



IDENTITY CONSULTANCY

WELLNESS WHISPERS

VOLUME 2, ISSUE 2

Beyond the Game

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Dear Readers

Welcome to Volume 2, Issue 2 of *Whispers*, the quarterly digital newsletter of Identity Consultancy. This issue comes at a time when conversations about psychological well-being are becoming increasingly important; not only within clinical spaces, but also in our schools, workplaces, families, communities and everyday lives. Our overarching theme, "Psychology for Everyday Life," reflects a simple but powerful idea that psychology should not remain confined to textbooks, lecture rooms or therapy rooms. It must speak to the realities people experience every day. Psychology is not only about understanding the mind. It is about understanding people within their worlds and using that understanding to create healthier individuals, families, organisations and communities. Enjoy the issue.



The Editor
Tipedze Courage W

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How the Digital Divide is Failing a Generation of Zimbabwean Students.

By Doreen Chikanya



Aaron, a 12-year-old pupil in rural Zimbabwe, faced harsh obstacles: the lack of electricity and internet access meant he couldn't participate in online or radio lessons during the pandemic. This tangible barrier isn't just a resource gap—it is the defining force behind systemic injustice, with some students advancing while others are left behind and denied any opportunity for learning.

Having access to digital resources has become essential for academic success in a time when technology permeates every part of daily life. However, this dependence on technology has brought to light a startling fact: the digital divide, which is the gap between those who can use digital tools and

those who cannot. This divide is more than just a lack of access; it is a covert cause of educational inequality that stifles potential and prolongs cycles of disadvantage.

Unequal access to digital tools produces differences in academic performance but also profoundly affects students' self-esteem, motivation, and long-term prospects. The COVID-19 pandemic made this reality unavoidable. While some students easily adapted to online learning, others, particularly those from rural, marginalised, or economically disadvantaged backgrounds, were left behind. For instance, a study showed that only a small percentage of rural students had internet connectivity in Zimbabwe. Inadequate electricity infrastructure, frequent power outages, and high poverty rates further diminish the prospects for online learning for these students.

Despite the promise of digital innovation, the gap between those with and without access to technology is still growing, leading to increasing inequality, especially in education. A lack of devices, inadequate electricity, or poor connectivity prevented many students in Zimbabwe from using online platforms. Furthermore, even when online learning platforms are available, high data costs can prevent students from accessing educational materials. Some boarding schools and school administrators' decisions to forbid laptops and cell phones because they think they could impair students' performance show a lack of understanding of the role that technology plays in modern education. Although there are legitimate worries about



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about distraction, complete prohibitions may unintentionally worsen the digital divide by leaving students unprepared to function in a technologically advanced society.

Instead of outright banning technology, schools should think about enacting structured policies for its integration. For instance, setting aside specific times for technology use that are centred on learning tasks could encourage students to use digital tools while reducing distractions. Furthermore, educating parents and students about responsible technology use can promote a well-rounded strategy and guarantee that students acquire the fundamentals of digital literacy.

Schools can implement extensive filtering and monitoring systems that limit access to harmful content while granting students the freedom to explore educational resources in order to further reduce the risks associated with inappropriate content. Including instruction on digital citizenship in the curriculum can also enable students to make wise decisions online by assisting them in differentiating between reliable and dangerous sources.

In this conversation, parents are also very important. Parents and teachers can reduce the above fears through a collaborative learning environment, which can be fostered by promoting open communication about the advantages and difficulties of technology. Instead of limiting digital access, schools and parents should collaborate to develop policies that support it and acknowledge its significance for educational equity. We can better prepare students to succeed in



an increasingly digital world while making sure they are protected from inappropriate content by creating an atmosphere where technology is seen as an ally rather than an enemy.

The effects of the digital divide extend beyond academic performance from a psychological standpoint. Students who lack access to digital resources frequently feel excluded, inferior, and powerless. They might believe they are less capable because they lack the resources necessary to fully engage in contemporary education, rather than because they are less intelligent. This gradually saps motivation and may result in complete disengagement from education. On the other hand, students who have access to technology grow more confident, digitally literate, and adept at solving problems; skills that help them succeed in a competitive world.

According to the psychology of education, learning involves more than just

absorbing information; it also involves a learner's attitude, fortitude, and sense of community. Students' psychological development is hampered when they are routinely denied access to digital opportunities. They lose out on opportunities for group online education, exposure to different viewpoints, and the boost in self-esteem that comes from becoming proficient with technology. In Zimbabwe, where the digital divide is exacerbated by factors like high data costs and unreliable electricity, the situation is particularly dire. As a result, this gap keeps people in poverty and disadvantage for generations.

It takes more than just providing devices to address this inequality. Improving internet infrastructure, providing dependable power supplies for schools,



and providing digital training for educators are all essential components of a comprehensive strategy to close the digital divide. As students move into digital environments, educational psychologists are also essential in helping them emotionally. Technology alone is insufficient for historically marginalised people; they require direction, mentoring, and support to gain the self-assurance necessary to use it efficiently.

Additionally, educators and legislators need to understand that digital inclusion is a social justice issue. The goal of education as the great equaliser is compromised if the digital divide is not addressed. Classroom attendance and textbook availability are no longer the only indicators of educational equity. In the twenty-first century, equity must

also entail equal access to the digital resources that influence education, work, and social engagement. For instance, the government is accelerating its drive to transform the education sector through public-private partnerships to create digital classrooms. However, a large percentage of schools in marginalised communities still lack internet access.

To address this pressing issue, I urge policymakers to implement targeted subsidies for data costs, making internet access affordable for all students. Furthermore, investment in rural infrastructure is critical; stable connectivity is required for educational fairness. Policymakers should also implement digital literacy initiatives to improve the abilities of learners and educators, ensuring that everyone can

effectively navigate the digital realm.

Corporations, too, have a pivotal role to play. I encourage telecoms and technology businesses to form public-private partnerships to construct neighbourhood digital centres that provide critical access to technology, internet connectivity, and training. Furthermore, firms should commit to corporate social responsibility activities that encourage digital skills and offer resources to underserved schools, so as to level the playing field.

Finally, educators and parents must advocate for the smarter integration of technology in schools rather than outright bans. This approach requires training for educators on effectively using technology to enhance learning experiences. Parents and educators should also engage in community initiatives



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to raise awareness of available digital resources and facilitate access for students.

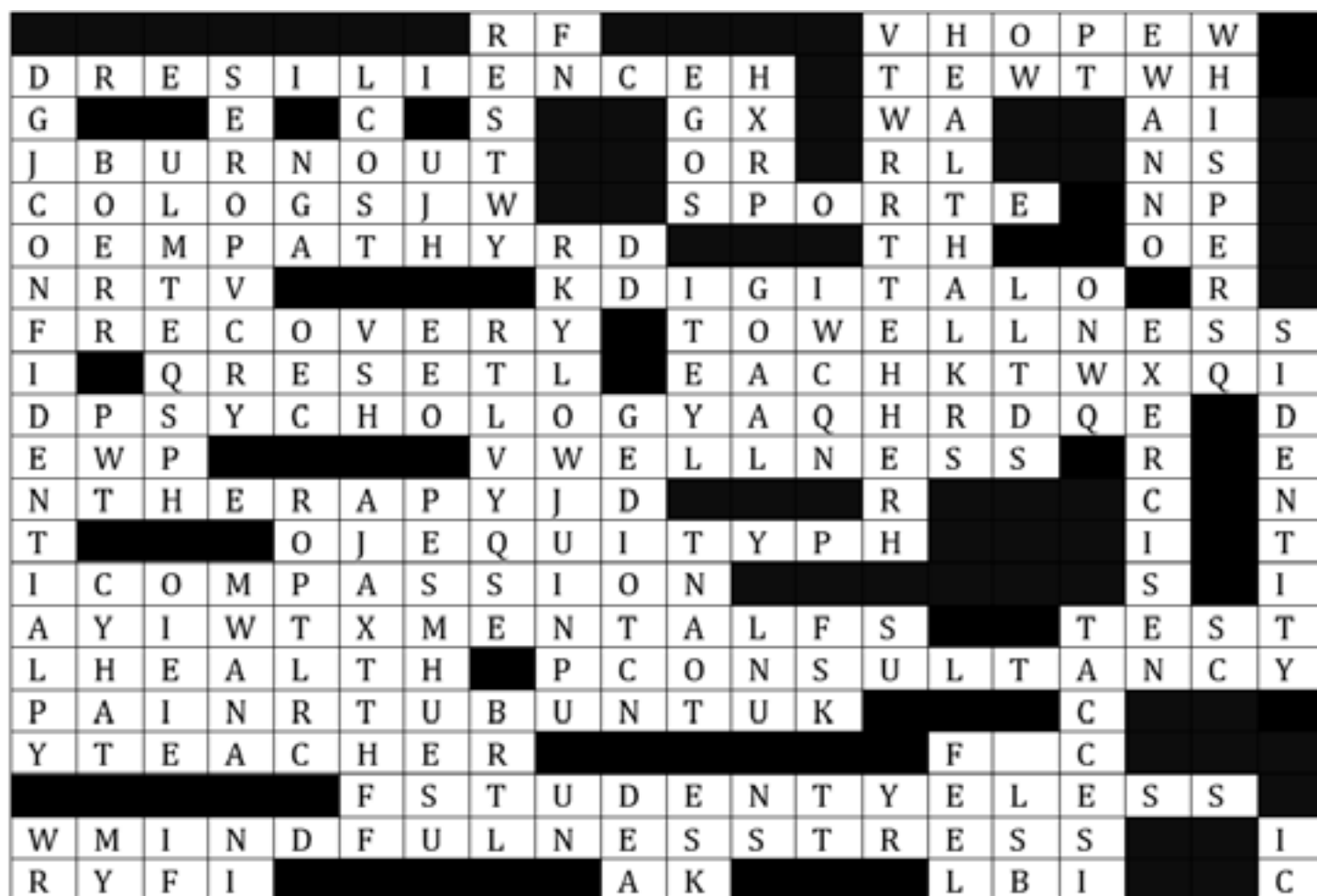
The digital divide is failing a generation of Zimbabwean students, and it is our collective responsibility to address this issue. Policymakers, corporates, educators, and parents each one of us has a role to play in ensuring that every student has the opportunity to succeed in an increasingly digital world. Only when all students, regardless of background, have the chance to take advantage of digital technology will

there be a true transformation in education.

Until then, we run the risk of producing a generation in which access, rather than aptitude or effort, determines opportunity. Bridging the divide is more than just technology; it's about restoring dignity, advancing equality, and ensuring a fair future for everyone. Let us commit to action, advocate for change, and work together to bridge the digital divide for the future of Zimbabwean students. The time to act is now.



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This crossword contains distractors. Some letters belong to the crossword answers, while others are intentionally included to distract you. Your challenge is to identify the correct words using the clues provided.

CLUE: Think like a psychologist!!

The Silent Burnout: Why High-Functioning Individuals Are Struggling in Plain Sight

By Audrey T.C Rondoza

In today's fast-paced, achievement-driven world, burnout is often imagined as something visible, like missed deadlines, emotional breakdowns, or complete withdrawal from responsibilities. But there is a quieter, less recognised form of burnout that is steadily rising, which is high-functioning burnout. It affects individuals who continue to perform, achieve, and meet expectations externally, while internally they are emotionally exhausted, detached, and overwhelmed.

High-functioning burnout refers to a state where an individual experiences the symptoms of burnout, such as exhaustion, cynicism, and reduced performance, yet continues to function effectively in daily life, work, and social responsibilities. Despite appearing to manage well outwardly, they may be struggling internally with stress, fatigue, and emotional exhaustion. This form of burnout can be insidious because it often goes unnoticed or is overlooked, as the person maintains routines and responsibilities while experiencing significant inner distress. It is particularly common among professionals, students, and caregivers who are conditioned to "keep going" regardless of their feelings. These individuals are often praised for their resilience, work ethic, and reliability. However, this external validation can mask a deeper struggle that is chronic stress, anxiety, and a diminishing sense of fulfilment.

One of the key drivers of this phenomenon is the cultural normalisation of overwork. For instance, in the corporate workplace, there is a strong emphasis on teamwork or communal effort and personal sacrifice, where individuals



may feel compelled to go an extra mile and work extended hours to meet deadlines and expectations, even at the expense of their health and personal well-being. With productivity increasingly serving as a measure of self-worth, many people tie their identity to their achievements, making it difficult to slow down without feeling guilt or inadequacy. Social media further amplifies this pressure, creating a constant comparison loop where rest feels undeserved and success always seems just out of reach.

Another contributing factor is emotional suppression, where high-functioning individuals often develop coping mechanisms that allow them to compartmentalise their feelings.

While this may be adaptive in the short term, over time it leads to emotional numbness and

disconnection. They may struggle to identify what they feel, let alone express it, which can strain relationships and reduce overall life satisfaction.

The consequences of ignoring high-functioning burnout are significant. Prolonged stress without adequate recovery can lead to physical health issues such as insomnia, headaches, weakened immunity, and even cardiovascular problems. Psychologically, it can progress into anxiety disorders, depression, or a complete loss of motivation, which many describe as feeling "empty" despite outward success.

Addressing this issue requires a shift not only at an individual level, but also within organisations and society at large. Firstly, there is a need to redefine productivity, and being productive should not mean being constantly busy or exhausted



Sustainable productivity includes rest, reflection, and balance. Employers and institutions must create environments that encourage healthy work habits, realistic expectations, and psychological safety.

At an individual level, self-awareness is crucial. Recognising the signs of burnout, such as chronic fatigue, irritability, reduced enthusiasm, and difficulty concentrating, is the first step toward change. Setting boundaries, such as limiting work hours and taking intentional breaks, is not a sign of weakness but of self-respect. Learning to say “no” can be a powerful tool in protecting one’s mental health.

Equally important is emotional expression. Talking to a trusted friend, mentor, or mental health professional can help individuals process their experiences and reconnect with themselves.

Practising techniques such as journaling, mindfulness, and therapy can also support emotional regulation and clarity.

Finally, there must be a cultural shift in how we view rest. Rest is not a reward for hard work, it is a fundamental human need. Just as we prioritise deadlines and responsibilities, we must also prioritise recovery and well-being.

In conclusion, high-functioning burnout is a silent struggle affecting many who appear to have everything under control. By bringing awareness, challenging harmful productivity norms and promoting healthier coping strategies, we can create a more balanced and humane approach to success. True well-being is not just about what we achieve, but how we feel while achieving it.



Audrey T.C Rondozi is a Human Capital Officer and a MSc Counselling Psychology Student with Great Zimbabwe University. She is passionate about making a meaningful impact in people's lives through promoting mental health awareness and emotional wellbeing.

When Caring Hurts: Compassion Fatigue Among Mental Health Practitioners

By Fadzai Chigaba

Mental health professionals devote themselves to helping individuals navigate trauma, grief, and psychological distress. While empathy is central to effective therapeutic practice, prolonged exposure to the suffering of others can take a significant emotional toll. Compassion fatigue is a widespread occupational hazard among professionals whose work centres on caring for others. Greater recognition of compassion fatigue is urgently needed, particularly as the demand for mental health services continues to grow. The emotional burden experienced by mental health practitioners can undermine the very environments intended to promote healing.

Compassion fatigue is often conceptualised as a form of secondary traumatic stress, resulting from repeated exposure to clients' traumatic experiences. Charles Figley describes compassion fatigue as a form of secondary traumatic stress that develops through prolonged empathic engagement with traumatised individuals. Burnout, by contrast, primarily reflects chronic workplace stress associated with excessive workloads, organisational pressures, and limited resources. Although the two conditions may coexist, they require different prevention and intervention strategies.

Moreover, compassion fatigue does not occur abruptly. Rather, it develops gradually, and the symptoms start as a series of minor warnings. The professional might feel emotionally exhausted and think they have nothing more to give. Minor workplace challenges may gradually trigger irritability and emotional withdrawal. Practitioners may begin avoiding emotionally



demanding client interactions or become detached during therapeutic encounters. Headaches, lack of sleep, or feeling exhausted might come along with physical symptoms. Others might feel the need to isolate themselves and pull away from their friends and relatives. Collectively, these signs may indicate the onset of compassion fatigue and should not be overlooked. Over time, continuous exposure to clients' trauma depletes emotional resources. Without adequate supervision, reflection, and opportunities for recovery, practitioners may struggle to remain emotionally present and resilient. Without adequate opportunities for reflection, supervision, and recovery, practitioners may experience reduced emotional resilience, making it increasingly difficult to maintain therapeutic presence.

Compassion fatigue is influenced by occupational, organisational, and individual factors. Heavy caseloads, repeated exposure to traumatic experiences, inadequate organisational support, and insufficient opportunities for self-care all contribute to chronic emotional stress. Poor professional boundaries and inadequate self-care reduce resilience and increase vulnerability to compassion fatigue. Therefore, the same characteristic that draws many individuals to careers in the helping professions can also make the work challenging to maintain.

Preventing compassion fatigue requires action at both individual and organisational levels. Mental health practitioners can reduce the risk of compassion fatigue through regular clinical supervision, reflective practice, peer support



manageable caseloads, mindfulness-based stress management, and maintaining healthy professional boundaries. Organisations should complement these individual efforts by fostering supportive workplace cultures, promoting employee wellness programmes, and ensuring reasonable workloads. In the meantime, the Ministry of Health can lead change by implementing policies that put staff well-being first, allocating resources to mental health services, and promoting a culture that values self-care. All this may help to reduce compassion fatigue, which enables the practitioners to deliver quality care. Practitioner well-being is directly linked to the well-being of the people they care for. Practitioners

who also prioritise their own physical and emotional wellbeing are better able to remain present, compassionate, and effective in supporting others. Perfection is not the goal. The goal is to understand that recovery, reflection, and support are essential. Ultimately, protecting the wellbeing of mental health practitioners is not merely an individual responsibility but an ethical and organisational imperative. When practitioners are adequately supported, they are better equipped to provide compassionate, ethical, and effective care. Investing in those who care for others ultimately strengthens individuals, organisations, and communities alike.



Fadzaishe Chigaba is a psychology graduate with a strong passion for promoting mental well-being and empowering individuals to develop healthier, more fulfilling lives.

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How Much Do You Know About Mental Health?

1. What is mental health?
2. Which mental health disorder is characterised by persistent sadness and loss of interest?
3. What is the most common symptom of an anxiety disorder?
4. True or False: People with mental illnesses can recover with appropriate treatment and support.
5. Which mental health disorder involves extreme mood swings between emotional highs and lows?
6. What does the abbreviation OCD stand for?
7. Which disorder is commonly triggered by experiencing or witnessing a traumatic event?
8. What is the main difference between stress and anxiety?
9. Which mental health disorder is characterised by persistent inattention, hyperactivity, and impulsivity?
10. What is one common symptom of schizophrenia?
11. Name two common symptoms of depression.
12. What is a panic attack?
13. Which eating disorder is characterised by an intense fear of gaining weight despite being underweight?
14. What is the difference between a phobia and ordinary fear?
15. Why is early intervention important in mental health care?
16. Explain the difference between obsessions and compulsions in OCD.
17. Which mental health disorder is often misunderstood as involving a “split personality”?
18. Why should mental health disorders be diagnosed by qualified professionals rather than through online self-tests?
19. Name three factors that can increase a person’s risk of developing a mental health disorder.
20. List three healthy strategies that can help maintain good mental health.

Innovations in Psychological Research and Practice

By Austin Gara



Global Trends and Emerging

Developments in Zimbabwe Psychology is undergoing a rapid transformation driven by technological innovation, interdisciplinary collaboration, and the growing demand for effective responses to emerging mental health challenges. The traditional boundaries of the therapy room are being dissolved by a wave of technological and methodological innovations that are improving how mental health conditions are studied, diagnosed, and treated. Across the world, psychologists are increasingly integrating digital technologies, data science, and culturally responsive approaches to make mental health care more accessible and effective. These developments are also beginning to shape psychological practice in Zimbabwe, where innovative solutions are helping address gaps in mental health services.

Global Innovations in Psychological Practice

One of the most significant developments in contemporary psychology is the growth of digital mental health services. Telepsychology and online counselling platforms allow therapists to deliver services through video conferencing, mobile applications, and secure messaging systems. These digital platforms have expanded access to mental health services for individuals who may face barriers such as geographic distance, stigma, or limited availability of professionals. The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the adoption of telepsychology worldwide, demonstrating that remote therapy can be effective for many psychological conditions (Wind et al., 2020). Another important innovation is the use of artificial intelligence (AI) in psychological research and intervention. AI technologies

can analyse large datasets to identify behavioural patterns associated with mental health conditions such as depression, anxiety, and stress. New specialised AI tools are being used to transcribe sessions and identify patterns in speech that predict relapse. In addition, AI-powered chatbots are increasingly used to provide psychoeducation and basic psychological support, particularly in contexts where access to mental health professionals is limited (Inkster et al., 2018). While these tools cannot replace trained clinicians, they can supplement mental health care and increase service reach.

Technological innovations have also introduced virtual reality (VR)-based therapies. VR environments are used in the treatment of phobias, post-traumatic stress disorder, and social anxiety by allowing individuals to safely experience and gradually confront

anxiety-provoking situations within a controlled environment. These immersive environments allow clients to confront feared situations gradually while remaining within a safe and controlled therapeutic setting. Advances in digital technologies are also enabling more data-driven and personalised approaches to psychological research. Digital phenotyping, which uses data collected from smartphones and wearable devices, allows researchers to track behavioural patterns such as physical activity, sleep, social interaction and even typing speed. Such information can enable clinicians to detect early warning signs of mental health difficulties and tailor interventions to the specific needs of individuals.

such as depression and anxiety. The programme trains community health workers, often elderly women known as “grandmothers,” to provide structured problem-solving therapy in primary care settings (Chibanda et al., 2016). Numerous studies have demonstrated significant reductions in symptoms of depression and anxiety among individuals who received the intervention, making it one of Africa’s most successful community-based mental health programmes. Another innovation is the ZimDigiPsych web-based platform



that incorporates a search module for Zimbabwean psychologists, a video-based teletherapy module, and an AI-driven diagnostic and treatment planning module, all accessible from the Electronic Health Records (EHR) sub-system (<https://zimdigipsych.co.zw/>). The EHR system was developed within Zimbabwe to support culturally responsive digital psychological care and it involves the integration of culturally relevant psychological frameworks into mental health practice. Traditional beliefs, spirituality, and community relationships play a significant role in how mental distress is understood within many Zimbabwean communities. Integrating indigenous perspectives with evidence-based psychological interventions helps improve the cultural acceptability of mental

health services and encourages individuals to seek help earlier.

Looking Ahead

Innovations in psychological research and practice continue to reshape the mental health landscape. Globally, advances in artificial intelligence, telepsychology, and immersive technologies are expanding the tools available to psychologists and researchers. In Zimbabwe, innovation is emerging through community-based interventions, culturally grounded approaches, and the gradual adoption of digital health technologies.

For the future, continued investment in training, research, and digital infrastructure will be essential to ensure that these innovations translate into improved mental health outcomes. As digital technologies continue to evolve, Zimbabwean psychologists have an opportunity to combine technological innovation with culturally grounded practice to improve access, quality, and equity in psychological care.



Innovations in the Zimbabwean Context

Although global innovations are transforming psychological practice, many low- and middle-income countries face significant economic structural challenges in delivering mental health care. Zimbabwe has a limited number of mental health specialists relative to its population, which highlights the importance of scalable and innovative mental health solutions. One of Zimbabwe’s most internationally recognised innovations is the Friendship Bench programme, a community-based intervention designed to address common mental disorders



Austin Gara is an Intern Counselling Psychologist. He holds an MSc Counselling Psychology (GZU), and a BSc (Hons) Psychology (ZOU). He worked extensively in the ICT industry and also holds a BSc (Computing Science & Mathematics) and MBA from UZ.



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Building the Resilience Edge in Individuals and Teams

By Chikati Zebron



Picture this: a high-stakes project implodes overnight. Deadlines suddenly become impossible to meet, budgets shatter, and stress levels spike. Some individuals crumble under the pressure while others emerge sharper, more united, and surprisingly energised. What distinguishes the two? Psychological resilience is a skill that may be learned to convert hardship into an advantage rather than a natural strength.

According to the American Psychological Association, resilience is “the process and outcome of successfully adapting to difficult or challenging life experiences, especially through mental, emotional, and behavioural flexibility.” It is neither a fixed trait nor mere toughness. It is a dynamic capacity anyone can

cultivate through mindset shifts, habits, and social scaffolds. In many African communities, resilience is also reflected in collective coping, where families, communities, and social networks provide emotional and practical support during adversity.

At the individual level, resilience rests on three pillars: how we perceive the world, the quality of our social resources, and our coping strategies. Optimism, cognitive flexibility, self-efficacy, and active problem-solving have consistently been identified by psychological research as key protective factors. People who reframe setbacks as temporary and controllable recover faster and report higher well-being. A large multilevel study of 530 employees across 68 teams found that individual resilience correlates

strongly with lower stress and higher subjective well-being, more so than with pure performance metrics. In short, personal resilience keeps you mentally healthy when the storm hits.

Building it is practical and evidence-based. Start with daily micro-habits: mindfulness or brief breathing exercises to regulate emotions; journaling to reframe negative events; and nurturing supportive relationships that provide perspective without pity. Growth-mindset practices, viewing challenges as skill-builders rather than threats, boost perseverance dramatically. Even simple acts like prioritising sleep, exercise, and gratitude have been shown to strengthen the neural pathways that support recovery. The payoff? Resilient individuals experience

fewer burnout symptoms, sustain motivation longer, and model calm for those around them.

Yet resilience scales beyond the self. Team resilience develops when individual strengths combine to create a shared capacity to adapt, recover, and perform under pressure. It is not the average of members' personal grit; it is a shared resource built on candor, resourcefulness, compassion, and humility. While individual resilience drives personal psychological health, team resilience is the stronger predictor of collective performance. Teams that adapt together deliver better results under pressure because they share mental models, distribute emotional load, and co-create solutions.

Across many African societies, resilience has long been nurtured through collective responsibility and community support. Concepts such as Ubuntu emphasise that individual well-being is deeply connected to the well-being of others. In workplaces, families, and communities, this spirit of shared responsibility can strengthen resilience by fostering trust, empathy, and mutual assistance during times of adversity.

Leaders and members can actively engineer this dynamic. Harvard Business Review's research on resilient teams highlights seven high-return practices that work in any environment, virtual or in-person. Encourage regular opportunities for honest and respectful feedback where team members can openly discuss challenges without fear of blame. Invite independent observers for unbiased insights. Share personal stories of struggle and triumph to build vulnerability. Conduct regular

"temperature checks" (quick 1–5 energy ratings) to catch fatigue early. Most powerfully, commit to "co-elevation", an explicit pact that helping colleagues rise is everyone's job.

Other proven levers include joint debriefs after setbacks, cross-training to spread knowledge and celebrating adaptive wins rather than flawless execution. Transformational leadership that models humility and encourages psychological safety accelerates the process. The result? Organisation research has consistently shown that resilient teams experience lower turnover, greater innovation, and stronger employee engagement.

The interplay between individual and team resilience creates a virtuous cycle.

Strong individuals seed collective strength; resilient teams, in turn, buffer and amplify personal resources. In today's rapidly changing workplaces, this synergy is no longer optional, it is the competitive advantage. Organisations that invest in both levels (through targeted training, coaching, and cultural norms) see sustained performance and healthier people.

Resilience is not reserved for extraordinary people facing extraordinary circumstances. It is built through ordinary choices made consistently over time. Every challenge presents an opportunity to strengthen ourselves and those around us. Through investing in both individual well-being and collective resilience, we create workplaces and communities that do not simply survive adversity; they grow because of it.



Chikati Zebron is interested in understanding human behaviour and promoting mental well-being.

Beyond the Game

By Audrey Nkhoma



Every winning goal, record-breaking sprint, or remarkable comeback begins in the mind long before it is seen on the field. While spectators celebrate physical talent, psychologists recognise that mental strength is often the true difference between success and failure. As the discipline of sport psychology continues to evolve, its influence has expanded beyond competitive performance to become a cornerstone of mental health promotion and social transformation. In cultivating emotional resilience, psychological well-being, and positive interpersonal relationships, sport psychology empowers individuals and communities to thrive in an increasingly demanding world. One of the most profound contributions of sport psychology is its ability to strengthen mental well-being. Participation in sport

exposes individuals to challenges such as pressure, uncertainty, failure, and intense competition. Rather than viewing these experiences as obstacles, sport psychology equips individuals with healthy coping mechanisms that transform adversity into opportunities for growth. Psychological interventions such as goal setting, cognitive restructuring, mindfulness, emotional regulation, and positive self-talk foster self-confidence, perseverance, and emotional stability. These evidence-based strategies enable athletes to regulate stress, overcome self-doubt, and sustain motivation, skills that extend far beyond the sporting arena into education, employment, and everyday life. Consequently, sport becomes not merely a physical activity but a vehicle for developing psychological resilience and lifelong

emotional competence.

While these psychological skills strengthen individuals, their impact extends beyond personal development to influence relationships and communities. In an era characterised by increasing rates of anxiety, depression, and social isolation, sporting environments provide meaningful opportunities for social connection and emotional support. Whether participating recreationally or competitively, individuals experience acceptance, teamwork, and shared achievement, all of which contribute to enhanced self-esteem and psychological well-being. Furthermore, regular physical activity stimulates brain processes associated with positive mood associated with improved mood, while psychological skills training enables individuals to sustain healthy behavioural patterns and maintain emotional equilibrium. This holistic interaction between mind and body illustrates that

optimal health cannot be achieved without recognising the psychological dimensions of human functioning. Beyond individual development, psychology in sport serves as a transformative force capable of reshaping societies. Sport possesses a unique capacity to



transcend barriers of race, gender, culture, religion, and socioeconomic status, creating spaces where diversity is celebrated rather than feared. Guided by psychological principles such as empathy, effective communication, leadership, and emotional intelligence, sport cultivates values of respect, discipline, integrity, and collective responsibility both on and off the field. These values nurture socially conscious citizens who contribute positively to their communities and inspire others through ethical conduct and compassionate leadership.

Moreover, sport psychology has emerged as an influential tool for addressing pressing social challenges. Community sport initiatives informed by psychological principles have demonstrated considerable success in reducing youth delinquency, substance misuse, discrimination, and social exclusion while promoting inclusion, resilience, and hope. For many young people, sport becomes a sanctuary where mentors

recognise potential,

encourage perseverance, and instil the belief that circumstances do not define destiny. Such experiences cultivate self-efficacy and empower individuals to become advocates for positive change within their families, schools, and communities.

Ultimately, psychology in sport is far more than a



Track Star Melissa Jefferson-Wooden

performance-enhancement discipline; it is a transformative catalyst that nurtures healthier minds and stronger societies. Its influence extends beyond stadiums and playing fields into classrooms, workplaces, and communities, where psychological resilience, emotional intelligence, and social responsibility are indispensable. Through empowering individuals to embrace challenges with courage, cultivate meaningful relationships, and inspire collective progress, psychology in sport demonstrates that true victory is measured not only by trophies won but also by lives transformed. Investing in sport psychology is therefore an investment in human potential, creating generations who possess the confidence to overcome adversity, the compassion to uplift others, and the determination to build a healthier, more inclusive, and socially progressive world. The greatest victories in sport are not always measured by medals, but by the lives transformed through resilience, hope, and psychological strength.



Audrey Nkhoma is a fourth-year Psychology student at Great Zimbabwe University with a growing passion for understanding human behaviour, mental health, and psychological well-being.



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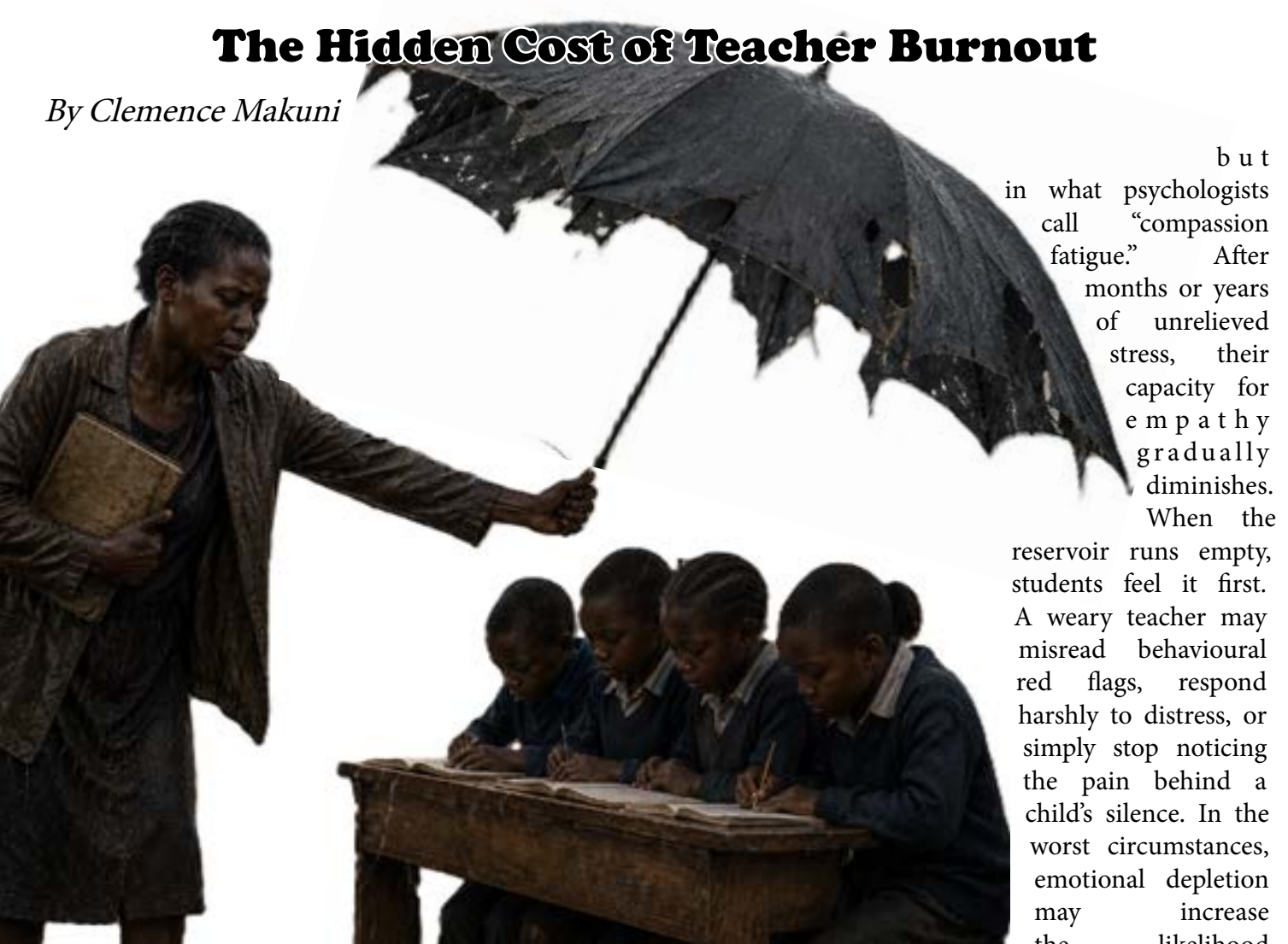
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The Hidden Cost of Teacher Burnout

By Clemence Makuni



In every classroom sits a mix of hope and responsibility, bright-eyed children on one side and a teacher often carrying emotional burdens that remain unseen by the other. We depend on our teachers to nurture young minds and watch for signs of trouble, yet we rarely ask who is watching over them. In the public service, where emotional labour is constant and expectations high, the need for structured mental health support is no longer optional; it is urgent.

Over the past few years, the conversation around mental health has moved from taboo to necessity, but policy has not caught up. In 2022, UNESCO reported that nearly 70 per cent of teachers worldwide experienced heightened stress and burnout after the Covid 19 pandemic. Emerging evidence

from Zimbabwe and across Africa similarly points to increasing teacher burnout, emotional exhaustion and attrition. When the well-being of educators falters, the consequences ripple through every level of society. Teaching is not simply the delivery of lessons; it is an act of empathy. As educational psychologist Dr. Sue Roffey once said, “Teachers are emotional first responders.” They are often the first adults to recognise when something is wrong with a child, yet they shoulder that awareness alone. Every tear quietly wiped away, every disclosure of hardship or abuse, becomes part of a heavy emotional ledger. Without mental health scaffolding, that emotional load can turn quickly into fatigue, detachment or despair.

The danger lies not only in burnout

but in what psychologists call “compassion fatigue.” After months or years of unrelieved stress, their capacity for empathy gradually diminishes. When the

reservoir runs empty, students feel it first. A weary teacher may misread behavioural red flags, respond harshly to distress, or simply stop noticing the pain behind a child’s silence. In the worst circumstances, emotional depletion may increase the likelihood of inappropriate

responses to students, including emotional neglect, harsh disciplinary practices or reduced sensitivity; born not from malice, but from unaddressed psychological collapse.

Child-protection professionals know that teachers form the first line of defence against abuse. UNICEF research emphasises the role of classroom educators as critical observers of change, the ones who notice when bruises are concealed or voices grow quiet. Nevertheless, if teachers themselves are unwell, the protective system weakens. As psychologist Charles Figley warned, “Empathy is both the source and the casualty of caring.” Without mental health support, that caring can cost too much.

What makes this crisis more tragic

is its invisibility. Mental health remains a topic many public servants approach with fear or shame. During a recent education roundtable, one secondary school teacher in Chiredzi remarked, “If a teacher goes to the administration

administration saying they’re struggling, they’re told to toughen up. But empathy wears out too, and when it does, what happens to the children we teach?” That simple question should focus every policymaker’s mind. We cannot expect resilience without resources. The public sector has systems for payroll, audits, and supervision, yet rarely for counselling, debriefing, or emotional recovery. Teachers attend workshops on child

protection but none on protecting themselves. It is a cultural blind spot that must close.

A practical path forward is neither mysterious nor unaffordable. Each school cluster could be linked to a professional counsellor who handles confidential sessions and runs periodic resilience workshops. Peer-support networks could give teachers safe spaces to speak openly about burnout and share coping strategies. Periodic wellness check-ins, treated not as assessments of competence but as acts of care, would help normalise mental-health conversations.

Reform also requires cultural change. For generations, public service has been framed as sacrifice. Resilience was measured by

endurance, the teacher who never complained, the nurse who never cried, the civil servant who stayed silent through exhaustion. That stoic culture is both outdated and dangerous. A humane public service is not

local mental-health organisations. Even the encouragement of honest conversation within staff meetings can help dismantle stigma. A system that looks after its teachers inevitably produces safer, more compassionate schools.



one that glorifies overwork, but one that sustains empathy and recognises emotional boundaries as assets, not indulgences.

Empathy must be treated as the cornerstone of professional excellence. When educators feel respected and supported, they bring that same energy to their students. Conversely, when they are dismissed, overworked, or shamed for needing help, their classrooms mirror that tension.

Simple practices can rebuild that balance: scheduled wellness days, open-door counselling policies, stress management and mindfulness training during in-service programs, or partnerships with

The deeper truth is this: protecting children starts with protecting the people who teach them. Teachers who feel emotionally secure are more likely to act when something seems wrong, to intervene with patience instead of anger, and to rebuild trust when students falter. They become role models not just of intelligence, but of kindness.

As author Parker J. Palmer wisely said, “We teach who we are.” If we continue to allow stress and silence to define the teaching profession, we embed those values, invisibly but powerfully, into every lesson. But if we choose to build a culture that honours care, empathy, and wellness, we will pass those same values on to our children.

The question, then, is not whether we can afford comprehensive mental health support for teachers and public servants. It is whether we can afford not to. Because every neglected teacher, every classroom ruled by fatigue rather than empathy, becomes a small act of harm that echoes outward.

Policy is powerful, but empathy is transformative. The moment we start caring for the caregivers is the moment the Public Service begins to reflect the compassion it was always meant to embody.

MAKUNI CLEMENCE is a qualified teacher and counselling psychologist (AHPCZ). Currently, he is serving as a Schools Inspector for guidance and counselling for Harare Province. He holds a Masters Degree in Counselling Psychology, complemented by a Bachelor's degree in Psychology. He is actively involved in mental health education and advocacy.

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