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SECRETARIAL SKILLS AND SECRETARIAL JOB EFFECTIVENESS IN PRIVATE ORGANIZATIONS IN OGUN STATE

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Abstract

The paper examined the possession of secretarial skills and secretaries' job effectiveness in private organizations in Ogun State. It was guided by two research questions and two hypotheses. A correlation research design was used. The population comprised secretaries of selected private organizations in Ogun State. Using multi-stage sampling technique, a sample of 250 secretaries was selected across registered private organizations in the State. Two researcher-developed instruments; tagged: 'Secretarial Skills Questionnaire (SSQ), and Secretaries Job Effectiveness Questionnaire (SJEQ) were used for data collection with 0.81 and 0.79 as reliability coefficients. Descriptive statistics of mean and standard deviation were used for analysing research question 1. Research questions 2 was analysed using regression analysis. Hypotheses 1 and 2 were tested using t-test and PPMC respectively. The findings of the study revealed that communication skills, analytical/research skills, flexibility/adaptability/managing multiple priorities skills among others were among the indicators of secretaries' job effectiveness in private organizations in Ogun State. The secretarial skill) was found to be significant and strongly predict job effectiveness of secretaries ($\beta = .806$, $t = 21.409$, $P < .05$). There was significant difference in the mean ratings of respondents on the indicators of secretaries' job effectiveness in private organizations $P = 0.04 < 0.05$. There was significant relationship between secretarial skills and secretaries' job effectiveness ($r = 0.678$, $p > .05$). The study concluded that secretaries with requisite secretarial skills demonstrate higher job effectiveness

and performance, which directly influences organizational outcomes. There should be periodic workshop and seminar training for secretaries to improve their secretarial skills.

Keywords: Secretarial Skills, Secretaries' Job Effectiveness, Private Organization

Introduction

Apart from the traditional responsibilities of a secretary, such as typing, taking dictation and transcribing, managing records, receiving, storing and retrieving information or operating the computer, attending meetings, answering telephone calls, he now prepares the manager's itinerary, makes travel bookings and hotel reservations, supervises the junior workers, and makes some decisions using his initiatives (Dosunmu, Bukki & Akintola, 2017). Secretary should be able to answer some questions on behalf of the boss. For example, a client who wants the price of a product should not wait to see the boss. A secretary should be familiar with the company's policies, price list and handbooks in order to relieve the boss burden by providing accurate information. Igbiniedion (2016) identifies the secretaries' responsibilities to include; taking dictation and transcribing it into correspondence which is at once dispatched to its business destination. He highlights some forms of these correspondences to include: letters, memos, circulars, orders, quotations, acceptances, contractual terms, and conditions, invitations, among others. As described by Iyanda (2017), the word Secretary means the chief administrator of an organization or a person who performs the functions of organizing and recording the proceedings of meetings, skilled in shorthand and keyboarding; responsible to an executive; as such a Secretary has been regarded to be the brain box of the organisation.

Job effectiveness is the extent to which an activity fulfil its intended purpose or function. Ayelotan (2014) defined effectiveness as a measure of the match between stated goals and achievements, which is doing the right thing. Job effectiveness in context of this research work is the secretaries' ability to use appropriately and available office machinery/automation/tools to carry out the assigned duties or tasks in an efficient manner in line with the employer's expectations. It is a known fact that employees are the key elements of any organisation and secretaries are integral part (Buseni, 2013). In a contemporary work environment, employers are in search of secretaries who possess knowledge, skills and competencies that would enhance job effectiveness. As such, the development of high level efficacy in ICT will affect the success of the secretaries' job effectiveness in the ever-increasing information-based environment. The need for every secretary in organization to improve his job effectiveness depends on possession of secretarial skills. Secretarial skills are skills acquired by secretaries during and after training to enable them perform their office jobs effectively and efficiently as well as being self-employed (Amiaya, 2015). These skills may be regarded as foundational skills. Secretarial skills can be obtained through human capital development either as a certificate programme or as a customized professional skill programme dedicated to the development of professional secretarial skills for individuals needed in the world of work. These skills are also needed for the success of every organization. Those possessing secretarial skills pass through the process of human capital development. The acquisition of secretarial skills is to enable the recipients to function effectively in the modern office environment (Ugaigbe, 2016).

As reiterated by Dosunmu, Bukki and Akintola (2017), for secretary job effectiveness to be achieved, secretary must possess some secretarial skills such as skills in word processing, database management, desktop publishing, micrographic, reprographic and office communication skills for effective operations of ICT- based equipment and facilities. Word processing skill is the ability to use advanced hardware to

manipulate words, sentences and paragraphs. The word processor is a type of electric typewriter with storage and processing components. A database management system (DBMS) skill is the ability to organize large numbers of records in a database. It is a collection of programs that allow users the ability to create, query and modify the structure in the database and to control access to it. Desktop Publishing skills is the ability to use modern printing process that combines personal computers and design software to create and edit layouts for producing all kinds of materials such as reports, books, magazines, brochures, flyers, and newsletters. Desktop publishing is the ability to produce high quality printed documents that include both text and graphic. It is closely related to word processing and requires many of the same skills. A reprographic skill is the ability to produce many copies of original document. A reprographic skill today involves the use of two primary types of equipment: copiers and duplicators. Copiers use an image-forming process similar to a camera to create copies directly from existing originals. While duplicators make copies from masters on special paper that must be prepared before copies are reproduced (Dosunmu, Bukki & Akintola, 2017). It is imperative that any organisation that wishes to achieve its aims and objective must be ICT compliant. The secretaries must be versatile and competent in handling ICT office facilities and equipment that would enhance their job effectiveness.

Statement of Problem

Despite the introduction of emerging technologies to organisations, some secretaries are still being subjected to traditional method of handling office tasks. In actual fact, some organizations engage the services of fresh graduates who are knowledgeable in handling ICT packages such as internet facilities, networking among others. Such traditional method of operation leads to ineffectiveness and unproductiveness among the secretaries. Anele et al., (2017) and Mumuni & Hawa (2014) argued that the automated office uses sophisticated equipment which provides information faster. Nevertheless, it is expensive, making organizations to provide few while using other obsolete machines to complement the effort of the secretary. It was also argued that the inability of any organization to send their secretaries on training will hamper the acquisition of new skills and competencies needed for the operation of modern equipment. Observations have also shown that the poor performance, lack of dedication and commitment of some secretaries have been a matter of concern and debate among government officials, private organization and the general public. The extent to which all these factors bedeviled secretaries' job effectiveness in private organization seems to have received less attention from the literature. This called for empirical investigation on the possession of secretarial skills and secretaries' job effectiveness in private organizations.

Purpose of the Study

The main objective of the paper was to examine the possession of secretarial skills and secretaries' job effectiveness in private organizations. Specifically, the study:

1. Examined the indicators of secretaries' job effectiveness in private organizations in Ogun State of Nigeria.
2. Assessed the extent to which secretarial skills can predict secretaries' job effectiveness in private organizations in Ogun State of Nigeria.

Research Questions

The following research questions were analyzed in this study:

1. What are the indicators of secretarial job effectiveness in private organizations in Ogun State of Nigeria?
2. To what extent do secretarial skills predict secretaries' job effectiveness in private organizations in Ogun State of Nigeria?

Hypotheses

H₀₁: There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of respondents on the indicators of secretaries' job effectiveness in private organizations in Ogun State of Nigeria.

H₀₂: There is no significant relationship between secretarial skills and secretaries' job effectiveness in private organizations in Ogun State of Nigeria.

Methodology

A descriptive correlational survey method was used in this paper. The choice of the survey as the research design for the study was necessitated by the nature of the study, because, the study gathered data from members of the selected population with the aid of questionnaire without any form of manipulation. The population of the study comprised secretaries of selected private organizations in Ogun State, Nigeria. Using a multi-stage sampling technique, organizations were stratified by industry type and location, with random selection of organizations and secretaries meeting the study's criteria. A sample size of 250 secretaries was determined using statistical methods to ensure representativeness and account for variability and non-responses, enabling generalization of the findings to the broader population. The study used two researcher-developed instruments; tagged: 'Secretarial Skills Questionnaire (SSQ), and Secretaries Job Effectiveness Questionnaire (SJEQ). These instruments were divided into two sections each; namely sections A and B. Section A focused on demographic characteristics of the respondents and section B examined items on secretarial skills as well as secretarial skills respectively. The measuring scales are as follows; Strongly Agree (4), Agree (3), Strongly Disagree (2) and Disagree (1). The initial drafts of the questionnaire were subjected to content validation by three experts from Business Education Department, Tai Solarin University of Education, Ijagun, Ogun State. All the corrections made were effected in the final version of the instrument. Test re-test method was carried out among ten (10) secretaries of private organization in Lagos state. The data generated were correlated using Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) in order to ascertain the level of reliability of the instrument. The reliability coefficients for the two instruments yielded 0.81 and 0.79 respectively for Secretarial Skills Questionnaire (SSQ) and Secretaries Job Effectiveness Questionnaire (SJEQ). Primary method of data collection was used in collecting data for the study. The data were collected using the validated instruments. The researchers administered the questionnaire to the respondents with the help of research-assistants. The researchers ensured that respondents are adequately briefed on the content and procedure for filling the questionnaire. Descriptive statistics of mean and standard deviation were used for analysing research question 1. Research questions 2 was analysed using regression analysis. Hypotheses 1 and 2 were tested using t-test and PPMC respectively. Any mean score of 2.5 and above was regarded as agreed while any one below 2.5 is regarded as disagreed. For t-test, regression and PPMC, when their P-value was less than significance level ($p < 0.05$), the null hypothesis was rejected and vice-versa.

Results and Interpretation

Research Question 1: What are the indicators of secretaries' job effectiveness in private organizations in Ogun State of Nigeria?

Table 1: Mean and standard deviation responses on the indicators of secretaries' job effectiveness in private organizations in Ogun State of Nigeria

Items	Mean	SD	Remarks
Communication skills	3.50	.701	Agreed
Analytical/research skills	3.55	.700	Agreed
Flexibility/adaptability/managing Multiple Priorities skills	3.53	.718	Agreed
Multicultural Sensitivity/Awareness skills	3.50	.751	Agreed
Planning/Organizing skills	3.58	.713	Agreed
Result-Driven skills	3.48	.666	Agreed
Problem-Solving/Reasoning/Creativity Skills	3.53	.751	Agreed
Interpersonal skills	3.47	.751	Agreed
Innovation skills	3.52	.695	Agreed
Self-improvement skills	3.60	.646	Agreed
Interpersonal relationship skills	3.49	.735	Agreed
Information and communication	3.48	.712	Agreed

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Table 1 revealed that communication skills, analytical/research skills, flexibility/adaptability/managing multiple priorities skills, multicultural sensitivity/awareness skills, planning/organizing skills, result-driven skills, problem-solving/reasoning/creativity skills, interpersonal skills, innovation skills, self-improvement skills, interpersonal relationship skills, and information and communication technology skills were among the indicators of secretaries' job effectiveness in private organizations in Ogun State of Nigeria.

The standard deviation (SD) scores indicate the level of agreement or variability in the respondents' ratings for each item. Lower SD values, such as for self-improvement skills (0.646) and result-driven skills (0.666), suggest a higher consensus among respondents about the importance of these skills as indicators of job effectiveness. Conversely, slightly higher SD values, such as for multicultural sensitivity/awareness skills (0.751) and interpersonal skills (0.751), indicate more variability in the responses, reflecting differing opinions among respondents. Overall, the SD values are relatively low, implying a general agreement among respondents on the listed indicators of job effectiveness.

Research Question 2: To what extent secretarial skills predict secretaries' job effectiveness in private organizations in Ogun State of Nigeria?

Table 2: Secretarial skills prediction of job effectiveness in private organizations in Ogun State of Nigeria

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	P
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	19.904	2.215		8.986	.000
	Secretarial skills	2.689	.126	.806	21.409	.001

a. Dependent Variable: Secretaries job effectiveness

Table 2 showed that the sign of the coefficient of secretarial skills is positive which implied that an increase or improvement in it will increase secretaries' job effectiveness. The independent variable was found to be significant and strongly predict job effectiveness of secretaries in private organizations in Ogun State of Nigeria with the P-value less than 0.05 and magnitude of secretarial skills ($\beta = .806$, $t = 21.409$, $P < .05$).

H₀₁: There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of respondents on the indicators of secretaries' job effectiveness in private organizations in Ogun State of Nigeria.

Table 3: Testing for significant difference in the mean ratings of respondents on the indicators of secretaries' job effectiveness in private organizations

Groups	N	df	Mean	SD	t	P	Decision
Male	57						
	248	33.614	3.283	2.912	0.04	Reject null hypothesis	
Female	193	35.477	4.485				

Source: Field Survey, 2024

The result from Table 3 shows that the t-value is 2.912, the degree of freedom (df) is 248 and $P = 0.04$ since $P = 0.04 < 0.05$ it implied that there is significant difference in the mean ratings of respondents on the indicators of secretaries' job effectiveness in private organizations. Therefore, the null hypothesis is hereby rejected and the researchers concluded that there was significant difference in the mean ratings of respondents on the indicators of secretaries' job effectiveness in private organizations in Ogun State.

H₀₂: There is no significant relationship between secretarial skills and secretaries' job effectiveness in private organizations in Ogun State of Nigeria.

Table 4: Significant relationship between secretarial skills and secretaries' job effectiveness in private organizations in Ogun State of Nigeria

Variables	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	df	fvalue	Pvalue
Secretarial skills		13.757	1.56			
Secretaries' job performance	250	8.675	1.39	3	.678	.002

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Table 4 shows Mean, Standard Deviation and zero order correlation between the variables. It was observed that there was significant relationship between the independent variable and the dependent variable in the order of ($r = 0.678$, $p > .05$). On this premise the null hypothesis was hereby rejected and the researchers concluded that there was significant relationship between secretarial skills and secretaries' job effectiveness in private organizations in Ogun State of Nigeria.

Discussion of Findings

The findings revealed that communication skills, analytical/research skills, flexibility/adaptability/managing multiple priorities skills, multicultural sensitivity/awareness skills, planning/organizing skills, result-driven skills, problem-solving/reasoning/creativity skills, interpersonal skills, innovation skills, self-improvement skills, interpersonal relationship skills and information and communication technology skills were among the indicators of secretaries job effectiveness in private organizations in Ogun State of Nigeria. These findings correlate with Anele, Micheal and Kerebara (2017) showed that for management of the organizations to achieve organizational objectives, it must not only make use of human and non- human resources in its disposal and should also develop and train employee's psychological capital. The coefficient of secretarial skills is positive which implied that an increase or improvement in it will increase secretaries' job effectiveness. There was significant relationship between secretarial skills and secretaries' job effectiveness in private organizations in Ogun State of Nigeria. These findings correlate with Amiaya (2015) who revealed that there is a correlation between secretarial skills and human capital development because the former is a function of the latter hence, the stock of human capital determines the productivity of the workforce. Dosunmu, Bukki and Akintola (2017) indicated that there was significant influence of office automation on secretaries' interpersonal skills, personal quality, professional behavior and job-related skills. Mumuni and Hawa (2014) revealed that knowledge on use of office equipment contributed positively to secretaries' productivity. Akpomi and Ordu (2015) revealed the availability of modern office technological gadgets in private business organizations, their use by secretaries' cause increase in productivity. Musa (2016) concludes that for effective and efficient management of office technology facilities, the secretary requires continuous learning, acquisition of new working skills, knowledge and experience which is ever changing in these technologically implied offices.

Conclusion

The effectiveness of job secretaries could predict organizational performance if all things being equal. However, this paper examined the possession of secretarial skills and secretaries' job effectiveness in private organizations and concluded that secretaries' with required secretarial skills predict job effectiveness, efficiency and performance at work. And that communication skills, analytical/research skills, flexibility/adaptability/managing multiple priorities skills, multicultural sensitivity/awareness skills, planning/organizing skills, result-driven skills, problem-solving/reasoning/creativity skills, interpersonal skills, innovation skills, self-improvement skills, interpersonal relationship skills and information and communication technology skills were among the indicators of secretaries job effectiveness in private organizations in Ogun State of Nigeria.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are provided for this study:

1. Periodic workshops and seminars should be organized to enhance secretaries' skills in areas identified as key indicators of job effectiveness, such as communication, planning, and adaptability.
2. Management of private organizations should ensure job security for secretaries to boost their commitment and dedication, which are critical to job effectiveness.
3. Workshops on effective planning and workload management should be conducted to help secretaries optimize their time and increase productivity.
4. Organizations should provide modern technologies and training programs for secretaries to improve their competencies in using advanced office tools, enhancing their job effectiveness and performance.
5. There should be regular upward reviews of secretaries' salaries through a collective bargaining process, considering economic realities to motivate and retain skilled secretaries.
6. Training programs on the use of modern office technology should be organized periodically for secretaries to stay updated on current practices and tools required for effective job performance.

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