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Secretarial Performance and the Gender Question (A Study of Selected Tertiary Institutions in Rivers State.

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Abstract: *The research was mounted to investigate how gender impacted on the job performance of the secretary. Secretaries working in two State owned Universities in Rivers State, Nigeria were used. The population was 102 and sample was 32. One questionnaire designed to elicit information from administrators on the performance activities of their secretaries was used. Four null hypotheses bothering on critical job areas of the secretary were formulated. The areas covered included computer operation and data processing; organizing and covering of meetings, supervision of other staff; and handling of office materials and equipment. The chi-square parametric test was applied in testing the hypotheses at 0.05 alpha level. Results revealed that the calculated chi-square value for all the hypotheses were greater than the critical table values indicating that there are significant differences in the job performance of male and female secretaries in the job areas so investigated. A further breakdown of the data revealed that while the male secretaries were better in computer operation and data processing, and in organizing and covering meetings, the female secretaries were better in the areas of supervision of staff and handling of materials and equipment.*

Keywords: *Administrators, Gender, Job Performance, Office Materials & Secretaries*

I. Introduction

Gender equality and inequality has become topical in recent discourse in various areas of endeavour. It is common fact that the issue of gender appears to favour men in all areas where they are mentioned. Perhaps because it is generally believed that men possess more skill and ability endeavours.

It is common knowledge that the job of a Secretary is usually referred to as a females' job even when we have many men also doing the job. Even advertisement and recruitment of Secretaries in many organizations – public or private favour women. Today's Secretary is no longer the typist and shorthand writer of old. There is widespread evidence to prove that today's Secretary operates more like information manager than a coffee-fetching waiter.

Even when women seem to dominate the Secretarial field, men were the first entrants. Ogbondah (2014) posit that men were in ancient times and all through the middle ages, the ones who developed the shorthand, took notes, handled correspondences and administrative duties and otherwise assisted leaders in confidential matters from the 1860s to the late 1870s.

Ogbondah went on to assert that it was until the industrial revolution and the development of the typewriter during the 1860s and 1880s that women began to get involved into stenographic positions, and diminished male dominance.

The recent development in information and communication technology and the introduction of computer-based technology into Secretarial job put male and female gender side by side in the secretarial workplace. Here lies the need to consider and measure performance of secretaries along gender lines.

II. The Problem

With the preponderance of male and female practitioners of the Secretarial profession, one wonders what influences gender choice among employers of labour. Whereas female secretaries are seen as more humble, cautious, better dressed, more pleasant, the men on the other hand appear more creative, more skilled, could put in extra hours and can work under any amount of pressure. Whereas men's strength and ability could be undermined by their non-succulent nature, women secretaries could also be hampered by other exigencies like lateness, truancy due to pregnancy and childbirth.

The big questions still remain unanswered in terms of general duty performance, who is better? What are the major duties of the Secretary? Over and above theoretical formulations, in practical terms which of the genders perform more? Who is a better Secretary – Male or female?

III. Related Reading

Job performance relates to the worker's ability to accomplish set objectives and responsibilities associated with the position. We must accept here at first instance that in the present day workplace, there is no particular task that is seen as the exclusive reserve of any gender. Men and women compete for recognition in almost all life endeavours (Otamiri, 2011).

Whereas the above assertion stands true, Ewubare (2004) posit that women all over the world and more in developing countries of Africa are highly discriminated. According to her, women are under-utilized, under-represented in the socio-economic structure, neglected and indeed oppressed. Anele (2008) commenting on intellectual bias and gender, observed that a lot of men believe that because majority of the world's renowned scientists and intellectuals are men, therefore men must be intellectually superior to women. Nowell and Hedges, (1998) and Ballatine (2001) also argue that gender differences in education and performance persist even in developed countries of the world even after several decades of intense scrutiny and policy change.

Unger and Crawford (1992) developed two theoretical perspectives for the discussion of gender differences in occupational performance. According to them, the first perspective views gender as an individual property that is correlated with occupational and job variables and the individual differences between men and women as a result of these correlates. They observed that sex is a career variable for differences in experience and personal history that determine the difference obtained. By this perspective, Unger and Crawford (1992) assert that when the correlates of gender are controlled, differences between men and women in the workplace disappear.

The second perspective in their view treats gender not only as a property that individuals bring with them to the workplace, but also as an institutionalized character of the workplace, of occupations and occupational environments. But Acker (2000) sounding rather more succinctly, opined that only efficient and competent persons should handle the position of Secretary in organizations and discrimination against the females based on old conceived belief in gender inequality should be discouraged.

Hall and Rabinowitz (1970) had much earlier posited that it is not the person's sex that determines the job performance of work. Some employers prefer male Secretaries due to their steadiness in the performance of their job, while others prefer female Secretaries because of the good qualities they possess. They concluded that job performance is not a gender attribute and that employers should employ Secretaries based on qualification, experience and skills.

IV. Methodology

The study adopted the descriptive survey design, which focused on determining how gender impacted on the job performance of Secretaries in the employ of tertiary institutions in Rivers State. The population comprised of One Hundred and Two (102) male and female Secretaries in Rivers State University of Science and Technology and Ignatius Ajuru University of Education. The sample stood at 32 made of 16 males and 16 females.

Four research hypotheses were formulated for the study to cover specific areas of the Secretary's task namely – computer operation and Data processing; handling of office materials and equipment; supervision of office staff and organizing and covering meetings. The hypotheses read thus:

(1) There is no significant difference in the performance of male and female Secretaries in Computer Operation and Data Processing.
(2) There is no significant difference in the performance of male and female Secretaries in handling office materials and equipment.
(3) There is no significant difference in the performance of male and female secretaries in the supervision of office staff.
(4) There is no significant difference in the performance of male and female Secretaries in organizing and covering meetings.

To gather data for the research, a questionnaire was designed with statements of activity of the Secretary in the chosen variables and on a four-point likert scale of Not all (1); Sometimes (2); Frequently (3); Very Frequently (4); In the analysis of the research, data collected through responses given in the instrument were classified, tabulated and analysed using percentages. The chi-square method was applied in testing the hypotheses to determine whether to accept or reject any of the hypotheses. The formula for calculating the chi-square is given as follows:-

$$X^2 = \frac{\sum (Fo - Fe)^2}{Fe}$$

Where Fo = Observed frequency
Fe = expected frequency
$\sum$ = Sum of

X^2 = Value of chi-square

To calculate the expected Frequency (Fe)

$$Fe = \frac{\text{Row total X Column total}}{\text{Grand total (GT)}}$$

Degree of freedom is established by

$$DF = (R - 1)(C - 1)$$

Where

R = Number of Rows
C = Number of columns

Assumed level of significance is 50% or 0.05 alpha level.

V. Decision Rule

If the calculated chi-square value is greater than the table value, the null hypothesis is rejected, while it is accepted if the calculated value is less than the table value.

VI. Results

The results from the data generated and analysed using the chi-square are presented here-under. For easier understanding of the presentation, the results are presented along the line of the hypotheses tested. Decisions reached according to the decision rule are specified after every analysis.

Hypothesis One (1): There is no significant difference in the performance of male and female Secretaries in Computer Operation and Data Processing

Computer Operation and Data Processing

S/No	Questions	NA	S	F	VF	Total
1.	Does perfect typing, typesetting, formatting	-	4	12	9	25
2.	Excellent in spread sheet and excel	2	6	15	2	25
3.	Very competent in Internet, www and Networking	4	4	13	4	25
4.	Excellent in social network applications	1	4	9	11	25
5.	Efficient in handling of correspondence	5	4	14	2	25

Cell	O	E	O-E	$(O-E)^2/\sum$
	-		-	-
	2	(6 x 25) ÷ 125 = 1.2	0.8	0.533
	4	(6 x 25) ÷ 125 = 1.2	2.8	6.533
	1	(6 x 25) ÷ 125 = 1.2	-0.2	0.033
	5	(6 x 25) ÷ 125 = 1.2	3.8	12.033
	4	(22 x 25) ÷ 125 = 4.4	-0.4	0.036
	6	(22 x 25) ÷ 125 = 4.4	1.6	0.582
	4	(22 x 25) ÷ 125 = 4.4	-0.4	0.036
	4	(22 x 25) ÷ 125 = 4.4	-0.4	0.036
	4	(22 x 25) ÷ 125 = 4.4	-0.4	0.036
	12	(63 x 25) ÷ 125 = 12.6	0.6	0.29
	15	(63 x 25) ÷ 125 = 12.6	-2.4	0.457
	13	(63 x 25) ÷ 125 = 12.6	0.4	0.013
	9	(63 x 25) ÷ 125 = 12.6	-3.6	0.156
	14	(63 x 25) ÷ 125 = 12.6	1.4	2.064
	9	(28 x 25) ÷ 125 = 5.6	3.4	2.314
	2	(28 x 25) ÷ 125 = 5.6	-3.6	0.457
	4	(28 x 25) ÷ 125 = 5.6	-1.6	5.207
	11	(28 x 25) ÷ 125 = 5.6	5.4	2.314
	2	(28 x 25) ÷ 125 = 5.6	-3.6	2.314
		Total		**35.444**

Computed (calculated) X^2 = 35.444
Degree of freedom (df) = (R – 1) (C – 1)
= (5 – 1) (4 – 1)
4 x 3
= 12
Significant level 5% = 0.05
Critical value = 21.03

Using the table given in Appendix B, the percentage critical value at 12 degrees of freedom is 21.03 our observed value of X^2 is 35.444 and this is greater than the 5% critical value. $X^2 > X^2$ 0.05, 12 i.e. X2 > 35.444.

Decision Rule
Accept Null hypothesis (Ho) if X^2 < critical value
Reject Null hypothesis (ho) if X^2 > critical value.

However, the computed or calculated value of X^2 is 35.444 which is greater than critical value of 12.03. Therefore, we reject Null hypothesis (Ho) and accept Alternate hypothesis (H_A) which means that there is significant difference in the performance of male and female secretaries in Computer Operation and Data processing. Further examination of the Data shows that male secretaries perform better than the female secretaries in Computer operation and Data processing.

Hypothesis Two (2): There is no significant difference in the performance of male and female Secretaries in Organizing and Covering Meetings.

VII. Organizing and Covering Meetings

S/No	Questions	NA	S	F	VF	Total
6.	Proper handling of meeting notices	-	9	11	5	25
7.	Competent in preparation and distribution of agenda	4	6	7	8	25
8.	Covers meetings competently (shorthand/longhand)	5	5	10	5	25
9.	Efficient production and distribution of minutes of meeting	2	4	15	4	25
10.	Excellent drafting of motions and resolutions	5	6	10	4	25
	Total	**16**	**30**	**53**	**36**	**125**

Cell	O	E	O-E	$(O-E)^2/\sum$
	-		-	-
	4	(16 x 25) ÷ 125 = 6.7	-2.7	1.088
	5	(16 x 25) ÷ 125 = 6.7	1.8	1.013
	2	(16 x 25) ÷ 125 = 6.7	0.8	0.2
	5	(16 x 25) ÷ 125 = 6.7	1.8	1.013
	9	(30 x 25) ÷ 125 = 6	3	1.5
	6	(30 x 25) ÷ 125 = 6	0	0
	5	(30 x 25) ÷ 125 = 6	-1	0.167
	4	(30 x 25) ÷ 125 = 6	-2	0.667
	6	(30 x 25) ÷ 125 = 6	0	0
	11	(53 x 25) ÷ 125 = 10.6	0.4	0.015
	7	(53 x 25) ÷ 125 = 10.6	-3.6	1.223
	10	(53 x 25) ÷ 125 = 10.6	-0.6	0.033
	15	(53 x 25) ÷ 125 = 10.6	4.4	1.826
	10	(53 x 25) ÷ 125 = 10.6	-0.6	0.034
	5	(26 x 25) ÷ 125 = 5.2	-0.2	7.692
	8	(26 x 25) ÷ 125 = 5.2	2.8	1.508
	5	(26 x 25) ÷ 125 = 5.2	2.8	7.692
	4	(26 x 25) ÷ 125 = 5.2	-0.2	0.277
	4	(26 x 25) ÷ 125 = 5.2	-1.2	0.277
		Total		**26.225**

Computed (calculated) X^2 = 26.225
Degree of freedom (df) = (R – 1) (C – 1)
= (5 – 1) (4 – 1)
4 x 3
= 12
Significant level 5% = 0.05
Critical value = 21.03

Using the table given in Appendix B, the percentage critical value at 12 degrees of freedom is 21.03 our observed value of X^2 is 26.225 and this is greater than the 5% critical value. $X^2 > X^2$ 0.05, 12 i.e. X2 > 26.225.

Decision Rule
Accept Null hypothesis (Ho) if X^2 < critical value
Reject Null hypothesis (ho) if X^2 > critical value.

However, the computed or calculated value of X^2 is 26.225 which is greater than critical value of 12.03. Therefore, we reject Null hypothesis (Ho) and accept Alternate hypothesis (H_A) which means that there is

significant difference in the performance of male and female secretaries in Organizing and covering meetings. From the data presented and analysed, it could be concluded that male Secretaries performed better than female Secretaries in Organizing and covering meetings.

Hypothesis Three (3): There is no significant difference in the performance of male and female Secretaries in Supervision of other staff.

Supervision of other staff

S/No	Questions	NA	S	F	VF	Total
11.	Keep and maintain proper attendance register	-	4	6	15	25
12.	Ensures punctuality and regularity of staff	1	2	9	13	25
13.	Carries out proper appraisal of staff	7	8	4	6	25
14.	Effective discharge of responsibilities	3	10	9	3	25
15.	Effective coordination of work assignment in office	2	5	10	8	25
	Total	**13**	**29**	**38**	**45**	**125**

Cell	O	E	O-E	$(O-E)^2/\sum$
	-		-	-
	1	(13 x 25) ÷ 125 = 2.6	-1.6	0.985
	7	(13 x 25) ÷ 125 = 2.6	4.4	7.446
	3	(13 x 25) ÷ 125 = 2.6	0.4	0.062
	2	(13 x 25) ÷ 125 = 2.6	-0.6	0.138
	4	(29 x 25) ÷ 125 = 5.8	-1.8	0.559
	2	(29 x 25) ÷ 125 = 5.8	-3.8	2.490
	8	(29 x 25) ÷ 125 = 5.8	2.2	0.834
	10	(29 x 25) ÷ 125 = 5.8	4.2	3.041
	5	(29 x 25) ÷ 125 = 5.8	-0.8	0.441
	6	(38 x 25) ÷ 125 = 7.6	-1.6	0.337
	9	(38 x 25) ÷ 125 = 7.6	1.4	0.258
	4	(38 x 25) ÷ 125 = 7.6	-3.6	1.705
	9	(38 x 25) ÷ 125 = 7.6	1.4	0.258
	10	(38 x 25) ÷ 125 = 7.6	2.4	0.758
	15	(45 x 25) ÷ 125 = 9	6	4
	13	(45 x 25) ÷ 125 = 9	4	1.778
	6	(45 x 25) ÷ 125 = 9	-3	1
	3	(45 x 25) ÷ 125 = 9	-6	4
	8	(45 x 25) ÷ 125 = 9	-1	111
		Total		**30.201**

Computed (calculated) X^2 = 30.201
Degree of freedom (df) = (R – 1) (C – 1)
= (5 – 1) (4 – 1)
4 x 3
= 12
Significant level 5% = 0.05
Critical value = 21.03

Using the table given in Appendix B, the percentage critical value at 12 degrees of freedom is 21.03 our observed value of X^2 is 30.201 and this is greater than the 5% critical value. $X^2 > X^2$ 0.05, 12 i.e. X2 > 30.201.

Decision Rule
Accept Null hypothesis (Ho) if X^2 < critical value
Reject Null hypothesis (Ho) if X^2 > critical value.

However, the computed or calculated value of X^2 is 30.201 which is greater than critical value of 12.03. Therefore, we reject Null hypothesis (Ho) and accept Alternate hypothesis (H_A) which means that there is significant difference in the performance of male and female secretaries in the supervision of office staff. A closer examination of the analysis revealed that the female Secretaries performed better than male Secretaries in Staff Supervision and Control.

Hypothesis Four (4): There is no significant difference in the performance of male and female Secretaries in the Handling of Office Materials and Equipment.

Handling of Office Materials & Equipment

S/No	Questions	NA	S	F	VF	Total
16.	Keep proper inventory of materials and supply	4	4	10	7	25
17.	Ensure orderly and decent use of office equipment	-	4	13	8	25
18.	Effective at economic order quantity	4	6	10	5	25
19.	Effective at office supply management	1	6	6	12	25
20.	Proper arrangement and use of equipment	2	2	11	10	25
	Total	**11**	**22**	**50**	**42**	**125**

Cell	O	E	O-E	$(O-E)^2/\sum$
	4	(11 x 25) ÷ 125 = 22	-18	14.73
	-	(11 x 25) ÷ 125 = 22	-22	22
	4	(11 x 25) ÷ 125 = 22	-18	14.73
	1	(11 x 25) ÷ 125 = 22	-21	20.05
	2	(11 x 25) ÷ 125 = 22	-20	18.18
	4	(22 x 25) ÷ 125 = 44	-40	36.36
	4	(22 x 25) ÷ 125 = 44	-40	36.36
	6	(22 x 25) ÷ 125 = 44	-38	32.82
	6	(22 x 25) ÷ 125 = 44	-38	32.82
	2	(22 x 25) ÷ 125 = 44	-42	40.10
	10	(50 x 25) ÷ 125 = 10	0	0
	13	(50 x 25) ÷ 125 = 10	3	0.9
	10	(50 x 25) ÷ 125 = 10	0	0
	6	(50 x 25) ÷ 125 = 10	-4	1.6
	11	(50 x 25) ÷ 125 = 10	1	0.1
	7	(42 x 25) ÷ 125 = 8.4	-1.4	0.233
	8	(42 x 25) ÷ 125 = 8.4	-0.4	0.019
	5	(42 x 25) ÷ 125 = 8.4	-3.4	1.376
	12	(42 x 25) ÷ 125 = 8.4	3.6	1.543
	10	(42 x 25) ÷ 125 = 8.4	1.6	0.305
		Total		**274.226**

Computed (calculated) X^2 = 274.226
Degree of freedom (df) = (R – 1) (C – 1)
= (5 – 1) (4 – 1)
4 x 3
= 12
Significant level 5% = 0.05
Critical value = 21.03

Using the table given above, the percentage critical value at 12 degrees of freedom is 21.03 our observed value of X^2 is 274.226 and this is greater than the 5% critical value. $X^2 > X^2$ 0.05, 12 i.e. X2 > 274.226.

Decision Rule
Accept Null hypothesis (Ho) if X^2 < critical value
Reject Null hypothesis (Ho) if X^2 > critical value.

However, the computed or calculated value of X^2 is 274.226 which is greater than critical value of 12.03. Therefore, we reject Null hypothesis (Ho) and accept Alternate hypothesis (H_A) which means that there is significant difference in the performance of male and female secretaries in handling of office materials and equipment. Further examination of the results showed that female Secretaries were better in the handling of office materials and equipment than male Secretaries.

VIII. Findings and Conclusions

Consequent upon the data generated for this study and the subsequent testing of the four hypotheses raised, the following findings and conclusions were reached.

(1) It was revealed that there exist a significant difference in the performance of male and female Secretaries in Computer Operation and Data Processing. From the results it was revealed that male Secretaries performed more than the females in Computer Operation and Word Processing.
(2) It is hereby concluded that there exist a significant difference in the job performance of male and female Secretaries in the handling of office materials and equipment. Further examination of data revealed that female Secretaries do better in this respect than the males.
(3) It was concluded that there is a significant difference in the job performance of male and female Secretaries in Staff Supervision and Control.
(4) The research concluded that there exist a significant difference between the job performance of male and female Secretaries in organizing and covering meetings. It was however found that male Secretaries performed better in this respect than female Secretaries.

Conclusively, the research assets that there really exist some significant differences in the job performance of male and female Secretaries. It therefore follows that gender was a factor in the determination of job performance of Secretaries.

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