

School Leadership Practices and Teachers' Well-Being in the Digital Era: Addressing Occupational Stress and Workforce Sustainability

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Article History	Abstract
Original Research Article	<i>The rapid digital transformation of education has significantly reshaped teachers' professional responsibilities, creating opportunities for instructional innovation while simultaneously increasing workload demands and occupational stress. This study examined the influence of school leadership practices on teacher well-being, occupational stress, and workforce sustainability in public secondary schools in North-Central Nigeria. A cross-sectional survey design was adopted for the study. Data were collected from 520 teachers selected through a multistage sampling procedure using the School Leadership Practices Scale (SLPS), Teacher Well-Being Inventory (TWBI), Occupational Stress Assessment Scale (OSAS), and Workforce Sustainability Questionnaire (WSQ). Descriptive statistics, Pearson Product-Moment Correlation, and Multiple Regression Analysis were employed to analyse the data at the 0.05 level of significance. The findings revealed significant positive relationships between school leadership practices and teacher well-being. Supportive leadership, digital leadership competence, participatory decision-making, professional development support, and teacher recognition were found to be significant predictors of teacher well-being. The results further showed that occupational stress was negatively related to workforce sustainability, indicating that higher stress levels reduce teachers' commitment and retention. Multiple regression analysis revealed that school leadership practices jointly accounted for 58.4% of the variance in teacher well-being. These findings underscore the critical role of effective leadership in fostering positive work environments and supporting teachers in digitally evolving educational settings. The study concludes that supportive and digitally responsive school leadership is essential for enhancing teacher well-being, reducing occupational stress, and promoting workforce sustainability. It recommends leadership development programmes that strengthen digital leadership competencies and prioritise teachers' support as a strategy for improving educational outcomes and teacher retention.</i>
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Introduction

The twenty-first century educational landscape is undergoing profound transformation driven by rapid technological advancements, digitalisation, artificial intelligence (AI), and the growing demand for knowledge-based skills in modern economies, Edinoh, Abiola & Nwafor (2024). Across the world, educational institutions are increasingly integrating digital technologies into

teaching, learning, assessment, communication, and administrative processes. These developments have fundamentally altered the nature of teachers' work, creating new opportunities for instructional innovation while simultaneously introducing complex challenges that affect teachers' professional experiences and overall well-being.

Digitalisation is the process of transforming physical educational resources into packages or platforms or electronic forms where they can be stored and manipulated by a computer for the implementation of teaching and learning programmes in school (Asemota, Edinoh & Bisong, 2025). The expansion of digital learning environments has reshaped traditional teaching roles and expectations. Teachers are now required to perform multiple responsibilities beyond classroom instruction, including managing online learning platforms, facilitating virtual interactions, analysing digital assessment data, adapting to emerging technologies, and engaging in continuous professional development to remain technologically competent. While these developments have enhanced access to educational resources and expanded possibilities for personalised learning, they have also increased workload demands, technological pressures, and professional uncertainty. Consequently, concerns regarding teacher well-being have become increasingly prominent among educational researchers, policymakers, and school administrators (Edinoh, Onah & Oluwole 2025).

Teacher well-being is widely recognised as a critical component of educational effectiveness and school improvement. It encompasses teachers' psychological, emotional, social, and professional functioning within their work environments. A growing body of literature suggests that teachers who experience positive well-being are more likely to demonstrate higher levels of motivation, instructional effectiveness, creativity, resilience, and commitment to their schools. Such teachers are also better equipped to foster positive classroom climates and support students learning outcomes. Conversely, poor teacher well-being has been associated with occupational stress, emotional exhaustion, burnout, reduced job satisfaction, absenteeism, and intentions to leave the profession. These challenges have become increasingly significant as many education systems struggle to attract and retain qualified teachers in the face of escalating workplace demands (Edinoh, Asemota & Wakili, 2026).

The issue of teacher well-being has become even more critical in the digital era, where technological innovations continually reshape educational practice. Although technology has the potential to improve teaching efficiency and professional collaboration, it can also generate additional stressors, including technology-related anxiety, digital overload, role ambiguity, increased accountability pressures, and difficulties maintaining work-life balance. Many teachers report feeling overwhelmed by the pace of technological change and the expectation to continuously adapt to new digital tools and instructional approaches. Consequently, understanding the factors that support teacher well-being in digitally transforming educational

environments has become an important area of educational inquiry (Onyeukwu, Kontagora & Edinoh 2026).

Among the various organisational factors influencing teacher well-being, school leadership has consistently emerged as one of the most significant. Educational leadership extends beyond administrative management to include creating supportive working conditions, fostering professional growth, building positive school cultures, and responding effectively to the needs of teachers. In contemporary educational settings, school leaders are expected to guide institutions through complex technological transitions while ensuring that teachers remain motivated, supported, and professionally fulfilled. Effective leaders play a crucial role in shaping workplace conditions that influence teachers' psychological health, job satisfaction, and long-term commitment to the profession (Onyeukwu, Kontagora & Edinoh 2026).

Recent scholarship suggests that leadership practices characterised by trust, collaboration, recognition, professional empowerment, emotional support, and participatory decision-making contribute significantly to positive teacher outcomes. Leadership approaches that encourage teacher autonomy and provide opportunities for meaningful professional engagement have been found to strengthen teachers' sense of efficacy, belonging, and job satisfaction. Furthermore, leaders who actively support teachers during periods of educational change can reduce workplace stress and enhance organisational resilience. These findings highlight the importance of leadership as a protective factor capable of promoting teacher well-being and workforce sustainability in increasingly demanding educational environments.

The concept of workforce sustainability has gained considerable attention in educational discourse due to growing concerns about teacher shortages, attrition, and declining professional morale. Workforce sustainability refers to the ability of educational systems to attract, develop, retain, and support qualified teachers over time while maintaining high levels of professional effectiveness and organisational performance. Sustainable educational workforces are essential for ensuring continuity in teaching quality, institutional stability, and long-term educational development. However, persistent occupational stress, inadequate support systems, and poor working conditions threaten workforce sustainability in many countries, particularly within developing educational contexts.

In Nigeria, these challenges are becoming increasingly evident. The Nigerian education sector has witnessed significant efforts toward digital transformation, particularly following the disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Schools across the country have increasingly adopted digital technologies for instructional

delivery, communication, record management, and professional development. While these initiatives have accelerated educational innovation, they have also exposed infrastructural limitations, digital competency gaps, and increased professional demands on teachers. Many educators have been required to rapidly acquire new technological skills while simultaneously managing existing teaching responsibilities, often with limited institutional support (Onyeukwu, Kontagora & Edinoh 2026).

Within this context, the role of school leadership has become especially important. School leaders are expected to facilitate digital transformation, provide professional guidance, manage technological change, and create supportive working environments that enable teachers to thrive. Emerging evidence from Nigerian educational settings suggests that leadership practices that embrace digital transformation and teacher support are positively associated with organisational commitment, job satisfaction, professional engagement, and improved school performance (Edinoh, Odili & Wakili 2026). Nevertheless, many schools continue to face challenges related to leadership capacity, resource constraints, workload pressures, and teacher stress, which may undermine both teacher well-being and workforce sustainability.

Despite the growing body of literature on educational leadership, digital transformation, and teacher well-being, significant gaps remain. Much of the existing research has examined these variables independently, focusing either on leadership effectiveness, teacher stress, job satisfaction, or technology adoption. Comparatively few studies have investigated the interconnected relationships among school leadership practices, teacher well-being, occupational stress, and workforce sustainability within digitally transforming educational environments. Furthermore, empirical evidence from Nigeria remains relatively limited despite the unique challenges facing the country's educational system.

Addressing this gap is important because understanding how leadership practices influence teachers' well-being and professional sustainability can provide valuable insights for educational policy and practice. Effective leadership interventions have the potential to reduce occupational stress, improve teacher retention, strengthen organisational commitment, and enhance the overall quality of education. Consequently, this study examines the influence of school leadership on teacher well-being, occupational stress, and workforce sustainability in the digital age. By exploring these relationships within the Nigerian educational context, the study seeks to contribute to the growing discourse on educational leadership and provide evidence-based

recommendations for creating healthier, more sustainable school environments capable of meeting the demands of twenty-first century education.

Statement of the Problem

The digital transformation of education has expanded teachers' responsibilities, requiring continuous adaptation to new technologies, instructional approaches, and accountability demands. While these developments offer opportunities for educational improvement, they have also increased occupational stress, workload pressures, and challenges to teacher well-being. Consequently, concerns about teacher burnout, job dissatisfaction, and workforce attrition has become increasingly prominent.

School leadership plays a crucial role in shaping teachers' work experiences and supporting their professional well-being. However, empirical evidence on how leadership practices influence teacher well-being, occupational stress, and workforce sustainability within digitally evolving educational environments remains limited, particularly in the Nigerian context. This study therefore investigates the influence of school leadership practices on teacher well-being, occupational stress, and workforce sustainability in public secondary schools in North-Central Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

The study sought to:

1. Examine prevailing school leadership practices in public secondary schools.
2. Assess teachers' level of well-being and occupational stress.
3. Determine the relationship between school leadership practices and teacher well-being.
4. Examine the influence of occupational stress on workforce sustainability.
5. Determine the predictive contribution of school leadership practices to teacher well-being.

Research Questions

1. What school leadership practices are prevalent in public secondary schools?
2. What are the levels of teacher well-being and occupational stress?
3. What relationship exists between school leadership practices and teacher well-being?
4. To what extent does occupational stress influence workforce sustainability?

Hypotheses

H01: There is no significant relationship between school leadership practices and teacher well-being.

H02: Occupational stress does not significantly predict workforce sustainability.

H03: School leadership practices do not significantly predict teacher well-being.

Literature Review

Concept of Teacher Well-Being

Teacher well-being has emerged as a major area of interest in educational research due to its direct implications for teaching effectiveness, student achievement, job satisfaction, and teacher retention. The concept extends beyond the absence of stress or psychological distress to encompass teachers' overall emotional, psychological, social, and professional functioning within their work environment. It reflects the extent to which teachers experience positive emotions, meaningful engagement, supportive relationships, professional accomplishment, and a sense of purpose in their careers.

One of the most influential perspectives on well-being is the PERMA model developed by Seligman (2011), which conceptualises well-being as comprising five interrelated dimensions: Positive Emotions, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, and Accomplishment. Within educational settings, these dimensions are reflected in teachers' enthusiasm for teaching, commitment to professional responsibilities, positive interactions with colleagues and students, sense of professional fulfilment, and achievement of instructional goals.

Research consistently demonstrates that teachers with higher levels of well-being exhibit greater resilience, stronger organisational commitment, enhanced instructional effectiveness, and higher levels of job satisfaction. They are also more likely to adopt innovative teaching practices, maintain positive classroom climates, and contribute meaningfully to school improvement efforts. Conversely, diminished well-being has been associated with emotional exhaustion, burnout, absenteeism, reduced productivity, and increased intentions to leave the profession. In an era characterised by rapid educational change and increasing accountability pressures, promoting teacher well-being has become essential for ensuring both educational quality and workforce sustainability.

School Leadership Practices

School leadership remains one of the most influential organisational factors affecting teachers' professional experiences and workplace well-being. Leadership practices encompass the actions, behaviours, and strategies employed by school leaders to influence teaching, learning, and organisational performance. Effective school leaders not only manage administrative functions but also create supportive environments that enable teachers to perform

optimally and adapt successfully to educational reforms (Onyeukwu, Asemota & Edinoh, 2026).

Contemporary educational leadership literature identifies several leadership approaches that contribute to positive teacher outcomes. Instructional leadership focuses on improving teaching and learning through curriculum supervision, monitoring instructional quality, and supporting professional development. Transformational leadership emphasises inspiring a shared vision, motivating staff, fostering innovation, and encouraging professional growth. Distributed leadership promotes shared responsibility and collaborative decision-making among school stakeholders. Servant leadership prioritises the needs, welfare, and professional development of teachers, while digital leadership focuses on guiding schools through technological transformation and innovation.

Recent studies suggest that leadership practices characterised by trust, collaboration, recognition, empowerment, and professional support are strongly associated with improved teacher well-being. Teachers who perceive their leaders as supportive, accessible, and responsive often report higher job satisfaction, lower stress levels, and stronger commitment to organisational goals. Similarly, school leaders who provide opportunities for participation in decision-making and continuous professional learning contribute significantly to the creation of positive and sustainable work environments. As educational systems become increasingly digitised, leadership practices that support technological adaptation and professional resilience are becoming even more critical.

Occupational Stress in the Digital Era

Occupational stress refers to the physical, emotional, and psychological strain experienced when workplace demands exceed an individual's capacity to cope effectively. Teaching has traditionally been recognised as a demanding profession; however, the digital transformation of education has introduced additional challenges that have intensified workplace stress among educators.

The integration of digital technologies into educational practice has expanded teachers' responsibilities beyond traditional classroom instruction. Teachers are now expected to manage online learning platforms, facilitate virtual classrooms, utilise digital assessment tools, communicate through multiple technological channels, and continuously update their technological competencies. While these developments offer significant benefits for teaching and learning, they also create new forms of occupational stress.

Among the most commonly reported digital-era stressors are technology overload, continuous connectivity, digital

surveillance, increased administrative responsibilities, information fatigue, and rapid technological change. Teachers frequently experience pressure to remain constantly available through digital communication platforms, blurring the boundaries between professional and personal life. Furthermore, the continuous emergence of new technologies often requires ongoing training and adaptation, contributing to feelings of uncertainty and professional strain.

Recent research suggests that artificial intelligence (AI) and other emerging technologies present both opportunities and challenges for teachers. While such technologies may improve efficiency and access to instructional resources, they may also increase performance expectations and create concerns regarding professional competence and job security. Consequently, understanding how schools can support teachers in managing these demands has become an important concern for educational leaders and policymakers.

Workforce Sustainability

Workforce sustainability refers to the ability of organisations to attract, develop, support, and retain a healthy, productive, and committed workforce over time. Within the educational sector, workforce sustainability involves maintaining a stable teaching workforce capable of delivering high-quality education while adapting to changing professional demands and societal expectations, Igwe, Oche & Edinoh (2026).

Sustainable educational workforces are essential for ensuring continuity in teaching quality, institutional effectiveness, and long-term educational development. However, many education systems face increasing challenges related to teacher shortages, professional burnout, declining job satisfaction, and workforce attrition. These challenges have intensified in recent years as teachers confront growing workloads, accountability pressures, and technological demands.

The literature identifies several factors that contribute to workforce sustainability, including supportive leadership, healthy work environments, access to professional development opportunities, fair workload distribution, career advancement prospects, and effective work-life balance policies. When these factors are present, teachers are more likely to remain committed to their profession and contribute positively to school improvement efforts. Conversely, prolonged exposure to occupational stress and inadequate organisational support can undermine workforce stability and increase turnover intentions.

In the digital age, workforce sustainability has become increasingly dependent upon school leaders' ability to create environments that promote teacher well-being,

reduce unnecessary stressors, and support continuous professional adaptation. Thus, examining the relationships among leadership practices, teacher well-being, occupational stress, and workforce sustainability is essential for informing educational policy and practice.

Theoretical Framework

Job Demands – Resources (JD-R) Theory

This study is anchored on the Job Demands – Resources (JD-R) Theory developed by Bakker and Demerouti (2007). The theory provides a comprehensive framework for understanding employee well-being, motivation, and workplace performance across diverse occupational settings.

According to the JD-R model, every occupation contains specific job demands and job resources. Job demands refer to physical, psychological, social, or organisational aspects of work that require sustained effort and are associated with physiological or psychological costs. Examples within educational settings include excessive workload, technological pressures, role conflict, time constraints, and accountability demands. In contrast, job resources are organisational, social, or personal factors that help employees achieve work goals, reduce job demands, and promote professional growth and engagement.

The theory proposes that high job demands may lead to stress, exhaustion, and burnout, whereas adequate job resources enhance motivation, well-being, and organisational commitment. Importantly, job resources can buffer the negative effects of job demands and improve employees' capacity to cope with workplace challenges.

Within the context of this study, school leadership practices represent critical organisational resources that can support teachers in managing the demands associated with digital transformation. Leadership behaviours such as professional support, recognition, collaborative decision-making, mentoring, and digital capacity-building may reduce occupational stress while enhancing teacher well-being and workforce sustainability. Consequently, the JD-R Theory provides an appropriate theoretical lens for examining how leadership practices influence teachers' experiences within digitally evolving educational environments.

Methodology

Research Design

The study adopted a descriptive cross-sectional survey design. The design was considered appropriate because it enabled the collection of data from a large population at a single point in time and facilitated the examination of relationships among school leadership practices, teacher well-being, occupational stress, and workforce sustainability without manipulating any variables.

Population of the Study

The population comprised 4,820 teachers employed in public secondary schools across North-Central Nigeria. These teachers were considered suitable respondents because of their direct involvement in instructional activities and their experiences with school leadership practices, workplace stressors, and digital transformation initiatives within their respective schools.

Sample and Sampling Technique

A sample of 520 teachers was selected using a multistage sampling procedure. The first stage involved stratifying schools according to state and educational zone to ensure adequate representation. The second stage employed proportionate sampling techniques to determine the number of participants selected from each stratum. Finally, simple random sampling was used to select individual teachers who participated in the study. This procedure ensured fairness, representativeness, and the generalisability of findings.

Instrumentation

Data were collected using four structured instruments:

1. **School Leadership Practices Scale (SLPS)** – measured teachers' perceptions of leadership practices.
2. **Teacher Well-Being Inventory (TWBI)** – assessed teachers' psychological, emotional, and professional well-being.
3. **Occupational Stress Assessment Scale (OSAS)** – measured stress associated with workplace demands and digital responsibilities.

4. **Workforce Sustainability Questionnaire (WSQ)** – assessed teachers' commitment, retention intentions, and perceptions of long-term career sustainability.

The instruments were validated by experts in Educational Management, Measurement and Evaluation, and Educational Psychology. Reliability analysis using Cronbach's Alpha yielded coefficients ranging from .81 to .92, indicating high internal consistency and reliability.

Method of Data Analysis

Data collected were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions, while Pearson Product-Moment Correlation and Multiple Regression Analysis was employed to test the hypotheses at the 0.05 level of significance.

Results

This section presents the findings of the study based on the analysis of data collected from 520 teachers in public secondary schools across North-Central Nigeria. The results are organised according to the research questions and hypotheses that guided the study. Descriptive statistics, including mean, standard deviation, frequency, and percentage, were used to answer the research questions, while Pearson Product-Moment Correlation and Multiple Regression Analysis was employed to test the hypotheses at the 0.05 level of significance.

Research Question 1

What school leadership practices are prevalent in public secondary schools?

Table 1: Mean Ratings of School Leadership Practices

Leadership Practice	Mean	SD	Decision
Participatory decision-making	3.91	.62	High
Professional development support	4.03	.57	High
Teacher recognition	3.88	.71	High
Digital leadership competence	4.11	.54	High
Emotional support	3.84	.67	High
Overall Mean	3.95	.62	High

Interpretation of Table 1

Table 1 presents teachers' perceptions of school leadership practices in public secondary schools. The findings indicate that all dimensions of leadership practice were rated highly, with mean scores above the benchmark of 3.50. Digital leadership competence recorded the highest mean score ($M = 4.11$, $SD = .54$), suggesting that school leaders demonstrate considerable capacity in supporting technology integration and digital transformation initiatives. Professional development support also received

a high rating ($M = 4.03$, $SD = .57$), indicating that teachers perceive school leaders as actively encouraging continuous learning and skill development.

Participatory decision-making ($M = 3.91$, $SD = .62$), teacher recognition ($M = 3.88$, $SD = .71$), and emotional support ($M = 3.84$, $SD = .67$) were similarly rated highly, reflecting positive perceptions of leadership support and engagement. The overall mean score of 3.95 ($SD = .62$) indicates that supportive and effective leadership practices are prevalent in the schools studied.



Figure 1: Teachers' Perceptions of School Leadership Practices

Interpretation of Figure 1

Figure 1 provides a visual representation of the various dimensions of school leadership practices. The chart clearly shows that digital leadership competence emerged as the most highly rated leadership attribute, followed by professional development support. Although emotional support recorded the lowest mean score among the dimensions, it remained within the high category. The

pattern suggests that school leaders are increasingly responding to the demands of digital transformation while maintaining supportive relationships with teachers. Overall, the chart confirms the widespread presence of positive leadership practices across the sampled schools.

Research Question 2

What is the level of teacher well-being in public secondary schools?

Table 2: Distribution of Teachers by Level of Well-Being

Well-Being Level	Frequency	Percentage (%)
High	246	47.3
Moderate	201	38.7
Low	73	14.0
Total	520	100.0

Interpretation of Table 2

Table 2 shows the distribution of teachers according to their reported level of well-being. The results indicate that 246 teachers (47.3%) experienced high levels of well-being, while 201 teachers (38.7%) reported moderate well-being. Only 73 teachers (14.0%) reported low levels of well-being.

These findings suggest that the majority of teachers experience positive psychological, emotional, and professional functioning within their schools. Nevertheless, the proportion of teachers reporting moderate and low well-being highlights the need for continued efforts to strengthen teacher support systems and workplace conditions.

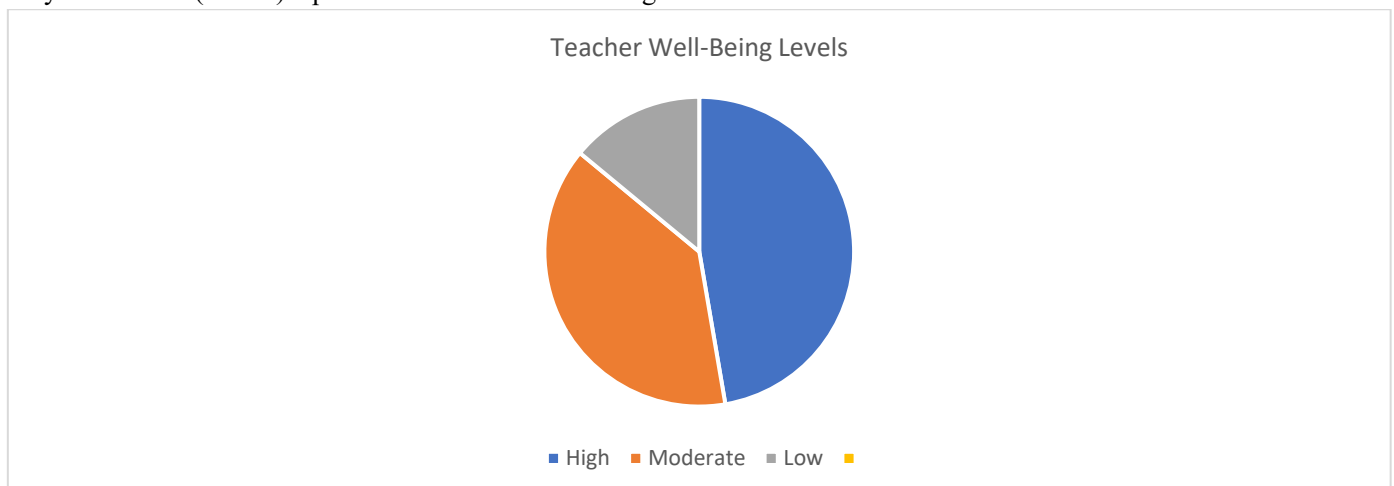


Figure 2: Teacher Well-Being Levels

Interpretation of Figure 2

Figure 2 illustrates the distribution of teacher well-being levels. The chart shows that nearly half of the respondents reported high well-being, indicating generally favourable workplace experiences among teachers. However, more than one-third reported moderate well-being, while a smaller proportion reported low well-being. This pattern

suggests that although teacher well-being is generally positive, there remains a sizeable group of teachers who may benefit from additional organisational and leadership support.

Research Question 3

What is the level of occupational stress among teachers?

Table 3: Distribution of Teachers by Occupational Stress Level

Stress Level	Frequency	Percentage (%)
High	212	40.8
Moderate	235	45.2
Low	73	14.0
Total	520	100.0

Interpretation of Table 3

Table 3 presents teachers’ levels of occupational stress. The findings reveal that 235 teachers (45.2%) experienced moderate stress levels, while 212 teachers (40.8%) reported high stress levels. Only 73 teachers (14.0%) reported low stress. These results indicate that occupational stress

remains a significant challenge for teachers despite the generally positive leadership practices and well-being levels observed. The prevalence of moderate and high stress may be attributed to increasing workload demands, technological adaptation requirements, and accountability pressures associated with contemporary educational environments.

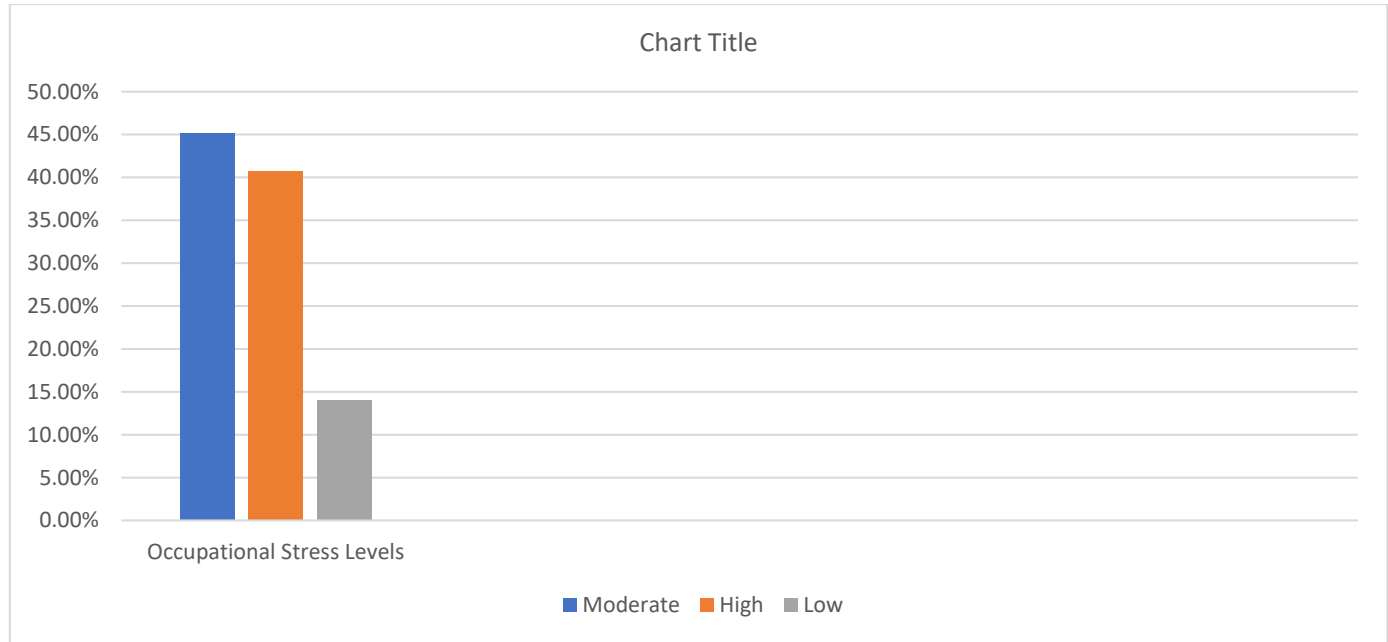


Figure 3: Occupational Stress Levels

Interpretation of Figure 3

Figure 3 shows that the majority of teachers experience moderate to high levels of occupational stress. The relatively small percentage of teachers reporting low stress suggests that workplace pressures remain widespread within the teaching profession. The chart highlights the importance of implementing strategies aimed at reducing

occupational stress and promoting healthier work environments.

Hypotheses Testing

Hypothesis One

H01: There is no significant relationship between school leadership practices and teacher well-being.

Table 4: Pearson Correlation Between School Leadership Practices and Teacher Well-Being

Variable	r	p-value
Leadership Practices and Teacher Well-Being	.684	.000

Interpretation of Table 4

Table 4 reveals a strong positive relationship between school leadership practices and teacher well-being ($r = .684$, $p < .05$). The positive correlation indicates that improvements in leadership practices are associated with higher levels of teacher well-being. Since the p-value (.000) is less than the significance level of .05, the relationship is statistically significant.

Table 5: Regression Analysis of Occupational Stress and Workforce Sustainability

Variable	β	t	p-value
Occupational Stress	-.591	-14.82	.000

Interpretation of Table 5

Table 5 indicates that occupational stress significantly predicts workforce sustainability ($\beta = -.591$, $t = -14.82$, $p < .05$). The negative beta coefficient suggests that increasing levels of occupational stress are associated with lower levels of workforce sustainability. In practical terms, teachers experiencing high stress are less likely to remain committed to the profession and may be more inclined to consider leaving their positions.

Table 6: Multiple Regression Analysis Predicting Teacher Well-Being

Predictor	β	t	p-value
Participatory Leadership	.241	6.34	.000
Digital Leadership	.302	7.95	.000
Teacher Recognition	.188	4.83	.000
Professional Development Support	.271	7.12	.000
Emotional Support	.219	5.76	.000

Model Summary

Statistic	Value
R^2	.584
F	89.42
p-value	.000

Interpretation of Table 6

Table 6 presents the results of the multiple regression analysis examining the predictive contribution of school leadership practices to teacher well-being. The findings indicate that all five leadership dimensions significantly contributed to the prediction of teacher well-being ($p < .05$). Digital leadership competence emerged as the strongest predictor ($\beta = .302$), followed by professional development support ($\beta = .271$), participatory leadership ($\beta = .241$),

Decision

The null hypothesis (H01) was rejected. Therefore, there is a significant positive relationship between school leadership practices and teacher well-being.

Hypothesis Two

H02: Occupational stress does not significantly predict workforce sustainability.

Decision

The null hypothesis (H02) was rejected. Occupational stress significantly and negatively predicts workforce sustainability.

Hypothesis Three

H03: School leadership practices do not significantly predict teacher well-being.

emotional support ($\beta = .219$), and teacher recognition ($\beta = .188$). The model explained 58.4% of the variance in teacher well-being ($R^2 = .584$), indicating substantial explanatory power. The F-ratio of 89.42 was statistically significant ($p < .05$), confirming that the model adequately predicts teacher well-being.

Decision

The null hypothesis (H03) was rejected. School leadership practices significantly predict teacher well-being.

Summary of Findings

The findings demonstrate that supportive school leadership practices are prevalent in public secondary schools and play a significant role in enhancing teacher well-being. While teachers generally reported moderate to high levels of well-being, occupational stress remains a major concern. The study further established that leadership practices significantly improve teacher well-being, whereas occupational stress negatively affects workforce sustainability. Collectively, the results underscore the critical role of effective leadership in fostering healthy, resilient, and sustainable educational workforces in the digital era.

Discussion

This study examined the influence of school leadership practices on teacher well-being, occupational stress, and workforce sustainability in public secondary schools within the context of increasing digital transformation. The findings revealed that school leadership practices were generally perceived as highly prevalent, with digital leadership competence receiving the highest rating among the leadership dimensions examined. This suggests that school leaders are increasingly responding to the demands of technologically driven educational environments by providing guidance and support for digital integration. The finding reflects the growing recognition that effective leadership in contemporary schools extends beyond administrative management to include facilitating teachers' adaptation to technological change.

The study further established a significant positive relationship between school leadership practices and teacher well-being. Teachers who perceived their school leaders as supportive, participatory, professionally encouraging, and emotionally responsive reported higher levels of well-being. This finding is consistent with the growing body of literature indicating that leadership behaviour characterised by trust, collaboration, empowerment, recognition, and professional support contributes significantly to teachers' psychological and professional well-being. Effective leadership creates a positive organisational climate in which teachers feel valued, supported, and motivated to perform their professional responsibilities.

A particularly noteworthy finding was that digital leadership competence emerged as the strongest predictor of teacher well-being. This result underscores the importance of leadership capacity in managing technological change within schools. As educational systems continue to embrace digital learning platforms, artificial intelligence tools, and technology-enhanced instructional practices, teachers increasingly depend on

school leaders for direction, professional support, and access to relevant resources. Leaders who demonstrate competence in navigating digital transformation are better positioned to reduce uncertainty, build teacher confidence, and minimise technology-related stress. Consequently, digital leadership has become an essential component of educational leadership effectiveness in the twenty-first century.

The findings also revealed that occupational stress significantly and negatively predicted workforce sustainability. Teachers experiencing higher levels of occupational stress were less likely to demonstrate long-term commitment, professional engagement, and intentions to remain in the teaching profession. This result reflects growing concerns regarding teacher retention and workforce stability in many educational systems. The increasing demands associated with technological adaptation, workload expansion, accountability measures, and continuous professional learning may contribute to stress levels that undermine teachers' commitment to their careers. If left unaddressed, such pressures may exacerbate teacher attrition and weaken the sustainability of the educational workforce.

The findings provide empirical support for the Job Demands – Resources (JD-R) Theory, which served as the theoretical framework for this study. The theory posits that employee well-being is influenced by the interaction between job demands and available organisational resources. In this study, occupational stress represented a significant job demand, while leadership practices functioned as critical organisational resources. The positive influence of leadership practices on teacher well-being and the negative effect of occupational stress on workforce sustainability support the central assumptions of the JD-R model. The findings suggest that supportive leadership can buffer the adverse effects of workplace demands and enhance teachers' capacity to cope with the challenges associated with digital transformation.

Furthermore, the regression analysis demonstrated that school leadership practices jointly accounted for 58.4% of the variance in teacher well-being. This substantial explanatory power highlights the central role of leadership in shaping teachers' professional experiences and workplace outcomes. The finding suggests that interventions aimed at improving teacher well-being should prioritise leadership development as a strategic mechanism for strengthening educational effectiveness and workforce sustainability.

Overall, the study reinforces the view that sustainable educational systems depend not only on technological advancement and policy reforms but also on leadership approaches that place teachers' well-being at the centre of

organisational decision-making. As schools continue to navigate rapid technological change, educational leaders must balance innovation with human-centred support systems that promote professional fulfilment, resilience, and long-term workforce commitment.

Implications for Educational Policy and Practice

The findings carry significant implications for educational leadership policy, teacher development initiatives, and workforce sustainability strategies in Nigeria.

Leadership Standards Reform

The Federal Ministry of Education and State Universal Basic Education Boards should revise leadership competency frameworks to include digital leadership, staff well-being management, emotional intelligence, and workforce sustainability indicators. Leadership effectiveness should no longer be evaluated solely through academic performance outcomes but also through teacher well-being metrics.

National Teacher Well-Being Policy

Nigeria currently lacks a comprehensive national framework dedicated to teacher well-being. The study highlights the urgent need for a National Teacher Well-Being Policy that addresses workload management, psychosocial support, mental health services, professional recognition, and work-life balance.

Integration Into Teacher Development Agenda

The findings support incorporating well-being competencies into the implementation of the National Policy on Education and the Teacher Professional Development Framework. Teacher well-being should be recognised as a strategic component of educational quality improvement and sustainable development.

Digital Transformation Strategy

As schools increasingly adopt digital technologies, educational authorities should provide systematic leadership training in digital transformation management. Principals require competencies in technological planning, cyber safety, digital ethics, data management, and staff support during technological transitions.

Workforce Sustainability and Retention

The significant relationship between occupational stress and workforce sustainability indicates that teacher retention strategies should move beyond salary enhancements alone. Sustainable retention policies should include:

1. Reduced administrative burden
2. Flexible professional development pathways
3. Employee assistance programmes

4. School-based counselling services
5. Teacher recognition schemes
6. Mentorship and peer-support structures

Educational Financing

Government funding mechanisms should allocate dedicated resources for teacher wellness initiatives. Investment in teacher well-being represents an investment in instructional quality, student achievement, and long-term educational sustainability.

Conclusion

This study investigated the relationship between school leadership practices, teacher well-being, occupational stress, and workforce sustainability in public secondary schools in North-Central Nigeria. The findings demonstrated that supportive leadership practices significantly enhance teacher well-being, while occupational stress negatively affects workforce sustainability. Among the leadership dimensions examined, digital leadership competence emerged as the strongest predictor of teacher well-being, reflecting the growing importance of technologically responsive leadership in contemporary educational environments.

The study concludes that effective school leadership remains a critical organisational resource for promoting teacher well-being and sustaining a productive educational workforce. Teachers working in environments characterised by professional support, participatory decision-making, recognition, emotional support, and effective digital leadership are more likely to experience positive well-being and remain committed to their profession. Conversely, persistent occupational stress poses a significant threat to workforce stability and long-term educational effectiveness.

As educational systems continue to undergo digital transformation, school leaders must move beyond traditional administrative functions and adopt leadership approaches that integrate technological innovation with teacher support and welfare. Sustainable educational development in Nigeria will depend largely on leadership structures that foster positive work environments, strengthen teacher resilience, and support continuous professional growth in an increasingly digital world.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Educational administrators and school leaders should undergo continuous professional training in digital leadership, teacher well-being

management, and workforce sustainability strategies.

2. Ministries of Education and school authorities should institutionalise comprehensive teacher wellness programmes that address psychological well-being, stress management, and work-life balance.
3. Teacher well-being indicators should be incorporated into educational quality assurance, school effectiveness assessments, and leadership performance evaluation systems.
4. Schools should provide regular professional development opportunities aimed at enhancing teachers' digital competencies while simultaneously equipping them with strategies for managing occupational stress.
5. School leaders should strengthen participatory decision-making structures that promote teacher voice, collaboration, and shared responsibility in school governance.
6. Government and educational stakeholders should develop evidence-based teacher retention policies that address occupational stress, career progression, workplace support, and long-term workforce sustainability.
7. Adequate technological infrastructure and support services should be provided to reduce technology-related stress and facilitate effective implementation of digital learning initiatives.
8. Future educational reforms should prioritise teacher-centred leadership approaches that balance accountability demands with professional support and employee well-being.

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