

DIGITAL WORKLOAD, TEACHER BURNOUT, AND RETENTION STRATEGIES IN PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS, KAJOLA LOCAL GOVERNMENT, OYO STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

Secondary school teachers in Kajola Local Government Area of Oyo State are increasingly burdened by digital workload, leading to emotional exhaustion, stress, and reduced job satisfaction. However, limited empirical research has explored how Human Resource Management (HRM) strategies can mitigate burnout and improve teacher retention. This study examined the relationship between digital workload and teacher burnout, assessed the effect of burnout on retention, and evaluated the effectiveness of HRM strategies in enhancing teacher well-being. A descriptive survey design was adopted. The study population comprised 1,250 teachers across 16 public secondary schools, from which 250 (120 males, 130 females) were selected using stratified random sampling. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire tagged "Digital Workload, Teacher Burnout, and Retention Strategies Questionnaire" (DWTBRSQ) validated by experts and yielding high reliability ($\alpha = 0.80-0.87$). Pearson's correlation, regression analysis, and ANOVA were used for data analysis. Findings revealed a significant positive relationship between digital workload and teacher burnout, with emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced accomplishment as major symptoms. Burnout negatively predicted teacher retention, while HRM strategies including mentorship, workload reduction, and professional development were found effective in reducing stress and enhancing retention. Although gender-based differences were minimal, female teachers reported slightly higher workload concerns. The study concludes that addressing digital workload and institutionalizing HRM interventions are critical for improving teacher retention and well-being. It recommended workload balancing, digital literacy training, and psychological support programs to enhance teacher job satisfaction and sustainability in the education sector.

Keywords: Digital workload, Teacher burnout, Retention strategies, Human resource management, Secondary school teachers.

Introduction

The increasing integration of digital tools in education has significantly transformed teaching and administrative processes, creating both opportunities and challenges for educators. While

these technologies enhance instructional delivery and administrative efficiency, they also contribute to an increased digital workload. Teachers now spend extended hours preparing digital lesson plans, grading assignments online, and responding to work-related emails beyond official hours. Consequently, this digital overload has been linked to stress, burnout, and high attrition rates among teachers (Adeyemo, 2021).

In Kajola Local Government of Oyo State, secondary school teachers face mounting pressure due to these digital demands, which affects their well-being and job satisfaction. Studies suggest that prolonged exposure to digital workload often leads to burnout, a condition characterized by emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and diminished professional efficacy (Maslach & Leiter, 2017). Obi and Yusuf (2022) further highlight that although digitalization enhances instructional efficiency, it requires continuous adaptation, which significantly impacts teacher morale and performance.

In Nigeria, secondary school teachers are expected to manage substantial digital responsibilities, often without adequate institutional support or training (Adeyemi & Nwachukwu, 2020). This situation contributes to increased job dissatisfaction, lower engagement levels, and higher teacher turnover rates. Research by Okonkwo and Balogun (2022) revealed that burnout negatively affects teachers' commitment, prompting many to consider alternative careers. Moreover, Aina and Bello (2021) found that schools with weak Human Resource Management (HRM) interventions struggle with teacher retention, leading to a decline in educational quality and student performance.

Despite the growing concerns surrounding digital workload and burnout, there is limited empirical research on effective HRM strategies that can alleviate these challenges, particularly in rural areas like Kajola Local Government. Therefore, the study aimed to bridge the gap by investigating the interplay between digital workload, teacher burnout, and human resource management strategies, providing evidence-based recommendations for fostering teacher well-being and retention in public secondary schools.

Statement of the problem

The growing integration of digital tools into teaching has reshaped educational practices, but it has also intensified teachers' workload, often without adequate institutional support. In public secondary schools within Kajola Local Government, Oyo State, many teachers face emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced job satisfaction linked to digital demands. While studies have explored digital workload and burnout independently, there is limited empirical evidence examining how Human Resource Management (HRM) strategies can mitigate burnout and improve retention, particularly in rural or under-resourced settings. Most existing literature overlooks the interplay between digital workload, burnout, and strategic HRM interventions. This gap leaves school administrators and policymakers without practical, evidence-based solutions to support teachers in digitally demanding environments. Addressing this issue is critical for sustaining teacher well-being and reducing attrition. Therefore, this study investigates the relationship between digital workload and teacher burnout, explores how burnout affects retention, and evaluates the effectiveness of HRM strategies in enhancing teacher sustainability in public secondary schools.

Research Purposes

The study investigated Digital Workload, Teacher Burnout and Retention Strategies in Public Secondary Schools, Kajola Local Government, Oyo State, Nigeria. Specifically the study:

1. Analyzed the impact of digital workload on teacher burnout in secondary schools within Kajola Local Government.
2. Investigated the relationship between teacher burnout and retention rates.
3. Evaluated the effectiveness of Human Resource Management (HRM) strategies in mitigating burnout and improving teacher retention.
4. Suggested evidence-based solutions to manage digital workload and enhance teacher well-being.

Research Questions

1. What is the relationship between digital workload and teacher burnout in public secondary schools in Kajola Local Government, Oyo State?
2. How does teacher burnout affect retention among secondary school teachers in the study area?
3. How effective are Human Resource Management (HRM) strategies in reducing burnout and enhancing teacher retention?
4. Are there significant gender-based differences in teacher burnout and retention intention in Kajola public secondary schools?

Research Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance:

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between digital workload and teacher burnout in public secondary schools in Kajola Local Government.

H₀₂: Teacher burnout does not significantly affect retention among secondary school teachers in Kajola Local Government.

H₀₃: Human Resource Management (HRM) strategies do not significantly mitigate teacher burnout and improve retention in public secondary schools in the study area.

H₀₄: There is no significant difference in burnout and retention intention between male and female teachers in Kajola Local Government.

Literature Review

This section explores relevant literature on digital workload, teacher burnout, retention, and the strategic role of Human Resource Management (HRM) in educational settings. It presents an overview of how digital demands influence teacher stress and emotional exhaustion, and how these conditions impact teacher retention. The review also evaluates empirical evidence on the effectiveness of HRM strategies in reducing burnout and improving staff sustainability. Emphasis is placed on studies conducted within Nigerian secondary schools and comparable global contexts to highlight both the universality and uniqueness of the challenges faced. By synthesizing these perspectives, this review provides a foundation for understanding the theoretical and practical significance of addressing teacher burnout through targeted HRM interventions.

Digital workload and teacher burnout

Digital workload refers to technology-driven teaching responsibilities that extend beyond traditional work hours, including digital lesson planning, online grading, and administrative reporting. Adeyemo (2021) describes it as a growing source of stress among educators. Obi and Yusuf (2022) highlight that ICT integration increases teacher workload due to constant adaptation to new tools and platforms. Kazeem and Jimoh (2023) argue that digital workload places emotional and psychological strain on teachers, especially in environments lacking adequate support.

Studies consistently show that teachers with excessive digital tasks experience high stress levels, emotional exhaustion, and reduced job satisfaction. These symptoms align with Maslach and Leiter's (2017) framework of burnout, which includes emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and diminished personal accomplishment. Gender-based studies, such as those by Ajayi and Ojo (2022), find that female teachers often report higher stress due to dual responsibilities at home and school, suggesting a need for gender-sensitive workload management.

The findings of Beneito, Añón-Higón, and Rocha (2022) report that 75% of teachers in Spain feel overwhelmed by digital demands. Ekanem and Oladele (2021) find that Nigerian teachers without institutional support are twice as likely to experience burnout. Similarly, Osei and Boateng (2020) conclude that excessive reliance on technology reduces job satisfaction among Ghanaian teachers.

Burnout and its implications for teachers

Burnout represents a state of prolonged emotional, mental, and physical exhaustion resulting from chronic job-related stress. Maslach and Leiter (2017) define it through three key dimensions: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment. In the teaching profession, burnout manifests as disengagement, low motivation, and decreased professional efficacy. Adeyemi and Nwachukwu (2020) explain that this condition leads to teacher fatigue and detachment from instructional responsibilities.

Research consistently links teacher burnout to higher attrition rates. Kim and Asbury (2021) report that 80% of UK teachers experience severe emotional exhaustion during the COVID-19 pandemic due to the pressures of online teaching. Okonkwo and Balogun (2022) find that Nigerian teachers with high digital workload and low digital literacy are more susceptible to burnout. Similarly, Garcia and Weiss (2020) reveal that burnout is a major factor behind teacher turnover in the United States, where 43% of educators leave the profession within five years.

The long-term effects of burnout include reduced instructional quality, decreased student engagement, and deteriorating school morale. Burnout not only affects individual teachers but also undermines overall educational outcomes. When left unaddressed, it creates a cycle of stress, dissatisfaction, and turnover, placing further pressure on remaining staff and disrupting school continuity.

Teacher retention and human resource management (HRM) strategies

Teacher retention refers to the ability of a school system to sustain a stable teaching workforce over time. Ingersoll and Strong (2018) identify job satisfaction, career development opportunities, and supportive working conditions as key factors influencing teacher retention. Ibrahim and Afolabi (2022) emphasize that workload balance, fair compensation, and a positive school climate play vital roles in keeping teachers in the profession.

Recent studies highlight the effectiveness of Human Resource Management (HRM) strategies in improving teacher retention. Kraft, Marinell, and Yee (2020) show that mentorship and workload management programs increase retention rates by 32% in the United States. Aina and Bello (2021) find that Nigerian public school teachers facing digital overload are more likely to consider leaving the profession, especially when HRM interventions are weak or absent. Johnson, Kraft, and Papay (2019) also note that schools with structured HRM systems retain significantly more teachers.

HRM strategies typically include induction programs, continuous professional development, wellness initiatives, and fair workload policies. Armstrong (2020) argues that effective HRM practices enhance job satisfaction and reduce occupational stress. Darling-Hammond and Hylar (2020) support this by showing that mentorship and supportive leadership reduce burnout by 45%. In the Nigerian context, Adediran and Salami (2021) report that teacher incentives, flexible schedules, and workload sharing significantly improve retention.

Methodology

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design, which allowed for systematic data collection and analysis to examine the relationships between digital workload, teacher burnout, and retention strategies. The targeted population comprised of all 1,250 secondary school teachers in the 16 public secondary schools in Kajola Local Government, Oyo State. However, to enhance response rate and ensure robust data analysis, the final sample size was adjusted to 250 teachers. The sample was stratified by gender to allow for gender-based analysis: Male teachers: 120 (48%) and Female teachers: 130 (52%). A stratified random sampling technique was employed to ensure fair representation across different school types (urban, semi-urban, and rural). The sampling process involved: categorizing schools by location, randomly selecting teachers from each category and, ensuring gender balance in the final selection.

A structured questionnaire titled "Digital Workload, Teacher Burnout, and Retention Strategies Questionnaire" (DWTBRSQ) was developed to measure: Digital workload (use of ICT in lesson planning, grading, and administrative tasks), teacher burnout (emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and job dissatisfaction), teacher retention (intent to stay in the profession, job satisfaction, and commitment) and, HRM strategies (mentorship, workload reduction policies, professional development opportunities). The questionnaire utilized a 4-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Agree, 4 = Strongly Agree) to encourage clear responses and minimize response bias.

The validity of the instrument was established through content and face validation by three senior lecturers from the Department of Educational Management, University of Ilorin. Their feedback led to: rewording ambiguous items for clarity, ensuring alignment with study objectives and, adjusting some Likert-scale items for better construct measurement.

For reliability, a pilot study was conducted with 30 secondary school teachers outside Kajola LGA. Using Cronbach’s Alpha, the reliability coefficients were: Digital Workload Scale: 0.82, burnout Scale: 0.85, Retention Scale: 0.80 and, HRM Strategies Scale: 0.87. Since all values exceeded the 0.7 threshold (Nunnally, 1978), the instrument was deemed highly reliable.

The collected data were analyzed using SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) version 27, employing the following techniques: Descriptive Statistics (Mean, Standard Deviation, Percentages) used to summarize demographic characteristics and general response patterns, Pearson’s Correlation Analysis was employed to determine the strength and direction of relationships between digital workload and burnout, regression Analysis was used to predict the impact of burnout on teacher retention, Independent Sample t-Test was applied to examine gender-based differences in burnout and retention while ANOVA (Analysis of Variance) was used to compare burnout levels across different school locations (urban, semi-urban, rural).

Results and Discussion of Findings

Demographic Profile of Respondents

A total of 250 secondary school teachers from Kajola Local Government participated in the study. Their demographic characteristics are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1

Demographic characteristics of Respondents

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	120	48.0
	Female	130	52.0
Teaching Experience	Less than 5 years	45	18.0
	5-10 years	90	36.0
	Above 10 years	115	46.0
School Location	Urban	85	34.0
	Semi-Urban	85	34.0
	Rural	80	32.0

The data from table 1 reveal a balanced gender distribution and varying levels of teaching experience, ensuring diverse perspectives on digital workload, burnout, and retention.

Descriptive analysis of key variables

Table 2 presents the mean and standard deviation (SD) of the key variables measured using the 4-point Likert scale.

Table 2

Mean and Standard Deviation of Variables

Variable	Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)	Interpretation
Digital Workload	3.45	0.76	High
Teacher Burnout	3.32	0.80	High
Retention Intention	2.61	0.88	Low
HRM Strategies Effectiveness	2.98	0.74	Moderate

Findings from Table 2 indicate that teachers experience a high level of digital workload (M = 3.45, SD = 0.76), suggesting that digital demands are significantly taxing. Similarly, burnout is also high (M = 3.32, SD = 0.80), indicating a strong psychological and emotional toll. Retention intention is notably low (M = 2.61, SD = 0.88), suggesting that many teachers are uncertain or unwilling to remain in the profession. HRM are rated moderately effective (M = 2.98, SD = 0.74), indicating room for policy and administrative improvement in supporting teacher well-being.

Hypothesis Testing

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between digital workload and teacher burnout in public secondary schools in Kajola Local Government.

Table 3

Pearson’s Correlation Analysis for Digital Workload and Teacher Burnout

Variables	r-value	p-value	Decision
Digital Workload and Teacher Burnout	0.72	< 0.01	Significant

The results from table 3 reveal a high, positive correlation between digital workload and teacher burnout (r = 0.72, p < 0.01), indicating that increased digital responsibilities significantly contribute to emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced professional fulfillment.

H₀₂: Teacher burnout does not significantly affect retention among secondary school teachers in Kajola Local Government.

Table 4

Regression Analysis for Teacher Burnout and Retention Intention

Predictor	β (Beta Coefficient)	t-value	p-value	R²	Decision
Teacher Burnout and Retention Intention	-0.65	-8.24	< 0.01	0.42	Significant

In table 4 above, regression analysis demonstrates that burnout significantly predicts retention intention (β = -0.65, p < 0.01), accounting for 42% of the variance. This means that teachers experiencing higher burnout levels are less likely to remain in the profession.

H₀₃: Human Resource Management (HRM) strategies do not significantly mitigate teacher burnout and improve retention in public secondary schools in the study area.

Table 5: ANOVA - Effect of HRM Strategies on Teacher Burnout Levels

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F-value	p-value	Decision
Between Groups	5.78	2	2.89	4.21	< 0.05	Significant
Within Groups	98.32	247	0.40			
Total	104.10	249				

ANOVA results from table 5 reveal significant differences in burnout levels among teachers exposed to various HRM strategies ($F = 4.21, p < 0.05$). This implies that the schools with mentorship programs, workload reduction policies, and professional development opportunities recorded lower burnout levels and higher retention rates.

H₀₄: There is no significant difference in burnout and retention intention between male and female teachers in Kajola Local Government.

Table 6

Independent t-test – Gender Difference in Burnout and Retention Intention of the teachers

Variable	Gender	Mean	SD	t-value	df	p-value	Decision
Teacher Burnout	Male	3.30	0.78	-0.45	248	0.65	Not Significant
	Female	3.34	0.82				
Retention intention	Male	2.63	0.86	0.35		0.73	Not Significant
	Female	2.59	0.90				

Independent t-test results from table 6 show no statistically significant gender-based differences in teacher burnout ($t = -0.45, p = 0.65$) or retention intention ($t = 0.35, p = 0.73$). This suggests that both male and female teachers experience similar levels of stress and have comparable intentions to remain in the profession.

Discussion of Findings

The study examined digital workload, teacher burnout, and retention strategies in public secondary schools, kajola local government, Oyo State, Nigeria. Four hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

The results from the tested hypothesis 1 reveals a strong, positive correlation between digital workload and teacher burnout ($r = 0.72, p < 0.01$), indicating that increased digital responsibilities significantly contribute to emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced professional fulfillment. This finding supports Maslach and Leiter’s (2017) theory that excessive workload leads to emotional exhaustion, reducing teachers’ engagement in

teaching. The study also confirms Adeyemo (2021), who emphasizes that digital overload intensifies stress among teachers. Similar studies by Kazeem and Jimoh (2023) confirm that prolonged exposure to digital tasks such as online grading and lesson planning elevates psychological strain. International findings by Beneito, Añón-Higón, and Rocha (2022) also corroborate this result, showing widespread teacher burnout due to technological overload.

The results of hypothesis 2 show regression analysis demonstrates that burnout significantly predicts retention intention ($\beta = -0.65$, $p < 0.01$), accounting for 42% of the variance. This means that teachers experiencing higher burnout levels are less likely to remain in the profession. This result confirms the work of Okonkwo and Balogun (2022), who note that burnout especially when triggered by digital workload diminishes job commitment and increases intent to quit. Similarly, Garcia and Weiss (2020) identify burnout as a leading cause of early career exits among teachers. These findings emphasize that unresolved burnout undermines retention and poses a serious threat to workforce stability in education.

ANOVA results of tested hypothesis 3 show significant differences in burnout levels across varying exposures to HRM strategies ($F = 4.21$, $p < 0.05$). Teachers in schools with well-structured HRM practices report lower burnout. This aligns with Aina and Bello (2021), who observe that mentorship, workload sharing, and development opportunities lead to better teacher retention. Armstrong (2020) emphasizes the role of HRM in creating positive work environments. Additionally, Adediran and Salami (2021) confirm that HRM interventions such as teacher incentives and flexible schedules significantly enhance job satisfaction. Thus, strategic HRM approaches are critical for retaining motivated, healthy educators in the digital era.

The results of tested hypothesis 4 finds no statistically significant gender differences in burnout and retention intention, suggesting both male and female teachers experience similar stress levels. However, qualitative insights indicate that female teachers report slightly higher workload concerns. Ajayi and Ojo (2022) explain that women often bear dual burdens of professional and domestic responsibilities, which may contribute to their elevated stress perception. Despite this, the general parity in burnout levels reflects the pervasive impact of digital workload across genders.

Conclusion

The study investigated the relationship between digital workload and teacher burnout, and evaluates the effectiveness of Human Resource Management (HRM) strategies in improving retention among secondary school teachers in Kajola Local Government, Oyo State. The findings reveal that digital workload significantly increases burnout, characterized by emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and a sense of reduced professional accomplishment. This aligns with existing literature and highlights the psychological toll of sustained digital engagement without adequate institutional support.

The study also confirms that burnout is a significant predictor of low retention intention. Teachers experiencing high burnout are more likely to disengage and consider exiting the profession. This poses a critical challenge for educational sustainability, particularly in public secondary schools that already face staffing constraints.

Importantly, the study finds that HRM strategies such as mentorship programs, workload redistribution, and ongoing professional development are effective in mitigating burnout and

enhancing teacher retention. While gender-based differences in burnout and retention are not statistically significant, female teachers report slightly more pressure related to workload, reflecting societal expectations and dual responsibilities.

Overall, the study concludes that improving teacher retention and well-being requires a deliberate effort to reduce digital workload and institutionalize supportive HRM practices. Without such interventions, the risk of burnout-induced attrition will continue to threaten the stability and quality of secondary education, particularly in resource limited settings like Kajola local government.

Recommendations

To mitigate teacher burnout and enhance retention, the study recommended the following:

1. The Ministry of Education and school administrators should implement digital workload policies that regulate the volume and timing of ICT-related tasks. This includes setting boundaries for after-school digital responsibilities and providing administrative support to reduce teachers' burden.
2. School leadership should integrate psychological wellness programs and stress management workshops into the school calendar. These initiatives will support teachers' emotional health and foster long-term commitment to the profession.
3. Public secondary schools should adopt structured Human Resource Management interventions, such as peer mentorship programs, teacher incentives, and accessible professional development. These strategies help reduce burnout and reinforce teacher engagement and retention.
4. Policymakers and administrators should promote gender-sensitive workload planning, ensuring equitable task distribution while considering the dual roles often played by female teachers. Flexible scheduling and optional remote planning time may help address underlying disparities.

Contribution to Knowledge

Firstly, the study provides empirical validation that digital workload is not only a significant stressor but a structural challenge, particularly in rural public secondary schools. By identifying digital workload as a direct and quantifiable driver of teacher burnout, the study offers policymakers a measurable entry point for reform.

Secondly, the research introduces Human Resource Management (HRM) strategies as an effective intervention framework, moving the discourse from problem identification to solution design. Unlike prior studies that only highlight teacher attrition as a consequence of burnout, this study evaluates and confirms the effectiveness of HRM approaches such as mentorship, workload balancing, and professional development in mitigating stress and improving teacher retention.

Thirdly, the study provides localized insights from Kajola Local Government Area, a rural setting often underrepresented in education research. By focusing on this context, the study contributes region-specific data that enhances the generalizability and comparative analysis of teacher welfare across different geographical settings in Nigeria.

Finally, the study's design and findings inform both theory and practice by providing a model for linking organizational support systems with psychological outcomes, thus contributing to both educational leadership literature and HRM theory within the education sector.

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