

## ■ EDITORIAL

# Excellence shouldn't come at the expense of health

Experts have sounded the alarm that sleep deprivation among learners, especially those in boarding schools, has reached crisis levels. The alarm has come at the right time as it has coincided with the release of the S4 national examinations results and the beginning of the academic year, reminding us all that the unrelenting pursuit of academic excellence is coming at the cost of children's mental and physical well-being.

Sleep is a biological necessity, especially for developing minds, because it is during rest that young brains consolidate learning, regulate emotions and support growth processes. A recent study conducted in Uganda by the Medical

Research Council, the Uganda Virus Research Institute (UVRI) and the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine reveals that learners average 4.8 hours of sleep on school days, which is way below the recommended 7-11 hours.

The limited sleeping time, according to the study, is attributed to heavy workloads, early wake-up times, sometimes as early as 3:00am, peer pressure, extracurricular activities and late-night social interactions. Chronic sleep deprivation

compromises growth hormones, triggers anxiety and depression, causing classroom agitation and manifests in learners dozing off during lessons.

On the other hand, adequate rest has a positive knock-on effect on learning because well-rested learners demonstrate better concentration, emotional stability and physical vitality. Sleep deficits expose children to an early onset of serious mental health conditions.

The Government, through the education ministry, should establish regulations on study hours and wake-up times and put in place mechanisms to monitor and enforce. Parents should eliminate sleep-disrupting gadgets and prioritise rest over late-night studying. Schools need to balance academic rigour with learners' health needs.



**SLEEP IS A BIOLOGICAL NECESSITY, ESPECIALLY FOR DEVELOPING MINDS.**