student affairs, and who have zero to five years total work experience. Given their little experience, they work more hard and can easily burnout. Tourigny and Lituchy (2005), stressed that entry-level staff should develop a focus on establishing balance early in their roles as new professionals in order to develop a habit of practicing good self-care. The authors also suggest that the quality of professional life needs to have a higher focus among entry-level student affairs administrators, particularly due to the transitional challenges these staff have to negotiate in their first professional experience (p. 367).

In the current study, the SAP tend to systematically reduce in number as years increase with the smallest number (10) being those who had worked there for over 20 years. This is a 6.7% compared to 51% of the newly employed cohort. This implies that after about 5 years majority of the SAP do quit working in student affairs departments in Kenyan universities. Though this study did not establish the attrition rate and where the personnel go after leaving the department, a study in the students' affairs department of Indiana University, however established that the attrition rate was high due to burnout (Lorden, 2008). Lorden concluded that student affairs professionals leave the profession every year because of job dissatisfaction, role ambiguity, role conflict, role orientation, stress, overload and perceived opportunities for goal attainment, professional development and career advancement. Toma and Grady (2002), explain that there are limited opportunities for mobility within the student affairs because organizational structures in higher education are relatively flat. This means that many positions exist at entry level but the number reduces at each succeeding level forming a pyramid like structure. The study agreed with that of Lorden (2008) where 70% of the participating deans i reported that the situation in student affairs departments in Kenyan universities was marked with unclear career paths leading to professionals having multiple paths. In the current study, 19.4% of the participants have had a feeling of being in the wrong profession and 32.9% felt that they have worked in the students' affairs department for too long. This therefore implies that if they got another opportunity, they would actually leave the department. Majority of the Deans interviewed preferred part time teaching or any other extra activity though they also complained about time for such being limited. An extra activity can easily be a source of burnout as well since there are little or no targeted burnout interventions at different career stages in Kenya. Ren and Hodge (2007) say that those with less experience normally come to the "reality shock" when their job expectations do not match the reality within the first years of employment leaving them frustrated on the job and constantly looking for other job opportunities.

Mitigation Measures for Burnout among the SAP

Having established that burnout is prevalent among the SAP in Kenyan Universities, the study sought to establish effective procedures for mitigating burnout among the SAP in Public and Private Universities. Participants made several recommendations to help minimize burnout in both public and private universities as presented in figure 5.

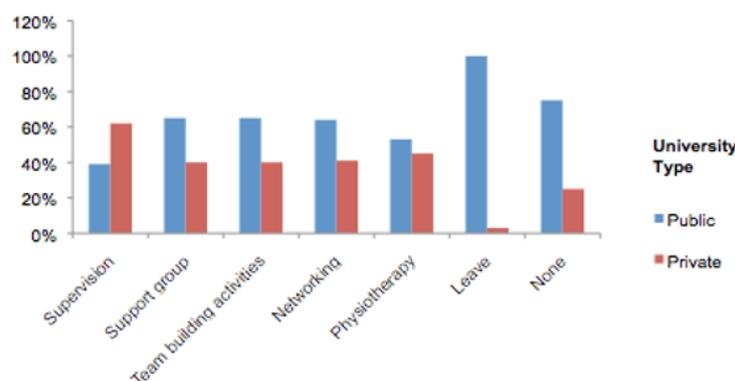


Figure 5. Burnout Minimization and Mitigation Measures

The various methods employed by individuals, Deans of Students and the Universities to minimize the SAP's burnout levels include supervision, support groups team building activities, retreats, networking with other universities, psychotherapy, and leave. An interesting issue is that whereas 96% of the SAP in public universities suggested leave as the best mitigation measure, less than 10% of the SAP in private universities recommended it, 66% were in favor of supervision instead. This is an area worth investigating. Excerpt 5 gives a summary of the mitigation measures as recommended by one respondent:

Excerpt Five

The management should hire more staff; give us better facilities because even office space alone can be a motivation. Some of my staffs have been mark timing in one salary scale for too long; I do not know what the management can do concerning such, even a letter or token of appreciation for them is a motivation. For some salary is such a motivating factor. I think we should also reach a level of giving the SAP one day in a week as their off day-especially after a busy period like after exams or student elections. Management should also consider having regular supervisions for my staff specially my counselors. This is because the cases that my counselors handle are emotionally draining and are likely to cause them burnout. The university should look for ways to appreciate that we play a very important role in this institution. We are the backbone of this institution and the first stop for every student in need of help.

Intervention Model

Regarding how entry-level student affairs staff can best manage the professional challenges within their position, Halbesleben, (2006), highlighted (a) receiving support, (b) understanding job expectations, (c) cultivating and promoting student learning, (d) progression within the field, (e) developing supervision skills, and (f) developing multicultural competencies as critical to the overall growth and development of new professionals (p. 369). NASPA adds that Student affairs staff should seek personal development, pursue opportunities for professional development, understand the environment of higher education and develop strong leadership traits through mentorship to avoid job burnout.

Based on these proposals and the current study findings, an integrated model to help deal with burnout in institutions of higher learning in Kenya was developed. The model has two procedures for burnout minimization; that is the commonly used reactive procedure and the integrated approach. The commonly used is the reactive procedure where one waits for burnout to occur and treats it. Since burnout occurs gradually and has long lasting effects, the model suggests that waiting to see its symptoms before intervening is a long and damaging process. The model suggests that instead of the long reactive approach to burnout, an integrated approach would be better, faster and with long lasting effects to the university and the SAP. It is integrated because it makes use of different psychological interventions (Intrapersonal, Interpersonal, Organizational and Inter-organizational) for burnout mitigation as indicated in figure 6.

The model acknowledges that though there are unique institutional and individual characteristics that can lead individuals to experience burnout, but immediately upon employment, staffs should be taken through a comprehensive orientation program to enable them settle down fast, understand the department and embrace the work ethics. This will also curb unnecessary stress that accompanies a new work place. The orientation program should include taking personality inventories to help in understanding the SAP and placing them in areas that they will enjoy working, Adeli (2013) makes reference to John Hollands's personality- job fit theory and states that most of the six personality types (Realistic, Investigative, Artistic, Social, Enterprising and Conventional) can all be used in the

student Affairs Department. An artistic counsellor for instance can use art therapy while a social one can do psychoeducation very effectively. While the enterprising counsellor will be useful in persuading students to attend counselling sessions while a conventional one will be good at keeping student records alongside counselling. This according to Adeli (2013) will help in mitigating burnout because the SAP will be doing what they enjoy. The burnout model also proposes giving regular self-awareness talks, personal and career development forums to help individuals understand themselves as well as their colleagues. This will in turn lead to a harmonious working environment and therefore burnout will be minimized. When this happens on a regular basis coupled with various measures to minimize burnout, the SAP will not feel the weight of the job demands. This should be a continuous process and once it is embraced, it becomes easy and cheap to use for the SAP and among other human service providers. Such a model in the end will help the institution to save on monies spent and lost on medication for burnout related illnesses as well as absenteeism from work. This will lead to a motivated SAP who are healthy and productive with minimal turnover providing an environment that help students to enjoy their university life from admission to graduation.

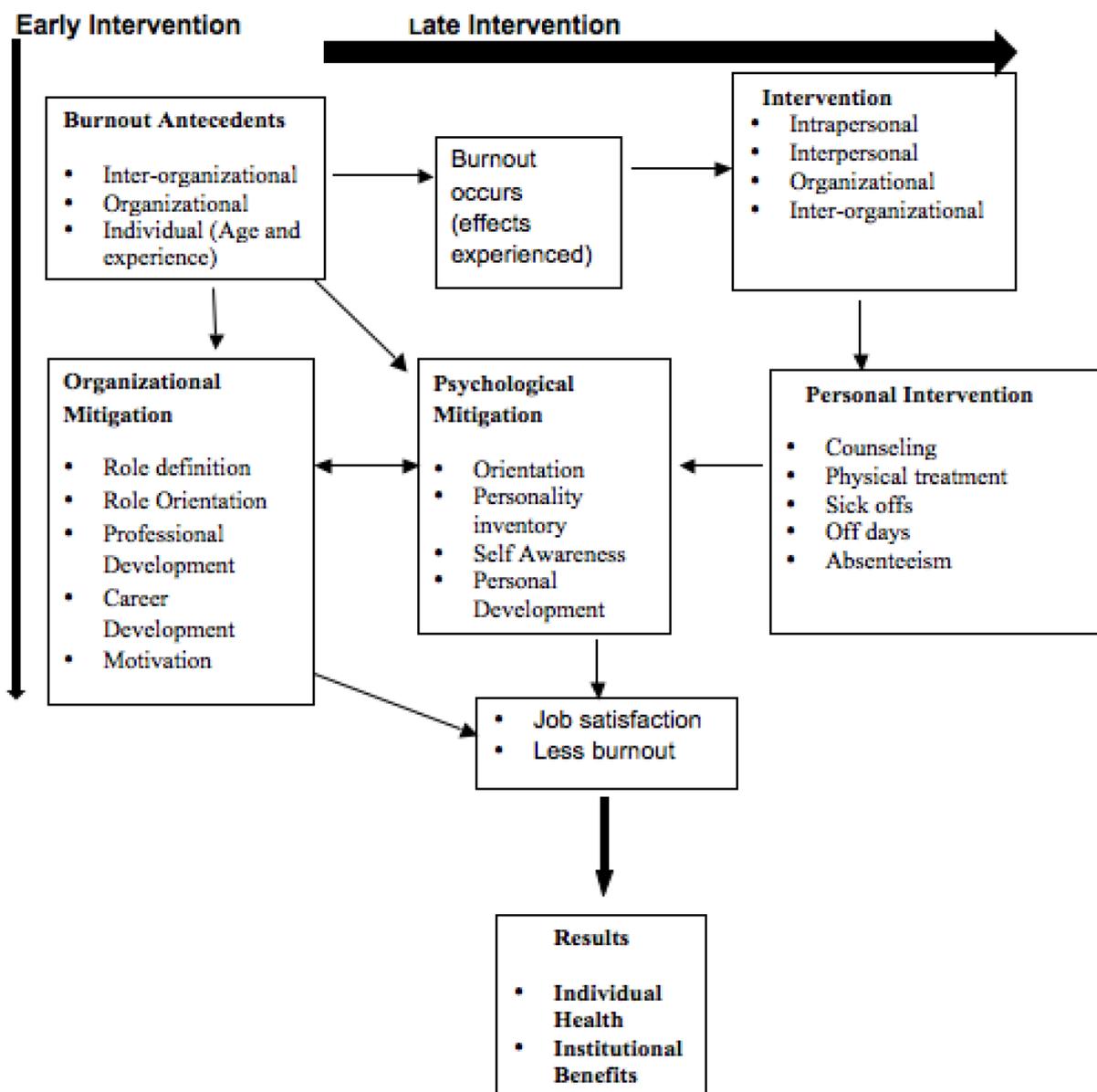


Figure 6. Burnout Mitigation Model (Adeli, 2013)

DISCUSSION

SAP in Kenya continuously work with students right from admission to graduation. They help students to navigate through their emotional, physical psychological, social and even academic difficulties. Such demands expose the SAP to burnout, which in turn affects the SAP's quality of life. Previous research examining the link between age and burnout has found that there was a significant negative correlation between age and both emotional exhaustion and depersonalization as measured by the Maslach Burnout Inventory. Work place experience produced similar results. Two theories are often advanced to account for this: those who suffered from emotional exhaustion or depersonalization at a younger age may have left the job either on grounds of ill-health or to seek alternative employment; older workers may have learned how better to pace themselves in their work in order to minimize opportunities for burnout (Renn & Hodges 2007). According to Friedman (2000), burnout appears to be more of a risk earlier in one's career and those who burn out early in their careers are likely to quit their jobs. This explains why there is a small number of the younger SAP in most Kenyan universities. The results show that the chronological age, and years in service are both negatively correlated with the emotional exhaustion and depersonalization subscales of burnout. In order to reduce the incidence of burnout among the SAP therefore, particular strategies need to be introduced for the care and support of the younger SAP.

In this study age was differently related to burnout among young, middle-aged, and Aging SAP. Among the SAP, the association between age and burnout was negative in the early work years, positive in the late work years, and non-existent in between. In other words, among the SAP, highest burnout prevalence was among the younger SAP and those who were above 50 years old. Burnout was not as high among the middle aged SAP. Lussier's (2006) review reports that the burnout condition develops gradually and if one does not address or solve it, the levels tend to be higher during the aging years and final stages of one's career life.

Results indicate that during the work career period, burnout both decreases and increases with age and experience which may reflect differential processes in the SAP's diverse phases of their career. Since burnout takes time to develop, results of this study imply that adjustment for service provision does not have a substantial effect of the age, experience -burnout -relationship. For the SAP however, at the final stages of their work career, burnout may reflect due to the accumulated effects of prolonged work stress, the growing demands for learning and flexibility in today's continuously changing work life and this may particularly tax aging workers (Amy, 2002). Findings of this study reveal that Age was differentially related to burnout in separate age groups though the study did not establish differentiation between the actual development of burnout and its effects during work career. A longitudinal research on burnout can be useful to better understand the relationships between age, experience and burnout.

The demographic characteristics of the participants in the present study were comparable to those in Lussier's (2006) study. Majority of the participants were aged 30-49 years (55%) and 51% had worked for less than 6 years in the student affairs department. All of them had a permanent contract in public universities or a contractual job for the private universities. The results showed that the majority of the participants experienced a moderate to high level of burnout. In line with our result, Lorden's (2008) study on burnout among SAP in Indiana University reported that burnout was highly prevalent and its level was higher than the average because of a strong relationship between burnout, age and experience. Lorden adds that the prevalence of burnout could also be the result of job-related stress as well as factors such as role ambiguity, role conflict, workload, work pressure and inadequate workplace conditions. Our study found that the majority of the participants had a high to moderate level of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization based on the relationship between age, experience and burnout levels. This in turn affects their retention and motivation. Based on the above, it seems that age and experience could have an adverse effect on burnout levels of the SAP in Kenya. The ability to handle burnout however improved with higher age and experience; therefore, more

experience could be associated with effective solving of unpredictable situations within the student affairs department.

The main strength of the present study is the inclusion of demographic variables and the use of the BQSAP, which was adopted from the MBI questionnaire to evaluate the subscales and levels of burnout among the SAP in Kenya. However, the small sample size was the main limitation, which in turn can affect the generalizability of the findings.

CONCLUSION

The results of the present study showed a high prevalence of burnout among the SAP in public and private universities in Kenya. The burnout levels and subscales were correlated with age and experience. Younger age and those who had less job experience were positively correlated with high and very high burnout levels leading them to be also high on the burnout subscales.

Like any other human service profession, the student affairs department is a human service department and this makes burnout inevitable. All the personnel irrespective of age or work experience burn out at one time or another during their work life at the university. From the findings of this study, it is evident that burnout is prevalent in both Public and Private Universities in Kenya and all the SAP experience burnout ranging from the normal to the dangerous levels. Results indicate however, that very little burnout mitigation is done in both Public and Private Universities in Kenya; not even creation of burnout awareness. The university management and the SAP are not aware of burnout as a serious barrier to service provision in this department and can lead to high turnover. Identification of those factors affecting the SAP burnout plays an important role in preventing this phenomenon in the student affairs departments. It is therefore important to address burnout at individual, collective and institutional levels where intrapersonal, interpersonal and organizational strategies can be adopted to minimize burnout. A well-managed SAP team will be beneficial to the university as a whole and these ripple positive effects benefit not only the student or the particular university but across the nation and beyond. This in turn will motivate the SAP leading to job satisfaction, less turnover and good service delivery.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Results of this study suggest that the SAP and more so the younger and aging workers and those with less experience may need tailored work –health promotion activities to curb the effects of burnout.
- In this study we have proposed the adoption of a burnout mitigation model to address issues of burnout among the SAP in Kenya and among all other human service providers in Kenya and beyond.

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