

## Utilization of Microsoft Office Applications and Secretaries Competency in Nigerian Tertiary Institutions (Federal Polytechnic, Ilaro, Ogun State, Nigeria Under Study)

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### ABSTRACT

Secretarial practice all over the world have undergone tremendous changes. This is as a result of sophisticated equipment and technologies to aid secretarial practices. The change has given the modern secretaries the opportunity to be more efficient and effective at work. Microsoft Office is one of the important applications used by Secretaries in organizations for the effective production of information. As important as this tool is, many secretaries are not competent in the usage, hence this study. The study investigates the utilization of Microsoft Office Applications in work place. Two research questions and hypotheses were formulated to guide the study. Descriptive survey research design was employed for the study and the instrument used was 20 items self-developed questionnaire. The study was carried out among ninety-five (95) Secretaries in Federal Polytechnic, Ilaro. Seventy-seven (77) secretaries were randomly selected among the population of secretaries in the study area, using balloting method. The data collected were analyzed using Zero-order Correlation and multiple regression analysis was used to test hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The result revealed that Ms.word application had significant positive relationship with utilization by secretaries ( $r = .20$ ;  $P < .01$ ); Ms. Excel had significant strong positive relationship with effective secretarial practice ( $r = .21$ ;  $p < .01$ ); PowerPoint had significant strong positive relationship with utilization by secretaries ( $r = .19$ ;  $P < .01$ ), Ms. Publisher usage had significant strong positive relationship with effective secretarial practice ( $r = .86$ ;  $P < .01$ ), and Ms. Access usage had significant strong positive relationship with p value greater than .01 ( $r = .97$ ;  $P < .01$ ). Lastly, the results indicate that, there is significant joint prediction of (Microsoft Lync, Outlook, SharePoint, OneNote, and Visio applications) on effective usage by secretaries in Federal Polytechnic Ilaro,  $R^2 = .215$ ,  $F(3, 290) = 35.290$ ,  $p < .01$ . It was recommended among other recommendations that: Secretaries without new skills in the use of Office Applications should be retrained to fit into the trend of current advancement technology.

**Keywords:** Utilization, Microsoft Office Applications, Secretary, Competency

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Secretarial functions all over the world have undergone a lot of technical changes because of the invention of more sophisticated modern office equipment which gives the secretaries the opportunity to increase their efficiency. Microsoft Office is an application used by secretaries in an office for the effective production of information. Research has shown that, many secretaries are not competent in the usage of these modern equipment and applications. Onifade (2010) confirm that there is no doubt that these modern technologies have thrown some secretaries out of job and the trend will continue for some time. Any time the secretaries are getting used to a version another version of Microsoft Office Applications is released and many secretaries who have not gone for proper training become incompetent in the use of these applications. The application is not static which makes the work tasking for them, and they must continue to update themselves before they can be competent and effective.

Modern Secretaries are now charged with the use of updated applications like Microsoft Office Applications in performing their day-to-day business activities by processing information that would enable them to carry out their office duties efficiently and effectively to enhance productivity. The functions of secretaries in public and private parastatals have become broader in recent times. The secretaries' responsibility in utilizing information systems requires certain Microsoft Office Application skills that will enable them to perform efficiently and effectively (Okubotimibi, 2010).

According to Buxom (2007), secretarial duties have gone beyond performing the normal manual daily official routines. In today's automated office environment, secretaries are expected to acquire modern information system application skills to be proficient in their duties. Secretaries in many establishments are most times referred to as information managers since the functional processes to which they are continually exposed, are synonymous with normal office information managing activities. Because of changes in technology, the role of secretaries in business has changed tremendously from that of typewriting and shorthand dictation, answering of telephone calls and processing of mails to office Information Technology and Management (Edwin, 2008).

### 1.1 Objective of the Study

The main objective of this study is to investigate on the effective utilization of Microsoft Office Application on secretary competency in Nigerian tertiary Institution. Specifically, the study will:

- Examine the extent of usage of Microsoft Office Applications like: Ms. Word, Ms. Excel, Ms. PowerPoint, Ms Publisher and Ms Access increases the efficiency of Secretaries in Tertiary Institutions.
- To ascertain the level of competencies of Microsoft Application like: Microsoft Lync, Outlook, SharePoint, OneNote, and Visio applications among secretaries in Tertiary Institution .

### 1.2 Research Questions

1. To what extent did the usage of Microsoft Applications like Microsoft Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Publisher and Access )increase efficiency of Secretaries in Tertiary Institution?
2. What is the extent of office Applications (Microsoft Lync, Outlook, SharePoint, OneNote, and Visio applications) competencies of secretaries in Tertiary Institution.

### 1.3 Research Hypotheses

- Ho<sub>1</sub> There is no significant relationship between the usage of Microsoft Applications and Secretaries Competency for effective Secretarial Practice in Federal Polytechnic, Ilaro, Ogun State
- Ho<sub>2</sub> There is no significant joint and independent prediction in (Microsoft Lync, Outlook, SharePoint, OneNote, and Visio applications) competencies on effective Secretarial Practice in Federal Polytechnic, Ilaro, Ogun State

## 2. CONCEPTUAL AND RELEVANT LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Microsoft Office Suite

Microsoft Office is an application used by secretaries in an office for the effective production of information but many of the secretaries are not competent in using it. Onifade (2010) confirm that there is no doubt that these modern technologies have thrown some secretaries out of job and the trend will continue for some time. Any time the secretaries are getting used to a version another version of Microsoft Office Applications is released and many secretaries who have not gone for proper training become incompetent in the use of these applications. The application is not static which makes the work tasking for them, and they must continue to update themselves before they can be competent and effective, and these applications are:

#### Microsoft Access

Microsoft Access is a form of database management system (DBMS) designed by Microsoft Corporation to facilitate data independence, share ability, consistency and non-redundancy (Ayatalumo 2004). They further define a database as a collection of data items stored with a minimum of duplication to provide a consistent and controlled pool of operational data. It is simply information related to a subject or purpose such as tracking customer orders.

#### Microsoft Excel

Azih 2016 (in Nnorom 2009) described Microsoft Excel as one of the most versatile and popular spreadsheet programs. It serves as an electronic pad for accountants. It can easily perform simple as well as complex mathematical operations. Excel also provides the facility to convert the spreadsheet data into various charts like bar, pie, 2D, and 3D. When converted into charts, the spreadsheet data can easily be understood. Microsoft Access and Microsoft Excel programs will ensure that the graduates of the programme develop relevant and sellable competencies that would enable the recipients to be self-employed and also create employment after graduation.

#### Microsoft Publisher

Microsoft Publisher software application is a software application which a secretary utilizes to carry out his office duties effectively. Microsoft publisher is also referred to as desktop publishing tool and it is used with the aid of the computer to create documents that have the combination of text and graphics. Ndinechi and Ementa (2013) noted that Microsoft Publisher is an application software that allows for the combination of text and graphics which aim at producing typeset quality documents such as: newsletters, flyers, brochures, magazines and so on. McGoldrick (2010) noted that publisher allows users to manipulate, typeset, and align images, graphics, and page layout with a single integrated system. According to Nwaosa, Egbule and Olannye (2013) office information managers need to develop their competencies on the use of desktop publishing application in order to be able to create documents that have the combination of charts, graphic, text and headlines with variety of typefaces.

### Microsoft PowerPoint

PowerPoint is a presentation program forming part of the Microsoft Office Suite of programs. The application uses slides to convey information rich in multimedia. Krizo (2014) defines PowerPoint as a presentation software bearing a collection of individual slides that contain information on a given topic. Commonly, it is used in business meetings, trainings, capacity buildings, workshops and for educational purposes. It is continually used to display structural presentations to enhance verbal and written communication. It is a very powerful instrument for inculcating competencies for enhanced effectiveness in teaching and learning (Nwosu & Mbaezue, 2016).

Agomuo (2014) observed that word processing allows the user to store the document for future reference or use, make corrections to documents conveniently, format document, to a wide variety of specification, automate some functions such as page numbering, generation of indexes, check the spelling of text in document for correctness and have greater control over page layout attribute such as margins, Ubani (2008) opined that Microsoft Word application software package is mainly used for creating and management of documents ranging from simple letters, reports to complex documents such as textbooks, magazines and it can be used to enter, edit, format, store, retrieve and print documents consisting of text and sometimes simple graphics and tables.

Darren (2013) explains that Visio is a program used to create diagrams and drawings of all types and for all purposes, unlike the basic diagram functions found in other Microsoft Office programs, such as Word or Excel, Visio offers advanced drawing, such as layout design, organisation charts, timelines, floor plans and diagram functions that can be useful for almost anyone, from home based users, to business and including people such as architects and interior designers. According to Anna (2013), Outlook is a sophisticated communication management program that helps you quickly and efficiently manage messages, schedules, address books and other information.

Darren (2013) observed that Microsoft Lync is an enterprise-ready, unified-communication platform, or put in more simple terms, a platform with which you can improve the way you communicate with colleagues and coworkers (both within and outside your organization), while at the same time improving your productivity. Lync provides you with the opportunity to tailor your communication environment to your individual requirements, and has been designed to enable you to interconnect and collaborate from wherever you might be, whether that's in the office, at home, or in your favorite coffee shop. With Lync, you can view your contacts availability, converse with them via instant message (IM), send and receive E-mail, make voice and video calls, and set up conferences (audio, video, and web), all right there at your fingertips.

Adrian (2020) noted that Microsoft OneNote is a note taking program that gathers handwritten or typed notes, drawings, screen clippings and audio commentaries. Notes can be shared with other OneNote users over the Internet or a network. OneNote was initially introduced as a standalone app that was not included in any of Microsoft Office 2003 editions. However, OneNote eventually became a core component of Microsoft Office; with the release of Microsoft Office 2013, One Note was included in all Microsoft Office offerings. OneNote is also available as a web application on Office Online, Windows desktop application, a mobile application for Windows Phone, iOS and Android. According to Archana and Raju (2014), Microsoft SharePoint is a browser-based collaboration and document management platform. It is used as host web sites that access shared workspaces and document as well as specialized applications like Wikis and Blog from a browser. Glushko and Rogovaya (2012) observe that competency is a result of education expressed in individual acquisition of definite number of working methods toward specific item of activity, the number of learning ways of activity is relevant over a long time period and is formed during several years by different means distinctive for each society, social stratum and age.

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### 3. SECRETARIES AND COMPETENCY

Competency as a term has long been used in most management literature. It can be divided into two: natural competence and learned competence, Meutia and Ismail (2012) state that natural competence consists of characteristic, attitude, self-image and social role. Unnatural or learned competence are skills that are needed when a task is done, which is acquired through practical and theoretical learning. This includes skills, knowledge and experience. Therefore, Microsoft Office Applications competencies are the skills, knowledge and experience needed by secretaries which assist them to execute the tasks in a manner that is most befitting.

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 applications for the efficacy of the secretarial functions (Akpomi & 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 by the office managers in the discharge of their duties and ascertaining continuity of efficient service delivery in all sections of the institutions. (Obi, 2012). 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. 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 center 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.

#### 2.3 Secretarial Staff and Academic Environment

In tertiary institutions, Secretaries or 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 peculiarity 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 a higher institution (Jimoh, 2014). To perform effectively, office managers/secretaries in tertiary institutions must possess Office Applications skills to address the converging challenges of sophistication, globalization, competition, and technological innovations (Draper, 2004 as cited in Obi, 2012).

### 3. METHOD

A survey design method was used, and the population of the study were 95 secretaries in Federal Polytechnic, Ilaro. The instrument used was 20 items self-developed questionnaires. Section A was social demography; section B was 10 items measuring the extent of effective utilization of Office Applications among secretaries. Five (5) point Likert scale response pattern (VHE) = Very high extent, (HE) = High extent, (ME) Moderate extent, (LE) Low extent, (VLE) Very low extent, while the section C was Microsoft Office Application competencies scale, developed to measure Microsoft Application competencies with the four (4) point Likert response pattern, Very Effective (VE), Effective (E) Moderately Effective (ME), Ineffective (IE).

The researcher carried out a standardization of the new questionnaire formed by running a test re- test reliability, and the reliability coefficient of Microsoft Office Application competencies scale was 0.76 while the reliability coefficient of effective secretarial practice was 0.82. Lastly, the researcher also conducted a face validity test, by subjecting the new scale developed to five different experts to rate the scale, their rating makes the scale face valid. Slovin's formula sample size determination formula was used in this study to determine the sample size for this study.

The formula:

- is used to calculate the sample size (n) given the population size (N) and a margin of error (e).
- it's a random sampling technique formula to estimate sampling size
- It is computed as  $n = N / (1+Ne^2)$ .

Where:

n = no. of samples

N = total population =95 Secretaries from Federal Polytechnic, Ilaro

e = error margin / margin of error =0.05

Solution

$$n = N / (1 + Ne^2)$$

$$n = 95 / (1 + 95 * 0.05^2)$$

$$n = 95 / (1 + 95 * 0.0025)$$

$$n = 95 / (1 + .24)$$

$$n = 95 / 1.24, \quad n = 76.6, \quad n = 77 \text{ Secretaries}$$

The participants for this study were 77 Secretaries from Federal Polytechnic, Ilaro which was selected from five faculties, registry and rectory through a simple random sampling technique using balloting method.

#### 4. RESULTS

Hypothesis one stated that there is no significant relationship between Microsoft Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Publisher and Access competencies on effective Secretarial Practice in Federal Polytechnic, Ilaro. Zero-order Correlation analysis was used to test the hypothesis. The result is presented in Table 4.1.

**Table 4.1: Summary of Zero-order Correlation among Microsoft word, Excel, PowerPoint, Publisher, access and effective secretarial practice.**

S/N	Variables	Mean	Std. D	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	Microsoft word	7.59	9.21	-					
2	Microsoft excel	46.87	10.61	.306**	-				
3	Microsoft power point	51.49	13.89	-.152**	-.030	-			
4	Microsoft publisher	0.93	1.78	.190**	.171**	-.143*	-		
5	Microsoft access	1.72	3.65	.200**	.218**	-.210**	.713**	-	
6	Effective secretarial practice	2.64	5.00	.202**	.213**	.193**	.864**	.969**	-

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level



Table 4.1 presents results on the zero-order correlation among Microsoft (word, excel, PowerPoint, publisher, access) competencies and effective utilization among secretaries in Federal Polytechnic, Ilaro. It is shown that Microsoft word had significant strong positive relationship with effective usage ( $r = .20$ ;  $P < .01$ ); Microsoft excel had significant strong positive relationship with effective usage among secretaries in Federal Polytechnic, Ilaro ( $r = .21$ ;  $p < .01$ ); Microsoft PowerPoint had significant strong positive relationship with effective usage among secretaries ( $r = .19$ ;  $P < .01$ ), Microsoft publisher had significant strong positive relationship with effective usage ( $r = .86$ ;  $P < .01$ ), and Microsoft access had significant strong positive relationship with effective usage ( $r = .97$ ;  $P < .01$ ). This implies that the higher the Microsoft Applications (word, excel, PowerPoint, publisher, access) usage, the higher the effectiveness of secretaries in academic environment. The hypothesis is rejected.

Hypothesis two stated that there is no significant joint and independent prediction in (Microsoft Lync, Outlook, SharePoint, OneNote, and Visio applications) competencies on effective Secretarial Practice in Federal Polytechnic, Ilaro. Multiple regression analysis was used to test the hypothesis. The result is presented in Table 4.2.

**Table 4.2: Summary of Multiple regression table showing joint and independent prediction of (Microsoft Lync, Outlook, SharePoint, OneNote, and Visio applications) competencies on effective Secretarial Practice in Federal Polytechnic, Ilaro**

Variables	B	T	P	R	R <sup>2</sup>	F	P
Microsoft Lync	.122	2.104	< .05				
Microsoft Outlook	.197	3.419	< .01				
Microsoft SharePoint	-.169	-2.996	< .05	.464	.215	35.290	<.01
Microsoft One note	.315	3.312	< .05				
Microsoft Visio	.325	4.621	<.05				

From Table 4.2, the results indicate that, there is significant joint prediction of (Microsoft Lync, Outlook, SharePoint, OneNote, and Visio applications) on the utilization of Ms. Applications among secretaries in ,  $R^2 = .215$ ,  $F(3, 290) = 35.290$ ,  $p < .01$ . The result also indicates that 22% variance of effective secretarial practices in Federal Polytechnic, Ilaro is accounted for by (Microsoft Lync, Outlook, SharePoint, OneNote, and Visio applications) competencies, while the remaining 78% variances are attributed to other alienated factors which are not considered in this study. Further results show that there is significant independent prediction of Microsoft Lync application ( $\beta = .122$ ,  $p < .05$ ), Microsoft Outlook applications ( $\beta = .197$ ,  $p < .05$ ), Microsoft SharePoint applications ( $\beta = -.169$ ,  $p < .05$ ), Microsoft OneNote applications ( $\beta = .315$ ,  $p < .05$ ), and Microsoft Visio applications ( $\beta = .325$ ,  $p < .05$ ) on effective secretarial practices in Federal Polytechnic, Ilaro. The hypothesis was rejected.

#### 4. DISCUSSION OF FINDING

The study revealed that Microsoft word had significant strong positive relationship with effective secretarial practice; Microsoft excel had significant strong positive relationship with effective secretarial practice; Microsoft PowerPoint had significant strong positive relationship with effective secretarial practice, Microsoft publisher had significant strong positive relationship with effective secretarial practice, and Microsoft access had significant strong positive relationship with effective secretarial practice. This implies that the higher the Microsoft applications, (word, excel, PowerPoint, Publisher, Access) competencies the higher the effectiveness of secretarial practices.

In support of these findings, Akiti and Onyema (2010) explained that the knowledge of computer application software such as Spreadsheet, Excel, Computer Aided Design and Data-Base are important skills that should be impacted on the secretary, this will enable them to compete favorably in the business world.

Furthermore, the study indicates that there is significant joint prediction of (Microsoft Lync, Outlook, SharePoint, OneNote, and Visio applications) on effective secretarial practices in Federal Polytechnic, Ilaro. The result also indicates that 22% variance of effective secretarial practices in Federal Polytechnic, Ilaro is accounted for by (Microsoft Lync, Outlook, SharePoint, OneNote, and Visio applications) competencies, while the remaining 78% variances are attributed to other alienated factors which are not considered in this study. Further results show that there is significant independent prediction of Microsoft Lync application, Microsoft Outlook applications, Microsoft SharePoint applications, Microsoft OneNote applications, and Microsoft Visio applications on effective secretarial practices in Federal Polytechnic, Ilaro.

The finding agrees with Nwosu, Anaka and Eleoba, (2003) opined that secretaries today require new sets of skills and competencies in the application of office functions for information processing, management employment, office productivity, job retention, job success and job satisfaction.

## 5. CONCLUSION

Base on the finding and different opinions from several literature reviewed, the researchers thereby concluded that utilization of the Microsoft Office Applications increases competency of secretaries in Federal Polytechnic, Ilaro. This finding by extension, when properly utilized by higher institutions of learning in Nigeria, will enhance the skills of the secretaries in the use of application software.

## 6. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

- 1 Secretaries without updated skills in Office Applications should be retrained to fit into the trend of current advancement in technology.
- 2 Institution should procure the original and updated versions of Microsoft Office Applications to enable secretaries increase their competencies and productivities.
- 3 Secretaries in Tertiary Institutions should be well informed about the importance of training and re-training on Office Applications for effective job performance.
- 4 Secretaries should attend seminars, conferences and workshops to develop their skills in the areas of information technologies and Microsoft office packages.
5. Management in tertiary institutions should make it a compulsory task for secretaries to update their knowledge regarding the latest technologies for effectiveness and efficiency of the secretarial staff
6. Government should made available Training and Development Scholarship schemes to facilitate the learning processes of Secretaries.



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