

Research Article

Supervisors' Rating of Modern Office Applications Competencies Possessed by Secretaries for Effective Performance in Tertiary Institutions in Imo State, Nigeria

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Abstract: The need to enhance secretaries' performance necessitated this study on supervisors' rating of modern office application competencies possessed by secretaries for effective performance in public tertiary institutions in Imo State, Nigeria. Two research questions guided the study and two null hypotheses were tested. Descriptive survey design was adopted for the study. Population was 226 supervisors in tertiary institutions in Imo State, Nigeria. No sampling was done as the population size was not too large. A structured 20 items with five-point ratings scale questionnaire was used for data collection. The instrument was validated by three experts. Internal consistency method with Cronbach Alpha was used to determine the reliability of the instrument and obtained a reliability co-efficient value of 0.83 and 0.87 for clusters B1 and B2 respectively, with an overall co-efficient value of 0.85. The instrument was administered personally by the researcher with the help of four research assistant. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions, while Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The findings revealed that respondents agreed that secretaries in public tertiary institutions in Imo State possess competencies in modern office applications (word processing and spreadsheet) for effective performance. Findings also found that supervisors differed significantly in their mean ratings on word processing and spreadsheet competencies possessed by secretaries for effective performance in public tertiary institutions in Imo State as a result of institutions type. The study concluded that secretarial training programmes adequately expose and inculcate their requisites to the products. However, it was, therefore, recommended among others that supervisors of secretaries in public tertiary educational institutions in Imo State, Nigeria should provide conducive office environment and technical support to enable their secretaries amply utilize their possessed modern office application competencies for effective work performance.

Keywords: Supervisors' Rating of Modern Office Applications Competencies, Secretaries Effective Performance, Tertiary Institutions.

Introduction

The changes in technology have tremendously affected the role of secretaries in tertiary institutions from typewriting and writing of shorthand dictation, processing of mails and answering of telephone calls to include searching for relevant data, analyzing and interpreting the data via technology in addition to other advanced operations. In regard to this, Edwin (2008) opined that modern secretaries should be exposed to modern office technologies which make their work easier with more access to knowledge more. As observed by Nna (2009), modern technology is the development and application of scientific methods, skills, processes, techniques, tools and raw materials to make desired products to solve problems and satisfy human needs. Consequently, the technological and

environmental demands of the 21st century knowledge and information driven era, make it a prerequisite for secretaries to acquire modern technological competencies in order to adapt to the change from traditional to digital methods of operations. Secretaries should demonstrate competencies in the application and operation of the new technologies in modern office work in order to contribute to the achievement of goals and objectives of their organizations effectively.

The survival and success of all types of organizations including tertiary institutions are dependent on the performance of their workers especially secretaries who process information and manage the office records. According to the Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (SCANS) in Obi (2012), secretaries who wish to perform their duties effectively and serve their organization well should possess office application skill, communication skill, interpersonal skills and organizational skills among others. Secretaries in tertiary institutions have direct contact with staff and students who visit the office for one transaction or the others whose contact can affect them positively or negatively depending on the competencies the secretaries demonstrate.

In the recent past, a trained secretary was known to be an efficient office worker equipped with knowledge of shorthand, typewriting and office practice. Today, competency needs of secretaries have shifted as modern technology has eliminated old techniques and created new ones by transforming the ways information is organized and shared. Also, with the changing times and enhanced curriculum, secretaries are equipped with multifarious subjects and are quite versed in several office functions including processing of data using information and communication technology resources. The enhanced curriculum resulted from advocacies from various researchers in the past regarding the inadequacy of the past secretarial studies curriculum. Wahab in Olibie, Ezoem and Ekene (2014) opined that office work now requires increased understanding of the way computers link people, office to office and business to business. In supporting Wahab view, Olibie, Ezoem and Ekene posited that secretaries may only be employed or retained on the job in contemporary offices if they are ICT friendly and competent.

According to Emmanuel and Bolanle (2010), a secretary is any employee who is concerned with preparation, presentation, preservation and transmission of all types of communication of confidential nature at various levels in an organization. Winter in Boladele (2002) observed that a secretary is a warm, tirelessly helpful and understanding individual whose sole aim is to alleviate, solve, prevent or soften problems, workload and up-sets for an executive. Furthermore, Boladele posited that secretary is the means by which the boss initiates, handles and completes projects. In the light of this, secretary is one who provides the human element in the fast growing and constant flow of information in today's office work. In this way, the secretary greatly assists the boss with relevant knowledge and expertise.

Secretaries in the 21st century require the ability to perform effectively in the modern office work and willing to be lifelong learners, create ways to improve the methods by incorporating diversity and collaborating with others. This is because the task facing them at the modern office which is technology driven cannot be effectively handled if they lack competencies in relevant office applications such as word processing, internet application, spreadsheet, operating systems, webpage design application and data-base management among others. This study covers only word processing and spreadsheet.

Word processing is a modern office application used for manipulating text-based documents like letters, memoranda, reports and other literary works. It has an inbuilt dictionary and thesaurus and eliminates the use of paper, pen, typewriter and eraser frequently used by secretaries in the traditional office of the past (Encarta, 2009). According to Agomuo in Ibelegbu (2013), word processing can be likened to a typewriter inside a computer in that it incorporates all the duties of a typewriter. Typewriters are used to type and produce text on paper but word processors are used to type and produce text on computer screens which can be disseminated as soft copies without the

need for hard copies on paper. The use of word processors has several advantages for the functions secretaries. For instance, instead of the carriage return lever in a typewriter, the Enter key on the computer keyboard is used to take the insertion point to the beginning of a new line of text. There are commands (simple ones) for paragraph, indent and spacing and change of font style, size and colour to highlight parts of the document being created among others. Okiti-Okagbare (2008) noted that word processors allow secretaries in modern offices to create edit their documents, store document in a computer files (which is known as electronic filing) quickly retrieve them for future reference or use, and conveniently modify existing documents when required to do so. Okiti-Okagbare further elucidated that secretaries use word processors to format documents in a variety of specifications, automate some functions such as page numbering, generate indexes; check the spelling in document and control page layout. Ajike (2015) reported that several word processing competencies are required by secretaries for effectiveness performance. Ajike outlined such competencies to include ability to create and organize computer files and folders, use storage devices like (hard disk, diskette, CD, flash) for storing and sharing files among others. The study by Ezenwafor (2012) also asserted that word processing competencies help in creating, formatting, modifying and editing different types of error-proof office document to enhance effective performance of secretaries. In addition Aliata and Hawa (2014) revealed that the use of office equipment contributed positively to productivity based on institutions type.

Spreadsheet processing is another office application which secretaries frequently use in modern offices. Okiti-Okagbare (2008) explained that spreadsheet allows secretaries in business offices to organize and analyze data as well as create and work with formulas. Therefore, secretaries in different organizations in Nigeria including tertiary educational institutions appear to find utilization of these modern office applications somewhat difficult and it is affecting their duty performance. Over the years, there have been criticisms and complaints from supervisors, staff and students of tertiary institutions in Nigeria about delay in information dissemination, loss of official document, delay in retrieving records from files among other lapses by secretaries as a result of lack of relevant competencies in modern office application (Emmanuel and Bolanle, 2013). In fact, Ajike (2015) noted that several spreadsheet competencies are required by graduates of office technology and management programme (secretaries) for effective performance of their functions in the organization. In support, Okoye (2016) asserted that spreadsheet application competencies help the secretaries in carrying out their duties effectively in the modern automated offices. Okolocha and Olannye (2015) also reported that secretaries in government ministries in Delta State possessed spreadsheet application competencies irrespective of their institutions type.

The influencing factors in the context of supervisors' ratings of modern office application competencies possessed by secretaries for effective performance in public tertiary institutions could be type of institutions. Type of institutions is factor that could influence supervisors' ratings of modern office application competencies possessed by secretaries for effective performance. Type of institutions includes colleges of education, polytechnics and universities. In this regard, Okolocha and Olannye (2015) observed that modern office applications competencies are possessed by secretaries but are not performing as effectively as required entails that their supervisors should ascertain and address the causative factors which could be non-functionality of the hardware ICT resources, absence of power supply or lack of technical support and consumable materials needed in their use in their various institutions. Therefore, the influence of this variable on the ratings of the respondents will be tested in the study.

Statement of the Problem

For effective transition and utilization of modern office applications, tertiary educational institutions will require two principal action areas which are provision and installation of relevant ICT resources and training, retraining and updating the capacity of the secretaries and other employees with relevant competencies to utilize them effectively. Through improved funding of education by the present administration in Imo State, most tertiary educational institutions have acquired and installed

these resources. However, personal observations by the researcher show that they seem not being utilized effectively by the secretaries because records are still not properly managed. The situation is in line with Okolocha and Olannye (2015) who lamented that most tertiary institutions in Nigeria do not have a properly developed record management culture due to lack of knowledge, cost of acquisition of modern office equipment, and weak infrastructure. Ajike (2015) observed that there is lack of trained personnel to install, maintain and use these electronic systems, thereby initiating the urgent need for secretaries to be trained on the use of modern office equipment vis-à-vis the application of such equipment. It is obvious that where employees do not possess the relevant competencies to utilize the ICT resources, the goals of their acquisition will be totally defeated.

The problem of this study, therefore, is that many tertiary educational institutions in Imo State have been provided with ICT resources for effective performance but they do not seem to be optimally utilized especially by secretaries whose functions center on information processing. The researcher worried about this ugly situation since utilization of modern office equipment and applications is known to facilitate effective performance in different aspects of information processing carried out by secretaries. This could be as a result of secretaries in these institutions not adequately possessing relevant competency for utilizing the ICT resources effectively. This makes it imperative to conduct this study on supervisor' rating of modern office application competencies possessed by their secretaries for effective performance in tertiary institutions in Imo State, Nigeria. Where supervisors do not understand the level of competences possessed by their subordinates, lots of conflicts will be created and performance efficiency will be lowered greatly.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to determine supervisors' rating of modern office application competencies possessed by secretaries for effective performance in public tertiary institutions in Imo State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study determined supervisors rating of:

- 1) Word processing application competencies possessed by their secretaries for effective performance.
- 2) Spreadsheet application competencies possessed by their secretaries for effective performance.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study.

In the opinion of supervisors,

- 1) What is the level of word processing application competencies possessed by secretaries in public tertiary institutions in Imo State, Nigeria for effective performance?
- 2) What is the level of spreadsheet application competencies possessed by secretaries in public tertiary institutions in Imo State, Nigeria for effective performance?

Hypotheses

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

- 1) There is no significant difference in the respondents' mean ratings on word processing application competencies possessed by secretaries in public tertiary institutions in Imo State, Nigeria for effective performance based on institutions type (university or polytechnic or college of education).
- 2) There is no significant difference in the respondents' mean ratings on spreadsheet application competencies possessed by secretaries in public tertiary institutions in Imo State, Nigeria for effective performance based on institutions type (university or polytechnic or college of education).

Method

The study adopted a descriptive survey design. The population of this study comprised of 226 supervisors (Deans/ Directors of Schools, Heads of Departments/Units and Coordinators of programmes entitled to have secretaries) from all the public and private tertiary institutions in Imo

State, Nigeria. Data collected was 20 items structured questionnaire. The instrument was structured questionnaire validated by three experts-two in business education and one in measurement and evaluation all from Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. Their comments enhanced the content validity of the instrument. To establish the internal consistency of the instrument, a trial-test was used. Data collected in the pilot test were analyzed using Cronbach Alpha to determine the internal consistency using the application of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21 and obtain reliability coefficients values of 0.83 and 0.87 for clusters B1 and B2 respectively with an overall coefficient value of 0.85.

Out of the 226 copies of the questionnaire distributed to the respondents in their schools through direct approach which facilitated a response rate, 218 copies (representing 94 percent) were retrieved and used for data analysis. Five copies were not properly filled and, thus discarded while another three copies were not retrieved representing (4 and 2 percent) respectively. Data collected regarding the research questions were analyzed using mean and standard deviation, while the Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

In order to determine the ascertain business educator's ratings of innovation and knowledge transfer as collaboration tools for achieving quality business education programme, a decision rule based on mean ratings between 4.50-5.00 were regarded as strongly agree, items with mean ratings of 3.50-4.49 were considered as agree. Furthermore, items with mean ratings of 2.50-3.49, 1.50-2.49 and 1.00-1.49 were considered as undecided, disagree and strongly disagree.

In testing the null hypotheses, where the calculated p-value was less than the 0.05 level of significance as it means that there was significant difference. Conversely, where the calculated p-value was greater than or equal to the 0.05 level of significance, it means that there was no significant difference and the hypothesis was not rejected. However, where there is a disagreement among the three groups, the Scheffe Post-hoc test was conducted to determine the group in which the disagreement lies.

Results

Research Question 1

What is the level of word processing application competencies possessed by secretaries in public tertiary institutions in Imo State, Nigeria for effective performance?

Table 1. Respondents' mean rating of word processing application competencies possessed by secretaries in public tertiary institutions in Imo State, Nigeria for effective performance (N=218)

S/N	Word processing competencies possessed by secretaries. Ability to:	\bar{X}	SD	Remarks
1	Access the application form windows desktop	4.00	.51	Agree
2	Create and organize computer files and folders	4.30	.46	Agree
3	Use storage devices (hardware, diskette, CD, flash etc). for storing and sharing files	4.30	.42	Agree
4	Speedily keys in text	3.80	.40	Agree
5	Use suitable command to edit text	4.10	.54	Agree
6	Insert pictures and symbols into a document	4.20	.40	Agree
7	Change font aspects in a documents	4.30	.44	Agree
8	Create and format a table in a document	4.20	.47	Agree
9	Use Word Art to create in a document	3.80	.55	Agree
10	Preview and print a document	4.10	.44	Agree
Cluster Mean		4.11		Agree

Table 1 shows that all the mean scores for all the listed 10 competencies in word processing ranged from 3.80 to 4.30 with a cluster mean score of 4.11 are above the cut off mean score of 3.00. This indicates that the respondents agreed that secretaries in public tertiary institutions in Imo State, Nigeria possessed word processing application competencies for effective performance. The standard deviations for all the items fall within the same range 0.40 to 0.55. This shows that the respondents were not wide apart in their mean ratings.

Research Question 2

What the level of spreadsheet application competencies possessed by secretaries in public tertiary institutions in Imo State, Nigeria for effective performance?

Table 2. Respondents' mean rating of spreadsheet application competencies possessed by secretaries in public tertiary institutions in Imo State, Nigeria for effective performance (N=218)

S/N	Spreadsheet competencies possessed by secretaries. Ability to:	\bar{X}	SD	Remarks
1	Access the application speedily	4.10	.57	Agree
2	Adjust column's width and row's height	4.20	.40	Agree
3	Sort data in worksheet	4.50	.50	Strongly Agree
4	Create formula and perform calculation	4.20	.60	Agree
5	Name/rename a worksheet	3.90	.54	Agree
6	Merge cells in a worksheet	4.10	.54	Agree
7	Insert borders in a worksheet	4.60	.49	Strongly Agree
8	Delete columns and rows in a worksheet	4.40	.49	Agree
9	Create and format charts for a worksheet	4.30	.68	Agree
10	Preview and print a worksheet	4.30	.64	Agree
Cluster Mean		4.26		Agree

Table 2 shows that all the mean scores for all the listed 10 competencies in spreadsheet application ranged from 4.10 to 4.60 with a cluster mean score of 4.26 are above the cut off mean score of 3.00. This indicates that the respondents agreed that secretaries in public tertiary institutions in Imo State, Nigeria possessed spreadsheet application competencies for effective performance. The standard deviations for all the items fall within the same range 0.40 to 0.68. This shows that the respondents were not wide apart in their mean ratings.

Result of Test of Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1

There is no significant difference in respondents' mean ratings on word processing application competencies possessed by secretaries in public tertiary institutions in Imo State, Nigeria for effective performance based on institution type (university or polytechnic or college of education).

Table 3. Summary of Analysis of Variance on respondents' mean rating of word processing application competencies possessed by secretaries in public tertiary institutions in Imo State, Nigeria for effective performance based on institutions type.

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	P-value	Remarks
Between Groups	1.526	2	.763	34.57	.000	Significant
Within Groups	4.055	215	.022			
Total	5.581	217				

Table 3 shows that the calculated F-value is 34.57 at 2 and 215 degree of freedom with a p-value of .000 which is less than the alpha level of 0.05. This means that the respondents did differ

significantly in their ratings of word processing application competencies possessed by their secretaries for effective performance based on institutions type (university or polytechnic or college of education). Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected.

Table 4. Scheffe post hoc test on respondents' mean ratings of word processing application competencies possessed by secretaries in public tertiary institutions in Imo State, Nigeria for effective performance based on institutions type.

I) institutions type	(J) institutions type	Mean Difference (I-J)	P-value
University	Poly.	.08455*	.002
	Coll	-.11684*	.000
Polytechnic	Univ.	-.08455*	.002
	Coll.	-.20139*	.000
College of Education	Univ.	.11684*	.000
	Poly.	.20139*	.000
Significant			

The Scheffe post hoc test of multiple comparisons in Table 4 shows that the difference is between secretaries in universities and those in polytechnic and while there is an agreement between secretaries in polytechnic and those in colleges of education.

Hypothesis 2

There is no significant difference in respondents' mean ratings on spreadsheet application competencies possessed by secretaries in public tertiary institutions in Imo State, Nigeria for effective performance based on institution type (university or polytechnic or college of education).

Table 5. Summary of Analysis of Variance on respondents' mean rating of spreadsheet application competencies possessed by secretaries in public tertiary institutions in Imo State, Nigeria for effective performance based on institutions type.

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	P-value	Remarks
Between Groups	1.526	2	.663	32.57	.000	Significant
Within Groups	3.055	215	.032			
Total	4.581	217				

Table 5 shows that the calculated F-value is 32.57 at 2 and 215 degree of freedom with a p-value of .000 which is less than the alpha level of 0.05. This means that the respondents did differ significantly in their ratings of spreadsheet application competencies possessed by their secretaries for effective performance based on institutions type (university or polytechnic or college of education). Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected.

Table 6. Scheffe post hoc test on respondents' mean ratings of spreadsheet application competencies possessed by secretaries in public tertiary institutions in Imo State, Nigeria for effective performance based on institutions type.

I) institutions type	(J) institutions type	Mean Difference (I-J)	P-value
University	Poly.	.07455*	.003
	Coll	-.10684*	.000
Polytechnic	Univ.	-.07455*	.003
	Coll.	-.19139*	.000
College of Education	Univ.	.10684*	.000
	Poly.	.19139*	.000
Significant			

The Scheffe post hoc test of multiple comparisons in Table 6 shows that the difference is between secretaries in universities and those in polytechnic and while there is an agreement between secretaries in polytechnic and those in colleges of education.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of the first research question indicated that supervisors in public tertiary institutions in Imo State, Nigeria agreed that their secretaries possess relevant competencies in word processing application for effective performance. This is in line with Ajike (2015) who reported that several word processing competencies are required by secretaries for effectiveness performance. Ajike outlined such competencies to include ability to create and organize computer files and folders, use storage devices like (hard disk, diskette, CD, flash) for storing and sharing files among others. The findings is also in agreement with Ezenwafor (2012) who asserted that word processing competencies help in creating, formatting, modifying and editing different types of error-proof office document to enhance effective performance of secretaries.

The findings also revealed that respondents did not differ significantly in their mean ratings on the word processing application competencies possessed by secretaries in public tertiary institution in Imo State, Nigeria for effective performance based on ownership of institutions and differed significantly as a result of institutions type. This finding agrees with Aliata and Hawa (2014) who reported that the use of office equipment contributed positively to productivity based on institutions type. The reason for the differences in test of hypotheses on institutions type is as a result of causative factors which could be non-functionality of the hardware ICT resources, absence of power supply or lack of technical support and consumable materials needed in their use. The findings of the second research question indicated that supervisors in public tertiary institutions in Imo State, Nigeria agreed that their secretaries possess relevant competencies in spreadsheet application for effective performance. This is in line with Ajike (2015) who reported that several spreadsheet competencies are required by graduates of office technology and management programme (secretaries) for effective performance of their functions in the organization. The findings is also in agreement with Okoye (2016) who asserted that spreadsheet application competencies help the secretaries in carrying out their duties effectively in the modern automated offices.

The findings also revealed that respondents did not differ significantly in their mean ratings on the spreadsheet application competencies possessed by secretaries in public tertiary institution in Imo State, Nigeria for effective performance based on ownership of institutions and differed significantly as a result of institutions type. This finding agrees with Okolocha and Olannye (2015) who reported that secretaries in government ministries in Delta State possessed spreadsheet application competencies irrespective of their institutions type. The reason for the differences in test of hypotheses on institutions type is as a result of causative factors which could be non-functionality of the hardware ICT resources, absence of power supply or lack of technical support and consumable materials needed in their use.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, that secretaries in public tertiary institutions in Imo State, Nigeria possess relevant competencies in the five frequently utilized modern office applications, it was concluded that secretarial training programmes adequately expose and inculcate their requisites to the products. Furthermore, it was concluded that non-functionality of the hardware ICT resources, absence of power supply or lack of technical support and consumable materials needed in their use outside lack of competencies could be responsible for the lapses in the performance of these secretaries.

Recommendations

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

- 1) Supervisors of secretaries in public tertiary educational institutions in Imo State, Nigeria should provide conducive office environment and technical support to enable their secretaries amply utilize their possessed modern office application competencies for effective work performance.
- 2) Management of tertiary institutions in Imo State, Nigeria should make provision for further training and sponsorship of secretaries to sustain and enhance their modern office application competencies in line with changes in technology.

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