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OFFICE EQUIPMENT MANIPULATION AND HUMAN RELATIONS SKILLS TRAINING NEEDS OF SECRETARIES OF PUBLIC ESTABLISHMENTS IN ANAMBRA STATE

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Abstract

The study determined office equipment manipulation and human relations skills training needs of secretaries of public establishments in Anambra State. Two research questions guided the study and six hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance. The descriptive survey design was used in the study. The population of the study comprised 89 secretaries in public establishments in Anambra State. The instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire. The instrument was validated by three experts. A pilot test was conducted to ascertain the reliability of the instrument. Test of reliability on the instrument with Cronbach Alpha yielded coefficient values of 0.75 and 0.77. The data collected were analyzed using mean and standard deviation and inferential statistics (ANOVA and t-test). Findings revealed that the respondents needed training in equipment manipulation skills and human relations skills. Furthermore, the findings revealed that gender, educational qualifications and years of experience of the respondents did not significantly influence their mean ratings on the training needs of secretaries in public establishments in Anambra State. The researcher concludes that secretaries public establishments in Anambra State need training to develop their equipment manipulation and human resource skills. It was recommended among others, that administrators of public establishments should ensure that office equipment tools and facilities are readily made available for secretaries.

Keywords: Office Equipment Manipulation, Human Resource, Skills, Secretaries, Public Establishment

Introduction

The advent of technology has revolutionalised the way business activities are conducted; this has brought about drastic changes in the conduct and processes in a modern office which has created a gap in the abilities of secretaries to meet up with the demands of the modern office environment. This has necessitated the need for secretaries to keep abreast with current technology as it affects office procedures and operations. The emergence of sophisticated office technology equipment like computers, word processors and other information technology resources coupled with new management techniques have completely changed the nature and scope of office work and business operations. Atakpa (2010) observed that secretarial functions everywhere in the world have experienced a lot of changes as functions that were previously done manually have been digitalized and automated. It is expected that secretaries are equipped with skills to meet with the demands of the modern office.

A secretary is as an individual who has undergone general education and has passed through a prescribed programme of training with appropriate skills, attitudes and competencies required for assuming roles in an office (Obi, 2012). Ugiagbe in Okpokwasili (2018) defined a

secretary as an assistant to an executive, possessing an impressive mastery of office skills and ability to assume responsibility without direct supervision and who displays initiative and exercises judgement and makes decisions within the scope of his/her authority. This means that secretaries are required to use sophisticated office machines/equipment in setting up an information system architecture that would enable them to carry out their office duties efficiently and productively. Owen (2011) opined that every secretary has the responsibility of up-dating and acquiring appropriate skills that are relevant for office information development and dissemination. However, it has been suggested that some secretaries might lack the competencies needed for the operation of a printing machine, using fax machines and using online processing systems to carry out office tasks (Onamade & Adebayo, 2012). The lack of office manipulation competencies among secretaries seem to have resulted from mismatch between the provisions of the curriculum and office practices.

According to Ezenwafor (2013), the curriculum of office education programme is deficient in tertiary institutions in Nigeria. This curriculum deficit according to Ezenwafor (2013) seems to have resulted in the production of half-baked and poor graduates who cannot perform effectively and efficiently in the world of work. The above situation may have risen because of the mismatch between what is taught in school and what is expected at work. Ezenwafor and Okeke (2011) averred that for secretaries to be able to adapt to the current changes in the modern office they need to possess office equipment manipulation skills and human relations skills. It is therefore imperative that the office equipment manipulation and human relations skills training needs of secretaries in public establishments in Anambra State are assessed so as to determine the areas they need training.

Office equipment manipulation skills involve the ability of secretaries to use office gadgets and machines in carrying out office works. Office equipment manipulation skills according to Ezenwafor and Okeke (2011) have to do with the use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) tools and gadgets in carrying out office works. Similarly, Okpokwasili (2018) averred that ICT is an umbrella of interconnected technological components that are used to collect, process, and store as well as disseminate information to support decision making in any organization. The information systems technically are a set of interrelated components that are used to collect (or retrieve), process, store, and distribute information to support decision making, coordination and control, in any organization. According to Okeke (2013), a secretary in a modern office is expected to be a professional in the use of information technology tools which includes the ability to manipulate hardware, software, database and communication to insert, process, bring out and manage information needed for efficient work. In essence the secretary is expected to be a very professional individual who has the appropriate human relation skills necessary for effective and efficient work process.

Human relations skills or interpersonal relation skills are those skills a secretary needs in order to communicate effectively with other staff or a group of people. These skills are usually referred to as ‘soft skills’ which help people work willingly in a team (Hagie & Dickson cited in David, 2015). Human relations skills is defined as being associated with a person emotional intelligence which represents the personal trait, social, grace, friendliness and optimism that characterize relationship with other people. Human relations skills complement the hard skills (office equipment manipulation skills) and they are used mostly for the success of any institution. Similarly, it has been suggested that the training needs of secretaries in public

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establishment could be dependent on factors relating to their gender, educational qualifications and their years of experience on the job.

According to Onamade and Adedayo (2012), there is significant difference between the mean scores of male and female respondents on the skills need of secretaries. Similarly, Okolocha and Baba (2017) stated that the level of educational attainment could significantly influence the training needs of secretaries. This situation can also be influenced by years of experience. According to Emeasoba (2014), years of experience did not influence secretaries training needs. However, Sarwoko et al (2013) noted that years of experience can influence the acquisition of skills and competences. However, these views are theoretical assumptions and have not been empirically proven to be the case with secretaries in Anambra State. It is against this background that the researcher assessed the office equipment manipulation and human relations skills training needs of secretaries in public establishment in Anambra State.

Statement of the Problem

The inability of some secretaries to demonstrate the requisite office management skills appear to slow down the work process in most public establishments. This seems to be evident in cases where secretaries in some of the establishment address visitors rudely, ignore greetings and in some cases curse or abuse aggrieved clients/visitors. This points to lack equipment manipulation and interpersonal relations skills among the secretaries in public establishments in the State.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study is to determine the office equipment manipulation and human relations skills training needs of secretaries in public establishment in Anambra State. Specifically, the study determined the level of training:

1. Secretaries in public establishments in Anambra State need training in office equipment manipulation skills.
2. Secretaries in public establishments in Anambra State need training in office human relations skills.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What level of training do secretaries in public establishment in Anambra State need in office equipment manipulation skills?
2. What level of training do secretaries in public establishment in Anambra State need in human relations skills?

Hypotheses

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

1. Male and female secretaries in public establishments in Anambra State do not significantly differ in their mean ratings on the level of training they need in office equipment manipulation skills.
2. There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of secretaries in public establishments in Anambra State on the level of training they need in office equipment manipulation skills based on educational qualification (OND/NCE, HND/Bachelor degree, and Higher degree qualifications)

3. There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of secretaries in public establishments in Anambra State on the level of training they need in office equipment manipulation skills based on years of working experience (Below 5 years, 5-10 year, Above 10 years)
4. Male and female secretaries in public establishments in Anambra State do not significantly differ in their mean ratings on the level of training they need in human relations skills.
5. There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of secretaries in public establishments in Anambra State on the level of training they need in human relations skills based on educational qualification (OND/NCE, HND/Bachelor degree, and Higher degree qualifications)
6. There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of secretaries in public establishments in Anambra State on the level of training they need in human relations skills based on years of working experience (Below 5 years, 5-10 year, Above 10 years)

Method

The study adopted descriptive survey research design. The study was carried out in Anambra State of Nigeria. The population of the study comprised 89 secretaries in public establishments in Anambra State. The entire population was studied without sampling because the size is manageable. The instrument for data collection was a questionnaire developed by the researchers. The instrument was titled Questionnaire on Equipment Manipulation and Human Relations Training Needs of Secretaries in Public Establishments in Anambra State (QEMHRTNSPEAS).

The instrument is made up of three Sections; "A-C", Section A contains personal data of the respondents such as gender, years of experience and educational qualification. Section B deals with office equipment manipulation skills training needs of secretaries in Public establishments in Anambra State with 30 items. Section C sought information on human relations skills training needs of secretaries in Public establishments in Anambra State. The instrument is on a 5-point rating scale of Very Highly Needed (VHN), Highly Needed (HN), Needed (N), Moderately Needed (MN) and Not Needed (NN). The instrument was validated by three experts. To establish the instrument's reliability, a pilot test was conducted. Copies of the questionnaire were administered on 10 secretaries in Federal College of Education (Technical), Asaba, Delta State who are not included in the population of the study. Using Cronbach Alpha reliability test on the data collected from the pilot study, coefficient values of 0.75 and 0.77 for cluster B and C respectively.

The instrument was administered with the help of three research assistants. Copies of the questionnaires was administered personally by the researcher and three research assistants who were briefed and guided on the modalities for the administration and collection of the questionnaire. A period of four weeks was used for the distribution and collection of the instrument. Out of the 89 copies of questionnaires distributed, 81 were returned in good condition. The copies of questionnaire successfully retrieved were used for data analysis. The data collected for the study were analyzed using mean, standard deviation, ANOVA and t-test. The mean score was used to answer the research questions while the standard deviation was used

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to ascertain the homogeneity or otherwise of the respondents' responses. The decision rule was based on real limits of numbers on a 5-point rating scale as shown below:

Response option	**Values**	**Real Limit**
Very Highly Needed	5	4.50-5.00
Highly Needed	4	3.50-4.49
Needed	3	2.50-3.49
Moderately Needed	2	1.50-2.49
Not Needed	1	1.00- 1.49

Analysis of variance (ANOVA) and t-test was used to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance, when p-value is less than or equal to 0.05 ($P \leq 0.05$), the null hypothesis was rejected otherwise, the null hypothesis was not rejected.

Results

Research Question 1: What level of training do secretaries in public establishment in Anambra State need in office equipment manipulation skills?

Table 1: Respondents Mean Ratings on Office Manipulation Skills Needs of Secretaries in Public Establishments

S/N	**Office Manipulation Skills Needs**	**Mean**	**SD**	**Remarks**
1.	Formatting secondary storage devices like flash drives	4.10	0.71	Highly needed
2.	Using compact disks to save documents from the computer	4.25	0.76	Highly Needed
3.	Using the flash drives to share documents	3.68	0.81	Highly Needed
4.	Using the monitor to view information on the screen	2.15	0.61	Moderately Needed
5.	Printing saved documents from the computer using the printer	3.23	0.54	Needed
6.	Using the Microsoft word application to edit documents	3.45	0.61	Needed
7.	Using the Corel Draw application to design graphics	2.50	0.74	Needed
8.	Using the computer to edit videos	3.04	0.60	Needed
9.	Using digital camcorders to record office meetings	3.50	0.70	Highly Needed
10.	Using emails to send correspondence	3.79	0.56	Highly Needed
11	Surfing the world wide web using web browsers	3.85	0.71	Highly Needed
12	Uploading information on the web using web browsers	3.52	0.64	Highly Needed
13	Installing softwares in the computer	3.73	0.67	Highly Needed
14	Uninstalling programmes from the computers	3.82	0.72	Highly Needed
15	Networking computers in the office	4.05	0.86	Highly Needed
16	Trouble shooting computers when	3.67	0.70	Highly Needed

	necessary			
17	Producing documents with the desktop publisher	3.56	0.75	Highly Needed
18	Setting up the projector for presentations in meetings	3.69	0.67	Highly Needed
19	Using the scanning machines to get documents in soft copies	3.78	0.74	Highly Needed
	Ground	**3.55**		**Highly Needed**

Data in Table 1 reveal that the respondents rated items, 1, 2, 3, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18 and 19 as highly needed with mean ratings ranging between 3.50 to 4.25 and standard deviations of 0.56 and 0.86. Furthermore, they rated items, 5, 6, 7 and as needed with mean ratings ranging between 2.50 to 3.23 and standard deviations of 0.54 and 0.74 respectively. The cluster mean of 3.54 indicates that secretaries in public establishment in Anambra State need training in office equipment manipulation skills. The standard deviations scores of 0.54 to 0.81 show that the respondents' opinions are closely related.

Research Question 2: What level of training do secretaries in public establishment in Anambra State need in human relations skills?

Table 2: Respondents Mean Ratings on Human Relations Skills Needs of Secretaries in Public Establishments

S/N	Human Relations Skills	Mean	SD	Remarks
20.	Building team work among colleagues	3.55	0.76	Highly Needed
21.	Developing cheerful attitude about work and about life	3.51	0.70	Highly Needed
22.	Employing tact and initiative in dealings with the public	3.63	0.69	Highly Needed
23.	Acknowledging successful task accomplished by colleagues or subordinates	3.80	0.79	Highly Needed
24.	Respecting the feelings of other colleagues and customers	3.57	0.76	Highly Needed
25.	Being courteous and respectful	4.04	1.06	Highly Needed
26.	Communicating clearly to avoid misunderstanding	3.74	0.82	Highly Needed
27.	Receiving and screening office visitors for the chief executives	3.83	0.79	Highly Needed
28.	Striving to make his/her boss succeed by working hard and being loyal to his/her boss	3.62	0.85	Highly Needed
29.	Offering professional advice when necessary	3.50	0.81	Highly Needed
30.	Promoting harmony between people of different culture	3.54	0.72	Highly Needed
	Ground	**3.67**		**Highly Needed**

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Data in Table 2 reveal that the respondents rated all 11 items as highly needed with mean ratings ranging from 3.50 to 4.04 and standard deviations ranging from 0.69 to 1.06. The nearness of the standard deviation scores shows that the respondents' opinions were close. The cluster mean of 3.67 indicates that secretaries in public establishment in Anambra State highly need training in human relations skills. The standard deviations show that the respondents' ratings are closely related.

Hypothesis 1: Male and female secretaries in public establishments in Anambra State do not significantly differ in their mean ratings on the level of training they need in office equipment manipulation skills.

Table 3: t-test Analysis of Respondents' Means Ratings on the training level they need in Office Manipulation Skills based on Gender

Variable	N	Mean	SD	df	á	Sig.	Decision
Male Secretaries	22	3.73	0.72				
				79	0.05	0.003	Not Significant
Female Secretaries	59	3.67	0.67				

Data in Table 3 show that the p-value of 0.003 is less than 0.05 level of significance. This shows that the respondents did not significantly differ in their mean ratings on the level of training secretaries in public establishments in Anambra State need in office equipment manipulation skills based on gender. Therefore, the hypothesis was not rejected.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of secretaries in public establishments in Anambra State on the level of training they need in office equipment manipulation skills based on educational qualification (OND/NCE, HND/Bachelor degree, and Higher degree qualifications)

Table 4: Summary of Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) of the Mean Ratings of Respondents on the Extent They Need Training In Office Equipment Manipulation Skills based on Educational Qualification

Source	Sum of squares	Df	Mean Square	Sig	Remark
Between groups	192	2	.096		
Within groups	240.091	79	.861	.001	NS
Total	240.283	81			

Data in Table 4 reveal that the p-value of .001 is less than 0.05 level of significance. Since the p-value of .001 is less than the 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis was not rejected. Thus, secretaries in public establishment in Anambra State do not differ significantly in their mean rating on the level of training they need in office equipment manipulation skills based on educational qualification.

Hypothesis 3: There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of secretaries in public establishments in Anambra State on the level of training they need in office equipment

manipulation skills based on years of working experience (Below 5 years, 5-10 year, Above 10 years).

Table 5: Summary of Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) of the Mean Ratings of Respondents on the Level of Training they Need In Office Equipment Manipulation Skills based on Years of Experience

Source	Sum of squares	df	Mean Square	Sig.	Remark
Between groups	.187	2	.088		
Within groups	223.010	79	.812	.017	NS
Total	223.283	81			

Data in Table 5 reveal that the p-value of 0.017 is less than 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis was not rejected. Thus, secretaries in public establishment in Anambra State do not differ significantly in their mean rating on the level of training they need in office equipment manipulation skills based on years of experience.

Hypothesis 4: Male and female secretaries in public establishments in Anambra State do not significantly differ in their mean ratings on the level of training they need in human relations skills.

Table 6: t-test Analysis of Respondents' Means Ratings on the level of Training they need in Human Relations Skills based on Gender

Variable	N	Mean	SD	df	ά	Sig	Decision
Male Secretaries	22	3.89	0.70				
				79	0.05	0.03	Not Significant
Female Secretaries	59	3.75	0.72				

Data in Table 6 show that the calculated p-value of 0.03 is less than 0.05 level of significance. This shows that the gender of the respondents did not significantly influence respondents mean ratings on the level of training secretaries in public establishments in Anambra State need in office human relations skills. Therefore, the hypothesis was not rejected.

Hypothesis 5: There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of secretaries in public establishments in Anambra State on the level of training they need in human relations skills based on educational qualification (OND/NCE, HND/Bachelor degree, and Higher degree qualifications).

Table 7: Summary of Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) of the Mean Ratings of Respondents on the level of Training Secretaries need in Office Human Relations Skills based on Educational Qualification

Source	Sum of squares	df	Mean Square	Sig.	Remark

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Between groups	.232	2	.188		
Within groups	267.001	79	.901	.002	NS
Total	267.233	81			

Data in Table 7 reveal that the p-value of 0.002 is less than 0.05 level of significance. Thus, the null hypothesis was not rejected. This implies that secretaries in public establishment in Anambra State do not differ significantly in their mean rating on the level of training they need in human relations skills based on educational qualification.

Hypothesis 6: There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of secretaries in public establishments in Anambra State on the level of training they need in human relations skills based on years of working experience (Below 5 years, 5-10 year, Above 10 years).

Table 8: Summary of Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) of the Mean Ratings of Respondents on the Level They Need Training on Human Relations Skills based on Years of Experience

Source	Sum of squares	df	Mean Square	Sig.	Remark
Between groups	.245	2	.108		
Within groups	284.221	79	.745	.001	NS
Total	284.446	81			

Data in Table 8 reveal that the p-value of 0.001 is less than 0.05 level of significance. Thus, the null hypothesis was not rejected. Thus, secretaries in public establishment in Anambra State do not differ significantly in their mean rating on the level of training they need in human relations skills based on years of working experience.

Discussion

Findings revealed that secretaries in public establishment in Anambra State need training in office equipment manipulation skills. The respondents opined training in office equipment manipulation skills on formatting secondary storage devices like flash drives, using compact disks to save documents from the computer, using the computer to edit videos and using emails to send correspondence among others were highly needed. These findings is in agreement with Okpokwasili (2018) who found that computer operation skills as well as the ability to use the Microsoft office suits as highly needed by secretaries. In the same vein, Emeasoba (2014) found that computer operation competencies, networking, telecommunication and media competencies are competencies that are highly required by secretaries. Okolocha and Baba (2017) found that secretaries lacked skills in the use of electronic gadget. This thus emphasizes the need for the improvement on the equipment manipulation skills possessed by secretaries in Anambra State. Okpokwasili (2018) recommended that secretaries in the public service should be given awareness by their employers on the need to acquire equipment manipulation skills and Training institutions should develop programmes that would assist secretaries update their skills and confidence. Similarly, Okolocha and Baba (2017) suggested that training programmes should be organized by government or employers of labour for secretaries in the area of equipment manipulation skill.

Furthermore, findings on the hypotheses revealed that gender, educational qualification and years of experience did not significantly differ the respondents mean ratings on the level of training secretaries in public establishments in Anambra State need in office equipment manipulation. This shows that all the respondents irrespective of their gender, educational qualification and years of experience agreed that secretaries need training in office manipulation skills in Anambra State. This is in line with Emeasoba (2014) who found no significant difference in the mean ratings of respondents on the office manipulation skills required by secretaries in public establishment. This may have resulted because office manipulation skills are very integral to the effective functioning of the organization. Hence, with the advent of more innovative office machines and softwares, it is important that secretaries are updated on their use and application in carrying out their jobs.

Findings revealed that secretaries in public establishment in Anambra State need training in human relations skills. The respondents opined that they need training on acquiring skills in building team work among colleagues, skills in entertaining official enquiries, skills in employing tact and initiative in dealings with the public, skills in respecting the feelings of other colleagues and customers and friendly and helpful skills among others. The findings are in agreement with Obi (2012) who found that secretaries of public establishments lacked interpersonal skills and resource skills to a high extent. According to Obi secretaries in public establishments do not have proper human relations skills because of the way in which they treat clients in their offices. Similarly, Onamade and Adedayo (2012) also found that secretaries in public organization lacked human relations and interpersonal skills. According to Onamade and Adebayo secretaries in some public establishment are unruly and rude when addressing visitors. This informed the call by researchers Obi (2012) to call for the training and retraining of office secretaries on the expected human relations skills needed by secretaries in the 21st century office. Onamade and Adebayo (2012) also recommended that the curriculum of tertiary institutions offering secretarial studies are updated in line with the current trends and employees demand to make their graduates more professionally inclined and competitive in the labour market like their counterpart trained in public institutions.

Furthermore, findings on the hypothesis revealed that gender, educational qualification and years of experience did not significantly differ the respondents mean ratings on the level of training secretaries in public establishments in Anambra State need in human relations skills. This shows that all the respondents irrespective of their gender, educational qualification and years of experience agreed that human relations skills training is highly needed by secretaries in public establishments in Anambra State. This is in line with Onamade and Adedayo (2012) who found no significant difference in the mean ratings of respondents on the human relations skills required by secretaries in public establishment. This may have resulted because human relations skills are important competences required for the smooth functioning of an organization. Thus, secretaries need to possess these competences so as to achieve organizational objectives.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it was concluded that there is need to adequately train secretaries in public establishment on appropriate office equipment manipulation and human relations skills so that they can effectively carry out office tasks. It is therefore imperative that measures are put in place that will facilitate and improve secretaries' office equipment

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manipulation and human relations skills.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the researcher proffers the following recommendations:

1. Administrators of public establishments should ensure that office equipment tools and facilities are readily made available for secretaries. This will help to improve the secretarial effectiveness of secretaries in the public establishments.
2. The federal and state governments should fund the training and re-training of secretaries in the public establishments on the need to have proper human relations skills. This will improve secretaries on the need to be courteous and respectful towards visitors and colleagues.
3. Secretaries should invest in their professional and personal development through reading of books on human relations and following current trends in human relations practices.

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