

**BLUEPRINT FOR
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IN NIGERIA:
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Edited By:

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PROFESSIONAL ETHNICS - THE MODE OF DRESSING OF THE PROFESSIONAL SECRETARY IN EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

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Abstract

The paper examines the mode of dressing of Secretary in Educational Institutions. In doing this, the paper discusses the definitions and functions of the secretary. It regards the secretary as an image-maker and considers mode of dressing as a paramount quality of secretaries. It discusses the types of dress that befit the secretary. It attempts to determine whether the mode of dressing of Secretaries in Educational Institutions is normal or abnormal using Federal Polytechnic, Ilaro as a case study. The study reveals that the dressing of the Secretary is often normal though it is abnormal occasionally. The paper therefore concludes that the secretary often gives good image but does otherwise occasionally. The paper therefore recommends adequate awareness and continuous education on dress code for practicing secretary and the inclusion of dressing ethnics in the training curricula of secretaries.

1.0 Introduction

The Secretary has been defined differently by various authors: Kuchal (1980) defined a secretary as a person whose duty is to write for someone else, one who is employed to deal with correspondence, to keep record and to transact various other businesses for another or for a society or a body. According to the National Association of Secretary (1988), a secretary is defined as: "An executive who possesses a mastery of office skills, who demonstrates the ability to assume responsibility without direct supervision, who exercises initiative, social judgements and makes decisions within the scope of her assigned authority. Advanced Learner's Dictionary defines secretary as "a person of official recognition who is charged with the responsibilities of dealing with correspondence, of keeping records, and other affairs of the business for her employer."

Although the aforementioned definitions may look different, however they mean the same thing. They all consider the secretary as an important person in every office. The secretary is usually regarded as a confidant, who is entrusted with secrets or confidence of his superior, who possesses the mastery of office skills, demonstrates the ability to take responsibilities without supervision, makes decision within assigned authority and exercises initiative and judgement. She must be intelligent, highly skilled and willing to accept responsibility. No executive can effectively work without the assistance of a competent secretary.

2.0 The Attributes of a Secretary

In order to perform the aforementioned duties effectively, the secretary is expected to possess some attributes. Secretarial professional ethnics can be deduced from the personal and business attributes that secretaries are expected to possess. Harrison et al (1960) identifies her qualities as initiative, punctuality, willingness, conscientiousness, discretion, tact, and diplomacy, loyalty and responsibility. Other include ability to associate with people, ability to keep secrets, cheerfulness and temperament, orderliness, alertness, good health, good posture and appearance.

3.0 The Secretary as an Image- Maker

Of all the aforementioned attributes, good posture and apperance seems to be among the paramount. As the first contact visitors have with an organisation, the secretary serves as an image -maker. Olayiwola (1991) remarked that "whoever secretaries are working with, they are the gate to that person and the moment a visitor comes in,.... he or she gets his/her impression from the secretary's apperance."

Furthermore, because of the importance of the office to every organisation, the professional secretary could be considered as the custodian of information or records in an organisation. As a result of its importance, the secretary is always in high demand. Mora (1993) maintained that: "I do know, they (job opportunities for secretaries) are enormous. The services industries ingeneral are the ones that are taking off in the United States and a good secretary is always in great demand.... The need for a good support person, such as the secretary, also increase and so the demand for good secretaries seems to be unending."

The secretary mirrors her boss/organisation in several ways, one of these ways is the mode of dressing. Customers or visitors get several imaginary impressions from the dress worn by the secretary. These impression can either be positive or negative. Some of these impressions or images are:

- Friendly or hostile boss/organisation
- Organised or disorganised boss/organisation
- Coordinated or un-coordinated boss/organisation
- Careful or careless boss/organisation
- Serious or unserious boss/organisation.

The dress worn by a professional secretary should give positive impression or images that will ring bell in the mind of visitors and customers when in and after leaving an organisation. The dress should present a picture of friendship, organised, coordinated, carefulness, and seriousness. The qualities of dress of be worn by a professional secretary include:

- Completeness
- Simplicity
- Average sophistication
- Neatness
- Free with body

The types of dress that posses the aforementioned qualities are regarded as normal dresses. The normal dresses that a professional secretary should wear should be complete, simple, moderate, averagely sophisticated and free with the body. Such dresses include:

- Skirt suit and blouse
- Trouser suit and blouse
- Skirt and blouse
- Blazer and skirt
- French suit and skirt
- Blazer and gown
- Suit

The types of dress that do not posses the aforementioned qualities are classified as abnormal dresses. The Professional secretary need to refrain or avoid dresses that are incomplete, carefree, highly sophisticated and very tight. The dresses that fall into this category include:

- Spaghetti
- Jumper blouse
- Mini skirt

- Knickers
- Lackral skirts
- Mini gown
- Leggles
- Three quarter trouser
- Body hug
- Armless blouse
- Hot pant, etc.

4.0 Investigation into the Mode of Dressing of the Secretary in Educational Institutions.

In order to fully appreciate the dressing pattern of professional secretaries an investigation into the mode of dressing of secretaries in educational institutions was carried out using the Federal Polytechnic, Ilaro as a case study. The purpose of the study is to determine whether the mode of dressing of the secretary gives a good or bad impression of the institutions

4.1 The Methodology of the Investigation

The investigation was carried out on twenty-two persons selected from the secretaries in the Polytechnic, using random selective sampling. Data was collected from the twenty-two subjects of the study designed questionnaire administered and collected by hand.

4.2 Presentation and Analysis of Data

The data collected from the questionnaire administered are presented and analysed below.

4.2.1 Age Distribution of Secretary

Ages (Yrs)	f
16 - 25	4
26 - 35	13
36 - 45	5
46 - 55	0
51 - 65	0
Total	22

Table 1: The age distribution of secretaries in FPI Source: Oct. 2001

$$X = 681 = 31$$

22

The mean age of secretaries in the Polytechnic is 31 years

4.2.3 The Secretary Mode of Dressing

The types of dress worn by the secretary to the office was investigated. The data obtained

classified into normal and abnormal dress and presented below:

Age (Yrs)	Class of Dress	
	Normal	Abnormal
16 - 25	6	1
26 - 35	46	6
36 - 45	16	0
51 - 65	0	0
Total	68	7
x	$68/22 = 3$	$7/22 = 0.3$

Table 3: The type of dress worn to the office by secretaries in FPI according to age.

Source: Survey Oct. 2001

The investigation into the type of dress worn by secretaries in the Polytechnic reveals that three types of normal dress are worn by the secretaries while only a small proportion of the secretaries specifically within the age of 16-35 years wear types of dress that is abnormal.

5.0 Results

The investigation carried out reveals the following:

1. The mean age of secretaries in the Polytechnic is 31 years while that of their bosses is 47 years. This shows a secretary: boss age factor of 0.66.
2. The Secretaries in the Polytechnic limit their mode of dressing to three types of normal dresses while only a small proportion of secretaries within the age of 16 to 35 years wears a type of dress that is abnormal.
3. Normal dress is worn often to the office by the secretary abnormal dress is worn occasionally.
4. Normal and abnormal dresses are worn by secretaries in the Polytechnic as occasional dresses after close of work.
5. While the secretary has a positive feeling about normal dress, she is indifferent about abnormal dress.
6. The boss is unconcerned when the secretary dresses normally but dislikes the of the secretary when it is abnormal.

6.0 Conclusion

The investigation carried out has shown that there is adequate seniority in age between the secretary and the boss in educational institutions for the boss to influence the mode of dressing of the secretary. The boss does this by showing his dislikes for abnormal dress, though he is indifferent when the secretary wears normal dress. The paper therefore concludes that the influence the boss exertion the mode of dressing of the secretary is adequate to ensure that the secretary dresses properly.

Furthermore, the paper has revealed that though the secretary may be wearing both normal and abnormal dresses after close of work, she wears normal dress to work often. However, the secretary in particular the young one wears abnormal dress to the office occasionally.. The paper therefore concludes that while the secretary presents a good impression of her institution and, she does otherwise occasionally.

7.0 Recommendations

From the foregoing conclusion, this paper recommends that:

1. The boss should continue to show concern about the mode of dressing of the secretary in order to ensure that she dresses properly always.
2. Educational institution should create greater awareness and provide more education on dress code for the secretary.
3. Educational institutions should investigate occasions that make the secretary to dress abnormally with a view to prevent them and ensure that the secretary dresses properly always.
4. Dress code should be incorporated into the curriculum of training of the professional secretary.

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