

Knowledge and Use of Computer Application Packages by Office Managers/Secretaries in Higher Institutions in Ogun State Nigeria: Implication on Performance Enhancement

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Abstract: All changes in the office environment were and are still driven by advances in technology. The impact of computers on office work has resulted in numerous changes in office activities, procedures and the expectations from office managers and secretaries. This study investigated the level of knowledge and use of computer office application packages by secretaries and office managers in higher educational institutions in Ogun State and the implications of these on their performance enhancement. The study is an ex post facto research and adopted the survey design for the collection of data. Two hypotheses were formulated, and a questionnaire was developed and tested at 0.05 level of significance. All office managers and secretaries in the service of higher educational institutions in Ogun State, Nigeria formed the population of the study. The study was limited to federal institutions and a total of 120 office managers/secretaries were selected to form the sample such that 40 office managers/secretaries were randomly selected from each of the three Federal higher institutions in the State, that is Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta, Federal Polytechnic, Ilaro and Federal College of Education, Osiele, Abeokuta, Ogun State. Analysis of data and hypotheses tests were carried out with frequency counts, percentage and T-Test. The result indicated varying levels of awareness on office application tools with limited knowledge and use of computer application packages by office managers/secretaries. The results also showed that good knowledge and high use of office application tools enhance performance of office managers/secretaries. The study recommended that there should be maximum institutional resources and support and personal development on the part of the office managers to ensure update knowledge and maximal use of office application tools by office managers/secretaries.

Keywords : application packages, computer, office managers, performance enhancement

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Abstract

All changes in the office environment were and are still driven by advances in technology. The impact of computers on office work has resulted in numerous changes in office activities, procedures and the expectations from office managers and secretaries. This study investigated the level of knowledge and use of computer office application packages by secretaries and office managers in higher educational institutions in Ogun State and the implications of these on their performance enhancement. The study is an ex post facto research and adopted the survey design for the collection of data. Two hypotheses were formulated, and a questionnaire was developed and tested at 0.05 level of significance. All office managers and secretaries in the service of higher educational institutions in Ogun State, Nigeria formed the population of the study. The study was limited to federal institutions and a total of 120 office managers/secretaries were selected to form the sample such that 40 office managers/secretaries were randomly selected from each of the three Federal higher institutions in the State, that is Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta, Federal Polytechnic, Ilaro and Federal College of Education, Osiele, Abeokuta, Ogun State. Analysis of data and hypotheses tests were carried out with frequency counts, percentage and T-Test. The result indicated varying levels of awareness on office application tools with limited knowledge and use of computer application packages by office managers/secretaries. The results also showed that good knowledge and high use of office application tools enhance performance of office managers/secretaries. The study recommended that there should be maximum institutional resources and support and personal development on the part of the office managers to ensure update knowledge and maximal use of office application tools by office managers/secretaries.

Background to the Study

The influence of technology in manufacturing, commerce, education, banking, home and especially industries and offices have fundamentally alter the nature of organizational work, its structures, systems and processes, how things are done, the expertise and competence required and the resources needed to carry out tasks. These changes in turn often result into the rethinking of

many professions with a subsequent remaking of basic structure and processes.

Modern business organisations have come to appreciate the role and importance of the secretary as well as the need to providing the needed and necessary office machines and equipment for the efficacy of the secretarial functions (Akpomi and Ordu, 2009). The provision of better services in tertiary institutions remains a priority for such institutions and the need to improve the delivery of secretarial services means addressing some problems encountered the by office managers (Obi, 2012) in the discharge of their duties and ascertaining continuity of efficient service delivery in all sections of the institutions.

Onifade (2010) refers to a secretary as an assistant to an executive, possessing mastery of office skills and ability, assumes responsibility without direct supervision, who displays initiative, exercises judgment, and makes decisions within the scope of her authority. Today, secretaries are now referred to as office managers by some people because of the changes in their activities, education, skill acquisition, knowledge and even expectations from their bosses, customers, clients and the general public. As a result, office managers now have many technologically advanced office gadgets including computer to ease their jobs and enhance proficiency and productivity on their jobs (Akpomi, 2003). Whether called a secretary, an office manager or a personal assistant, as a professional, the office manager is concerned with office occupations or the exhibition or use of skills, aptitudes, attitudes and knowledge for carrying out successfully the functions of the office. They are at the centre of information with a duty to providing comprehensive, accurate and up-to-date information promptly to enable the boss take quality management decisions. The effectiveness of these functions, according to Akpomi and Ordu (2009) depends largely on the availability of modern resources, the needed competencies and skills required of the office manager in the modern office practice.

In tertiary institutions, office managers, in addition to their traditional secretarial roles, attend to administrators, lecturers, students, other members of staff, and visitors to the institutions (Obi, 2012). The particularity of this occupational group in higher institutions stems from the

fact that they operate at the interface of all organisational functions in the life of an higher institution (Jimoh, 2014). To perform effectively, office managers and secretaries in tertiary institutions must possess the skill to address the converging challenges of sophistication, globalization, competition, and technological innovations (Draper, 2004 as cited in Obi, 2012).

According to Dulek and Fielden (1999) in Akpomi and Ordu (2009), we are in the era of computers and information technology which have become an enabler of greater convenience. Three of the most popular types of computer software programme are word processing, which help the user to write and edit memos, letters and reports, data management programmes or databases, which help the user-secretary to use long lists of data and spreadsheet programmes, which handle tables and numbers Dris (2014). As the most widely used office productivity tools, a secretary or office manager should be provided with Microsoft office application softwares such as of word processor (MS Word), spreadsheet (MS Excel) , presentation software (Powerpoint), and database (Access). These tools are used by the secretary to perform varying types of tasks with precision and convenience.

Statement of the Problem

The functions and effectiveness of the secretary in every organization, private or public, depends on the availability of office technologies as well as the skills and competencies of the secretary to use the technological resources. As a result, one of the things that make modern organizations unique is the use of modern technological resources. The arrival of computer and its related Office application softwares provide office managers and secretaries with most advanced and revolutionary tools to perform their duties. With the availability of computer and the ever-changing improved innovations in the application and use of computer office application tools, higher institutions' efforts towards effective service delivery through general staff efficiency, William and Tiffany (2007) submit that tertiary institutions face a growing gap between the level of services expected and the problem of secretaries' inefficiency seems to delay the rate of operations and procedures needed for quality service delivery. Hence, it is important to determine the level of up-to-date knowledge of the secretaries and their use of computer office application packages in higher educational institutions in Ogun State and how these affect their performance.

Objective of the Study

The main objective of this study was to assess the level of knowledge of office managers and secretaries in tertiary institutions in Ogun State on computer application packages and the extent of use of the office application tools in the discharge of their secretarial responsibilities. This study also aimed at identifying the necessary computer office application tools relevant to the secretaries' duties and the level of institutional resources and support available to make the computer application

packages accessible and effectively used by the secretary. It is also the objective of the study to determine how secretaries in higher institutions could make best and effective use of relevant application software available on their computer with a view to enhancing their performance and contribution to the achievement of their institutional objectives.

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised to serve as guides for the study:

1. What are the computer application packages necessary for effective performance of the office managers/secretaries in higher institutions in Ogun State?
2. What is the level of knowledge and skillful use of computer application packages by office managers/secretaries in higher institutions in Ogun State?
3. To what extent will office managers/secretaries' knowledge and skillful use of computer application software enhance their performance in higher institution in Ogun State?

Hypothesis

- H₀: Knowledge and use of computer application packages will not contribute to performance enhancement of office managers/secretaries.
- H₁: Knowledge and use of computer application packages will contribute to performance enhancement of office managers/secretaries.

Method

The study is an ex post facto in design survey approach was adopted the survey design for the collection of data. The population comprises all office managers/secretaries in the service of higher educational institutions in Ogun State, Nigeria. The study was limited to federal institutions in Ogun State to ensure that the subjects used in the study work under similar employment condition, scheme of service and employers. The study employed simple random sampling technique to select a total of 150 office managers/secretaries as the sample. There are three higher institutions in Ogun State owned and financed by the Federal Government of Nigeria, these are Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta, Federal Polytechnic, Ilaro and Federal College of Education, Osiele, Abeokuta. 50 office managers/secretaries were selected from each of the three higher institutions in the State for the purpose of collecting primary data. Questionnaire was the instrument used for collecting data and it was tagged Computer Application Packages and Office Manager's Performance Enhancement Questionnaire (CAPOPEQ) was used as instrument of data collection. The questionnaire was divided into two sections – Section A was designed to specifically collect information on the computer office application tools which the office manager could use and those that are available to them while Section B contains questions on how the office

manager/secretary skills in the use of the application packages could enhance their performance at work. The instrument was pretested to determine its reliability and validity. Out of the 150 questionnaire distributed, 146 were completed and returned by the respondents.

Results and Discussion

Data obtained through the questionnaire administered were subjected to frequency counts and percentages.

Table 1- Application packages relevant to the duties of office managers/secretaries

Application packages	Frequency	percentage
Ms-Word	146	100.00
Ms-Excel	125	85.62
Ms-Powerpoint	122	83.56
Ms-Access	56	38.36

Source: Filed Survey, 2017

The count indicated that the following computer office application software are available and relevant to the duties and expectations from an office manager/secretary – all the respondents, i.e. 100% indicated that Microsoft Word is relevant, 86% and 84% were of the view that Microsoft Excel and Microsoft PowerPoint respectively are relevant; while a few, that is, 38% considered Microsoft Access relevant to their duties.

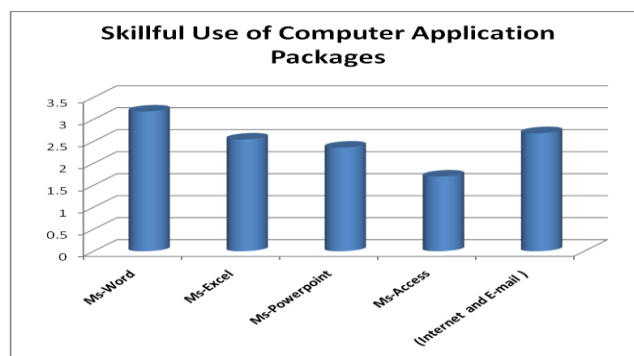
Table 2- Knowledge and Skillful Use of Computer Application Packages by Office Managers/Secretaries

Packages & Resources	Highly skillful	Skillful	Less Skillful	Not Skillful	Mean (X)
Ms-Word	65	42	39	0	3.18
Ms-Excel	35	43	34	34	2.54
Ms-Powerpoint	21	31	73	21	2.36
Ms-Access	5	12	63	66	1.70
(Internet & E-mail)	33	49	49	15	2.68

Source: Filed Survey, 2017

Items on Table 1 were ranked on a 4-point Likert scale with Highly skillful = 4, Skillful = 3, Less Skillful = 2 and Not Skillful = 1. Decision point was obtained by determining the mean value of the scores allocated to the alternatives. Hence, the mean value = 2.5.

Table 2 shows that most of the office managers/secretaries are skillful in the use of Microsoft Word and Microsoft Excel with a mean values of 3.17 and 2.54 respectively. These mean values are satisfactory since they are ≥ 2.5 . The mean values for Microsoft Word and Microsoft Excel could be attributed to the fact that these application packages are mostly used by office managers and secretaries and as a result, explore the packages and become very skillful in them. The results also show a mean value of 2.35 for Microsoft Powerpoint, indicating that the subjects are less skillful in application package and not skillful in the use of Microsoft Access. This is represented in the chart below.



From Table 1 and the above chart, with a mean value of 2.68, it is satisfactorily taken that the office managers/secretaries are skillful in the use of the internet and e-mail. The results clearly indicate that the office manager are well-skilled in the use of Microsoft Word and Microsoft Excel for the preparation of reports, letters, memoranda, tables, charts, spreadsheets, etc and also in the use of internet resources for searching for information and for using e-mail services. However, the less skillful use of the Powerpoint and Ms-Access could be a result of minimal use of the application packages by office managers/secretaries.

For the hypothesis, the following were generated

Table 3 : Skillful Use of Office Application Packages Increases The Efficiency Of Office Managers/Secretaries Crosstabulation - Count

Skillful Use Of Office Application Packages Increases the Efficiency Of Office Managers/Secretaries						
		SA A D SD				Total
SKILLFULNESS	SKILLFUL	62	25	8	3	98
	NOT SKILLFUL	28	16	1	3	48
Total		90	41	9	6	146
Tasks are completed with accuracy when computer application packages are skillfully explored						Total
SKILLFULNESS	SKILLFUL	52	33	7	6	98
	NOT SKILLFUL	22	17	6	3	48
Total		74	50	13	9	146
Tasks are completed with accuracy when computer application packages are skillful explored						Total
SKILLFULNESS	SKILLFUL	52	33	7	6	98
	NOT SKILLFUL	22	17	6	3	48
Total		74	50	13	9	146

Source: Filed Survey, 2017

TABLE 4 :Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Chi-Square	3.559 ^a	3	.313
Likelihood Ratio	3.884	3	.274
Linear-by-Linear Association	.141	1	.707
N of Valid Cases	146		

- a. 3 cells (37.5%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 1.97

Table 5: Pseudo R-square

Cox and Snell	.825
Nagelkerke	.924
McFadden	.950

Table 4 shows the Chi-square statistic of the data in Table 3. Since $\chi^2_{cal.} > \chi^2_{tab.}$, we reject H_0 and accept the H_1 at $\alpha = 0.05$. We therefore conclude that skillful use of office application packages increases the efficiency of office managers and secretaries. This shows that hat skillful use of office application packages by office managers/secretaries increases the efficiency of office managers and secretaries. It also indicates that availability of relevant computer application packages makes the office manager more relevant in the organisation. This is in tandem with Akpomi and Ordu (2009) and Dris (2014).

Conclusion and Recommendations

Office managers/secretaries are found in all sections of higher institutions and they function at the interface of academic and administrative activities, in the administration and management of the institution, and with senior executive and staff at lower echelons of institution's work, they perform a hybrid of functions across these different domains. The efficient and effective performance of this category of personnel in modern day higher institutions is important for the overall quality service delivery in all facets of the institution's life. Though, the availability of up-to-date relevant computer application packages and the skillful use of the resources by office managers enhance their performance and make their role relevant and indispensable.

Based on the foregoing, it is recommended that:

- Office managers/secretaries should make efforts for personal development and professional career growth in order to meet up with the ever-changing demand of the present day organisations.
- Higher institutions, government and other employers of secretaries should provide adequate institutional or organizational support on training and development programmes for their office managers/secretaries to stimulate higher performance in them.
- Offices should be equipped with functional computer system with up-to-date application packages and other resources for use by the office managers/secretaries.
- Students should make efforts on their own to reduce the amount of time spent on social activities via the social media network and make use of the technology for the purpose of learning and research.

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