

## Employees' Office Skills Required By Employers In Modern Business Organizations In Rivers State

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### **Abstract**

*It is imperative to conduct regular analysis in designing and implementing any functional curriculum. Therefore, educational processes must consider the needs of the society and the individuals in its service delivery. The business world in recent times has witnessed lots of changes especially with advent of information technology leading to newer method of doing things. The office of any business organization is at the centre of these changes. Hence, the study was to investigate the employer's demand and modern office work skills required of secretaries in modern organizations in Rivers State. A self-structured questionnaire validated by experts in business educators was used as instrument for data collection. The population of the study consisted of heads of departments, directors, chief executives, and managers in private and public organizations in Rivers State. Two research questions and two hypotheses were answered and tested of 0.05 level of significance. Among other things, the study revealed that the various skills identified by the study in cluster of word processing office work skills, interpersonal/human relation office work skills were all required office work skills demanded by the employers in the modern office. Based on the findings, it was recommended that, the curriculum of the office education programme be reviewed to accommodate these identified skills training and retraining, workshops, seminars were also recommended for the trainers especially in the areas of information technology.*

**Keywords;** *Employees' Office Skills, and Modern Business Organizations*

## Introduction

The major concerns of employers of labour in this information age is .the recruitment of employees' with requisite modern office work skills, to fit into the various organization job vacancies and positions. Therefore, organization's production, service and profit depend largely on the workers performance and productivity because, no investors would invest in an organization/company where work culture is poor (Abiola, 2019). Organizations, therefore, combine effectiveness and efficiency of its employees to achieve its goals of profit making, growth and survival amongst competitors in a dynamic business environment. To the employer, effectiveness means producing the desired result and efficiency means producing the result with minimum efforts, expense and waste. The customers waiting chairs in our offices have disappeared with a drive towards efficiency of ensuring that no customer is unnecessarily delayed in the office. Employers frown at work habits that will impede the effectiveness and efficiency of its services to the extent that they can fire, stagnate, and demote such erring employees.

Office is a place where the administrative functions of an organization are led out. The word administer means to oversee, to manage, to control, to devise in order to ensure that the goals of the office are achieved, the office tenders clerical executive and all other office functions for which the office setup. Modern office activities may vary like the works department office, the personnel office but the functions are closely related, that they one time or the other receive information, process the information, record the information, and give out information when required and above all to protect the let of the organization. A road construction company that spends so much of its time on road sites constructing road projects still set aside a place where the activities of the company are coordinated. Therefore, working in the modern office fee business educator requires some basic skills. Modern office work skills can therefore, be referred to mean those abilities required to carrying out office frictions-very well. Secretaries and administrative assistants are responsible for a variety of administrative and clerical duties necessary to keep office environment running smoothly. They serve as an information manager for an office, schedule meeting appointment, organize and. maintain paper and electronic files, manage lets, conduct research and provide information via the telephone, postal mail (email. These office work skills are varies as the office activities vary too. The ms activities in an organization are grouped together or clustered and assigned traffic job description like,: sales unit, purchase unit, technical unit, medical unit, transport unit etc; each of these units is' involved in the functions of an office. Therefore the modern office work skills are as varied as the office activities vary. The growth in technology in business has changed the manpower needs of many businesses as well as the functions in the office. Many office functions are plated and this leaves the clerical and secretarial employees with less manual more technical skills to deal with. Therefore, the office employees must be versatile with multi-technical and people related (Psycho-Social) skills in order to achieve relevant in today's business and the future. Modern office jobs now require complex and greater skills and knowledge hereby making it imperative for curriculum specialist and vocational education; programme developers to adjust their training programmes to meet the challenges of changing work environment (Agheta, 2012). Furthermore, the advancement in technology has revolutionarized office functions and obsolescence occurs so: quickly affecting occupational structure and specific jobs skills and knowledge.

## Statement of the problem

To engage in a life of work in, the office as well as for self employment, this laudable aim is yet to be achieved is such that work places such a dynamic environment" that is changing with time. The

office skills are also not left out of the changes, often times, there are new 'orders of doing things today, and most registration exercises in our higher institutions are done online.

Sooner or later lectures and examinations will be taken online. This also demands availability of personnel that can effectively and efficiently impart this knowledge to learners. Some years ago the need for modern office machines and equipment did not arise. This is because office functions could be performed using manual typewriters, electric typewriters, manually operated copying, duplicating machines and other office equipment operated manually out the office functions. These manual office machines and equipment makes the office work a little easier but were characterized with monotonous nature, time consuming, work output dirty, illegible and corrections on such often difficult and sometimes involves re-typing. But now, today's office functions and activities have risen beyond the manual processing of office functions, and it is assumed that those office employees trained with the manual office environment. Furthermore, the curriculum content especially emerging technologies of training institutions are yet to match with today's development, as it takes some period or, time for the review of the curriculum (Enyekit, 2020). As new businesses and job: opportunities are generated every day, there comes the need to identify the employer's demand and modern office work skills to match with the new challenges in the modern office to be employable on graduation; hence, the necessity to embark on this study. To this end, this study therefore is poised to determine to investigate employees' work skills demand by employers' modern business organizations in Rivers State.

### **Purpose of the study**

The main purpose of this study was to determine employees' work skills demand by employers modern business organizations in Rivers State. Specifically, the study seeks to;

1. Identify the relationship between knowledge of office documentation and efficiency in word processing skills in modern business organizations in Rivers State.
2. Identify the relationship between knowledge of human relations and effectiveness in interpersonal skills in modern business organizations in Rivers State.

### **Research questions**

The following research questions were formulated that guide the study.

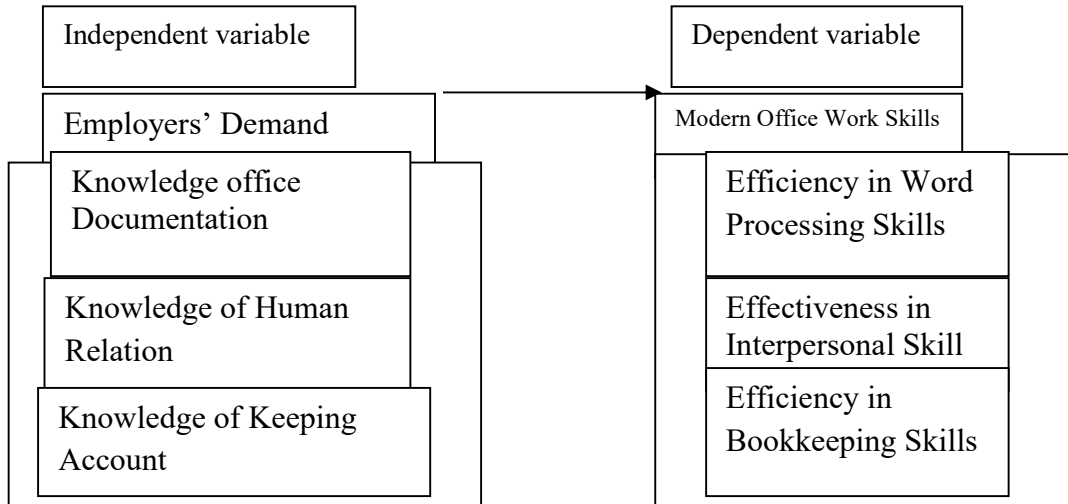
1. To what extent does efficiency in word processing skills influences office documentations in modern business organizations in Rivers State?
2. To what extent does effectiveness in interpersonal skills influences human relations in modern business organizations in Rivers State?

### **Research hypotheses**

The following null hypotheses were formulated that guided the study and were tested at 0.5 level of significance.

1. There is no significant relationship between knowledge of office documentation and efficiency of secretaries in word processing skills in modern business organizations in Rivers State.
2. There is no significant relationship between the knowledge of human relations and efficiency of secretaries in interpersonal skills in modern business organizations in Rivers State.

### Conceptual framework



Source: (Researchers, 2021)

#### Concept of employers' demand

According to the Micheal (2017) employers demand are the expectations of skills and knowledge from the employees. The employees should know that the factors which were most important to employers when recruiting graduates were personal attitude, and degree result; employability skills, relevant work experience. The most important transferable skills to employers when recruiting graduates were: trustworthiness, reliability, motivation, communication skills and willingness to learn are what the employers' demand of the employees. An office is a place of work. It is defined as a place where business is carried out. One would want to ask what kind of business? The offices, shops and railway premises act in Enyekit (2021) defined an office as a building or a [part of a building; the sole or principal use of which is an office or for office purposes. Micheal (2017) stated that an office is primarily an information processing centre, linking all the various sections within an organization together and linking outside world to the organization. Similarly, the office can be described as any place where clerical work is normally carried on processing information from the point of receiving to the point dissemination. Hence even road construction companies still set aside a building called office whereas their major activities are always on the road site where they are running contracts. Osuala in Enyekit (2020) referred to skill as an activity that requires controlled physical movements to be made under the guidance of the mind, which receives its stimulus through sensory input. Therefore, skill is acquired attitudes and behaviours after an exposure to theories and practices in the field of study. Skill is the ability to do something with a degree of proficiency resulting from certain behavior pattern in respect to smoothness, speed and accuracy. Furthermore, office skills may be used comprehensively to cover a variety of routine and non-routine activities in a business office, while office activities are clustered as word processing, skills, human relation/interpersonal office skills and according office skills.

#### Office documentation and efficiency in word processing skills

Office documentation/Word processing is the handling of alphabetical and alphanumeric information electronically. According to Moses (2021) the term was coined to emphasize the manipulation of certain types of Bata, characters combined to form words, sentence, paragraphs, memos, letters, and reports. A word processing system comprises equipment, procedures, and

people whereby thought and ideas are expressed and distributed; in hard copy {paper} and/or soft copy (CRT screen) form.

The equipment itself (the word processor) consists of a keyboard, an electronic memory, a display screen and a printer. Text is typed on the keyboard, but instead of being printed, it is entered into the machine's electronic memory. The secretary and typist can see the material on the screen and to check it as she types it in. She can also use the keyboard to display the text on the screen and to enter corrections and amendments. Nwogwugwu (2012) noted that many years ago, the need for modern machines, and equipment did not arise. This was mainly because the secretaries then could make do with the manual typewriters, manually operated photocopying and duplicating machines and other office equipment operated manually to do their work irrespective of the length of time and energy they exert in doing so, especially if they are engaged in narrow and non-competitive business. The inaccuracies, inefficiencies and non-standardization of these machines notwithstanding, once these traditional secretaries were able to take down dictation in shorthand and transcribe same on the manual typewriter, they would be satisfied that they have done their work. But now, the role of the business educators/secretarial staff in today's office has risen beyond the traditional role of taking dictation in shorthand and transcribing on the typewriter. According to Marshall (2008) in Enyekit (2021), noted that secretaries that possess mastery of office skills and ability to assume responsibility, displays initiative, exercise judgment and make decision in today's office. The secretarial profession has become more vast and highly demanding than it used to be in the past, hence the need to change from the use of archaic and slow manual office equipment and machines to highly sophisticated ones which include information technology resources and internet development to enhance their productivity and efficiency in the office. There are new ways of doing office work, which would become too cumbersome without the use of these modern machines. As new business and job opportunities are generated every day, there is the need for business educators to match the new challenges by acquiring new skills and competencies for the operation of the new technologies. This is necessitated that the society is in state of technological flux such as ours, it is compelling to monitor from time to time skills that employers of labour want so as to achieve maximum productivity. To achieve this, every work or production process requires specialized skills and competencies.

### **Human relation and effectiveness in interpersonal skills**

The importance of human relation and interpersonal skills in any work environment cannot be over emphasized; as such work place environment is a collection of different kinds of people who interact on daily basis. These groups of people include the employers, employees, visitors, contractors etc. How a staff is perceived by the employer and co-workers and even visitors to the office plays a large role; as minor as your day to day happiness at the office and as major as the future of your career. No matter how hard you work or how many brilliant ideas you may have, if you cannot connect with the people who work around you, your personal life will suffer. Every individual has several selves such as the self-esteem, the arrogant self, the modest self and the lazy self, the gentle and meek self, irritable self and so on. George-Amadi, (2020) agreed with the authors that a business education graduates needs to be skilled, intelligent, honest, smart and fluent in communication. It could also be expressed that there is a gap between student's actual performance and the performance required to succeed in occupations of their choice. He stated that the area which is lacking is student's willingness to perform on the job and his inability to get along with fellow men both at work and in his everyday life. The inability to get along with other people as a result of tension or conflict in the office between co-workers/superiors is expensive because it cuts down on productivity and adds to operating costs.

### **Employers' demand and modern office work skills in organizations**

There was a time when people stayed in their jobs for many years before receiving a promotion. Business moves at a much quicker pace today, and employees expect to be appreciated and move up in their companies.

So, employers look for workers who can do the job today with an eye toward what they might do in the near future. According to Libby Sander (2017), in Enyekit (2021) noted the employers' demands in modern office work skills are:-

#### **Communication skills**

In most discussions of top skills employers like to see in an employee, communication tops the list. That is because not much is done in business without good communication on all sides. It may go (different aliases, like interpersonal skills or the one you have known kindergarten, "works well with others).

#### **Technical knowledge**

Employers are not asking for geek-level knowledge unless IT is your field, but they do expect you to understand basic computer software programs that offices typically use, including those for composing documents, email, and possibly spreadsheets and slideshows, plus familiarity with the internet. Most business environments today expect or encourage teamwork. Some have actual defined teams whether for a particular project or for all work. For teams to work well together or for the collaborative spirit to thrive, people must be comfortable bounding ideas around with others.

#### **Ability to organize and prioritize**

Being organized is different from being neat. To organize means to classify assortments of things, ideas and what not into groups according to specified criteria. To prioritize means to order the element of a group according to importance. At work, tasks need to be prioritized so that the most important things are done even if there isn't time to accomplish everything on the list. Some employees are born with these skills, but they can also be learned. Employers do not care which one describes you; they want to hire you for having those demand skills.

#### **Commitment to work**

You could have every skill on an employer's list, but they are worthless without the commitment to show up on time everyday and buckle down to complete your prioritized tasks. A positive attitude goes along with commitment, and the best part about commitment is that it is contagious. No one wants to be the slacker next to the achiever.

### **Theoretical framework**

#### **Technological determinism theory**

Technological determinism theory was developed by Thorstein Veblen in 2001. The theory states that the emergence of technology and technological changes are the critical factors responsible for the changes in society. This theory explains how the emergence of technology has impacted on human thoughts and actions. It has changed the way people do things including the way we communicate with one another. Technological determinism theory tends to explain how the introduction of technology and the changes that come alongside with it (technological innovation) has influenced the way people perform a given task as well as the way they communicate with each other in an organizational setting. The theory shows that technological emergence drives social, economic, political and organizational change (George-Amadi, 2020). The theory sees technology as the basis for modernizing the way human beings perform a given task and relate with others within an organization. The idea behind this theory is that technology changes determine social change i.e.

the way people see things as well as the way they communicate with each other. It is believed that social progress with respect to the way we communicate is driven by technological development (George-Amadi, 2020).

Technological determinism theory believes that technological change is inevitable and as such society needs to keep up with the changes in technology to improve their communication pattern and solve other social problems. The theory questions the degree to which human thoughts and actions are influenced by technology. It tries to explain the degree to which technology has influenced human affairs to the extent that it has been applied in our communication pattern. However, once a technology is introduced into an organization's culture, what follows next is the continuous improvement of that technology. As technology is continuously improved, society embraces the new development and applies them to solve social problems including those related to communication (Adler, 2006).

### Methodology

The design for the study was a survey research design. The survey 'design was preferable to use when the objective of a described investigation centered on opinions, attitudes and perceptions of individuals. The reason for choosing the design is that, the study centered on opinions and perceptions of the respondents on the employers demand of the modern office work skills of the employees. The population of the study consists of 75 employers; made of directors, chief executives, and managers in private and public organizations in Rivers State. The sample size of the study consisted of 75 respondents gotten from the population of 100. The Taro Yamen Formula was used to obtain the sample size. A structured questionnaire was used for data collection. The questionnaire was developed to reflect the research questions. The research questions 1-3 with questionnaire items numbered 1-10 was designed to elicit information from the respondents using a four point liker type scale of "strongly agree", agree, disagree", and strongly disagree. The questionnaire was subjected to face validation using the expertise of the supervisor and three employees from Rivers State University, Port Harcourt. The instrument after the face validation was subjected to one time for reliability test to further evaluate the internal consistency of the questionnaire items. The instrument was administered and retrieved through personal contact by the researcher and research assistants. Research questions were analyzed using frequency tables and mean scores for each response category. For the decision rule, any item that has a mean score that is equal to or greater than ( $>$ ) 2.50 was considered as demanded, while any that is equal or less than ( $>$ ) 2.49 was deemed not to be demanded. The t-test statistics was used to test hypotheses at 05 alpha levels.

### Results

#### Research question 1

To what extent does efficiency in word processing skills influences office documentations of selected organizations in Rivers State?

**Table 1: Mean Responses of employers demand on office documentation and efficiency in word processing skills (N = 75)**

S/N	Office Documentation/Word Processing Skills	Mean	SD	Decision
1	Typing using appropriate finger skills	3.29	0.83	Demanded
2	Search for words/characters as appropriate	3.24	0.86	Demanded
3	Spell check for errors	2.96	1.01	Demanded
4	Recall/retrieve documents	3.29	0.83	Demanded
5	Store documents	2.99	0.83	Demanded

6	Use different word processing package like MS words, word perfect, Word-star	2.51	1.07	Demanded
7	Use communication package like fax	3.12	0.68	Demanded
8	Use communication packages like e- mail	3.16	0.97	Demanded
9	Use communication packages like web browser	2.59	0.62	Demanded
10	Control system against errors, virus and theft etc.	3.68	1.03	Demanded
		<b>3.08</b>		

The above table shows the mean responses of the respondents. The 10 items skills had their mean scores ranging from 2.51 to 3.68 while the cut off mean is 3.08. Therefore, the 10 items skills were all considered by the respondents as word processing office work skills for secretaries in the modern office as demanded by the employers.

### Research question 2

To what extent does effectiveness in interpersonal skills influences human relations in modern business organizations in Rivers State?

**Table 2: Means responses of employers demand on human relation and effectiveness in interpersonal skills (N = 75)**

S/N	Human Relation/Interpersonal Skills	Mean	SD	Decision
11	Accept responsibility for mistakes	3.12	0.68	Demanded
12	Exhibit moral integrity	3.16	0.97	Demanded
13	Obey authorities	2.59	0.62	Demanded
14	Display flexibility in pursuit of knowledge	2.96	1.01	Demanded
15.	Show sensitivity to others	3.29	0.83	Demanded
16.	Being trusted by people	2.99	0.83	Demanded
17.	Handle criticism/disagreement with maturity	3.29	0.83	Demanded
18.	Be able to stay late if there are urgent jobs to be done	2.96	1.01	Demanded
19.	Good public relation with the boss	3.29	0.83	Demanded
20.	Being neatly dressed and polite	2.99	0.83	Demanded
		<b>3.06</b>		

The above table shows the mean responses of the respondents. The 10 item skills had their mean scores ranging from 2.59 to 3.29 while the cut mean is 3.06. To this effect the 10 item skills were all considered by the respondents as human relation/ interpersonal office work skill for business education graduates as demanded by the employers.

### Hypotheses testing

#### Hypothesis 1

There is no significant relationship between knowledge of office documentation and efficiency in word processing skills in modern business organizations in Rivers State.

**Table 3: Comparison of the t-test difference between the mean responses of office male and female employees on their perception on documentation and efficiency in word processing skills of secretaries in modern business organizations**

Groups	N	Mean	Std Dev	Df	t- cal	t-crit
Male	45	3.29	0.83	73	0.38	2.00
Female	30	3.16	0.97			

The table above reveals the t-test statistical procedure for private and public organization responses with respect to the word processing works skills demanded in a modern office. The calculated t-value is 0.38, while the critical value is 2.00. The critical t-value is greater than the calculated value. The null hypothesis as stated is therefore retained that there is no significant difference in the mean responses of the two groups on the word processing office work skills demanded of business education graduate in the modern office.

### Hypothesis 2

There is no significant relationship between the knowledge of human relations and efficiency in interpersonal skills of secretaries in private and public organizations in Rivers State.

**Table 4: Comparison of the t-test difference between the mean responses of human relation and effectiveness in interpersonal skills of secretaries in private and public organizations**

Groups	N	Mean	SD	Df	t-cal value	t-crit value
Male	45	3.16	0.97	73	1.81	2.00
Female	30	2.59	0.62			

The above table reveals the t-test statistical procedure for public and private organizations responses with respect to human relation and interpersonal skills demanded in a modern office. The calculated t-value is 1.81 while the critical value 2.00. The critical t-value is greater than the calculated t-value. The null hypothesis as stated is therefore retained that there is no significant difference in the mean responses of the two groups on human relation/interpersonal skills demanded of working business education graduate in the modern office.

### Discussion of findings

The finding is from research question one, revealed that majority of the respondents agreed that, the identified 10 items word processing office work skills are demanded of secretaries in modern office. This result finding is related to the finding of Ohakwe and Okwuanaso (2006) that computer skills (word processing skills) are highly required of business education graduates. Similarly, Chukwumezie and Ndinechi (2006) revealed that computer skills such as word processing have brought about a lot of improvement and efficiency over the previous manual operations. This finding is also supported by the findings of Enyekit (2021) who identified a high percentage of word processing skills and other computer competencies needed by secretaries in modern business organizations. Research for findings include that working in the office requires relating with both other office staff and callers/visitors of the office. The identified 10 items of interpersonal/human relation office work skills are demanded of employees in the modern office. The result of this finding is related to the finding of Enyekit (2017) that employees lose their jobs because of poor human relation/ interpersonal skills, poor attitudes and liability to adopt to change brought about by technological changes. The finding further reveals that employers or business executives used to request for potential employees who are honest, reliable, punctual, dedicated, pleasant, responsive and free from all vices. This shows that employers place high premium on employees "interpersonal human relation skills".

The finding is also in agreement with Aghenta (2009) that inculcation of interpersonal human relation skills produce, disciplined, hardworking broadminded, selfless and patriotic citizens who would help build a strong and virile nation.

### Conclusion

The following conclusions were drawn based on the findings of the study. The study revealed that the employers in their opinions rated the identified cluster skills of word processing office work skills, human relation/interpersonal skills office work skills of employees in the modern office. Computer skills (word processing skills) are highly required of secretaries for working in modern offices.

### Recommendations

From the findings of this research, it is recommended that;

1. The curricula of the office education programmes in tertiary institutions are to be reviewed to include the identified skills which represent the needs of the employers.
2. The ministry of education and the national commission for colleges of education may use the findings of this research to organize seminars, conferences and workshops for retaining of teachers in office education field.
3. Facilities provided in the various institutions should also embrace the present state of information technology such that the transition from school to work place by the graduates will be easy.

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