



## **EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS NEEDED BY SECRETARIES OF SMALL SCALE ENTERPRISES FOR JOB PERFORMANCE IN ENUGU STATE**

**<sup>1</sup>DR. I. C. EZEABII**

Department of Business Education, Faculty of Education, Enugu State University of Science and Technology (ESUT), Enugu, Enugu State, Nigeria.  
[ijeoma.ezeabii@esut.edu.ng](mailto:ijeoma.ezeabii@esut.edu.ng)

**<sup>2</sup>DR. A. C. EKOH-NWEKE**

Dept. of Educational Management (Business Education Programme), College of Education, Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike, Abia State, Nigeria,  
[ekohangela@yahoo.com](mailto:ekohangela@yahoo.com)

**<sup>3</sup>OKONKWO A. J.**

Department of Business Education, Faculty of Education, Enugu State University of Science and Technology (ESUT), Enugu, Enugu State, Nigeria

### **Abstract**

*The main purpose of the study was to determine the employability skills needed by secretaries of small scale enterprises for job performance in Enugu State. The study was guided by two research questions and two null hypotheses. A descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The population for the study was 1978 registered small and medium scale enterprise managers in Enugu State. Sample size of 333 was obtained from the registered small scale business enterprise managers using Taro Yamane formula for finite figure. The instrument used for data collection was a 17 item questionnaire grouped into two sections. The instrument was validated and reliability of the instrument was determined using Cronbach Alpha which yielded 0.82. Out of 333 copies of the questionnaire distributed 324 were properly filled and returned representing 97.30% return rate. Mean, standard deviation and t-test statistics were the statistical tools used. From the result of data analysis, the study identified word processing skills and communication skills to be highly needed by the secretaries of small scale businesses. The findings of the study showed that there is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female managers of small scale enterprises with respect to word processing and communication skills needed by secretaries for job performance in Enugu State. Based on the findings, recommendations were made which include; administrators of institutions of higher learning should increase funding and emphasis on ICT to train future secretaries on information technology for effective job performance.*

**Keywords:** Employability skill, small scale enterprises, secretaries



## **Introduction**

Small scale businesses are sources of livelihood to many people in Nigeria. According to Hatten (2012) small scale businesses include business activities that are independently owned, operated and financed by one or two persons and has fewer than hundred employees. These include; cassava producing business, plastic manufacturing business, soap and pomade production among others. Alaye-Ogan (2012) defined a small scale business as components with capital base between twenty thousand naira. The Nigeria industrial development bank (NIDB) according to Igwe (2015) defined small scale businesses as enterprises with project cost not exceeding seven hundred and fifty thousand naira.

From the above small scale business is a business which is owned, managed and financed by one or two persons that have a relatively small market share and employ less than fifty (50) workers or persons. Nwobibia (2012) state that small businesses play some defined roles in the economy. They support and strengthen the growth of a nation and are very crucial to the citizens' healthy living. Also, small scale businesses are indispensable to nation's success and growth. There are many small scale enterprises in Enugu State.

Enugu State is one of the 36 states in Nigeria. It is made up of 17 local government areas. Citizens of Enugu State are enterprising hence the proliferation of small scale enterprises in the state. Those enterprises have both male and female secretaries that work in them. Ezeabii (2017) However, one is not sure if gender is a determinant factor for job performance. For small scale enterprises to perform well and achieve stated objectives, they need efficient secretaries.

A secretary is a personal assistant or administrative assistant in a society or organization who deals with a lot of duties which includes; handling of correspondences, managing budgets, book-keeping, attending telephone calls, handling visitors, maintaining websites, among others. Spencer (2011) defined a secretary as an office-staff who combines the mastery of secretarial skills of typewriting and shorthand with office routine functions. Agomuo (2014) defined the duties of a secretary as:

- i. Helping new employees and visitors to find their way around the organizations.
- ii. Manage customer files and other records in an office.
- iii. Handle incoming and outgoing phone calls and mail correspondence.
- iv. Copy documents for mailing or internal distribution.
- v. Perform clerical tasks and errands to assist others by cancelling or rescheduling appointments, ordering office supplies, taking notes during meeting and getting drink for guests, and
- vi. Support the manager or managers in an organization.

Some secretaries cannot effectively perform their functions or do what is expected of them in the office due to lack of education, skills and interest. If a secretary is not excellent in spellings and grammar or cannot type quickly and accurately, or relate with customers or visitors well or have the knowledge of computer software programs, such secretary cannot perform well, in any organization he finds himself. Okoli (2015) opined that a qualified secretary should have a wide knowledge of business acumen, versatile knowledge in accounting, personnel matters, office practice, communication and inside knowledge of the operation of all departments within the organization where he works, unlike a half-baked secretary who possesses only knowledge of shorthand, typewriting and basic office practices. Moreover, for a secretary to perform well in his job and achieve stated objectives he needs to be well trained in various skills which include; managerial, communication, technical skills etc. Job performance of secretary could be assessed through their impact in achieving the organizational outcomes and success. Campbell (2016) describes job performance as an

---



individual level variable or something a single person does. Some of the criteria's for job performance include; initiative, attendance, attitude, communication skills, focus, improvement from previous evaluation, integrity, level of knowledge, quality of work, reliability, stress management, team work etc. Therefore, for a secretary to perform well in a small business organization, he must be conversant with these criteria and possess competent skills needed.

Skill is an ability to do something well, gained through training and expectance. Skills involve a practical knowledge and ability to perform a function which could be acquired or learnt in the school or training centres through learning experience. Skills according to Mbah and Umurhurhu (2016) are the ability to make purposeful movements that are necessary to complete or master a particular task. Skill is a learned responses, often as a result of specific training which afford someone the ability to perform a particular task and achieve a particular objective. Agomuo (2014) also listed some of the skills needed by secretaries to perform well in the business organization to include: Good organization skills, Good time management, Good communication skills (written and verbal), Discretion, Confidence with information technology (IT) and computer packages, Accuracy and good attention to details, An ability to stay calm and tactful under pressure and Self-motivation. These skills when possessed makes a secretary employable.

Employability according to Okoli (2015) depicts the condition or situation of being ready for employment or ready to be employed, having acquired the necessary skills and tools for such employment. Therefore, employability skills are those skills acquired through education and training which enable one who acquired them to secure related employment easily, retain and progress on the job. Some of the employability skills include communication and word processing skills. Examples of communication skills are typing and computer skills, accounting skills among others. Ezeabii, Nwokike and Jim (2018) stated that communication skills are needed by secretaries of business organizations as they are coordinators of daily routines of an office and organizes the office schedules and paper works. In essence, secretaries need the skills for job performance. The secretaries need certain communication skills to deliver instruction to the students. Okoli (2017) noted that communication skills have become a challenge in the service delivery of secretaries of small scale businesses especially when verbal and non-verbal communication skills are needed. Apart from communication skills, word processing skills are also needed.

Agomuo (2014) explained that the contemporary office workers are required to acquire broad based skills in computer application and information technology. Okoli (2015) opined that every secretary entering the labour market today needs to understand the importance of word processing in carrying out office functions.

It is absurd that some of these small scale enterprise secretaries even in Enugu State are not performing well in the organization. According to Igwe (2015) some secretaries in small scale enterprises are copy typists in the sense that they are not excellent in spellings and grammar skills. Some of them do not type fast and accurately, some lack good customer relationship and this affects their performances in the organizations. Some secretaries are not conversant with varieties of computer software programs. All these deficiencies lead to non-achievement of the objectives of the enterprises. Does it mean that these secretaries do not possess the needed employability skills for job performance? Therefore, this research work sought to determine the employability skills needed by small scale enterprises secretaries for job performance in Enugu State.



## **Research Questions**

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What are the word processing skills needed by secretaries of small scale enterprises for job performance in Enugu State?
2. What are the communication skills needed by secretaries of small scale enterprises for job performance in Enugu State?

## **Hypotheses**

The following null hypotheses tested at .05 level of significance guided the study:

- H<sub>01</sub> There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female managers of small scale enterprises with respect to word processing skills needed by secretaries for job performance in Enugu State.
- H<sub>02</sub> A significant difference does not exist between the mean ratings of male and female managers of small scale enterprises with respect to communication skills needed by secretaries for job performance in Enugu State.

## **Method**

The study adopted a descriptive survey design. This design according to Nworgu (2015) is one in which group of people or items are studied by collecting and analysing data from only a few people or items considered being representative of the entire group. The design was considered appropriate for the study as sample of managers of registered small scale enterprises was used for the study and the result inferred to the entire population. The population used for the study was 1,978 registered small and medium scale managers in Enugu State. Taro Yamane formula for finite figure was used to determine the sample size of 333 registered small scale business managers.

The instrument used for data collection was a 17 item questionnaire grouped into two sections according to the research questions that guided the study. The items were structured in four point rating scale of Very Highly Needed, Highly Needed, Slightly Needed and Not Needed with weighting numerical values of 4, 3, 2 and 1 respectively. The instrument was validated and the reliability of the instrument was determined by administering copies of the validated instrument to secretaries of small scale business enterprises in Anambra State and their responses were analysed using Cronbach Alpha which yielded 0.82. The researchers and two trained research assistants distributed and collected the copies of the questionnaire. Out of 333 copies of the questionnaire distributed 324 were properly filled and returned representing 97.30% return rate. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions while t-test statistics was used to test the null hypothesis using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS). The decision was based under the principle of upper and lower limit of the mean. Thus:

4.00 – 3.50	Very Highly Needed	(VHN)
3.49 - 2.50	Highly Needed	(HN)
2.49 - 1.50	Slightly Needed	(SN)
1.49 - 1.00	Not Needed	(NN)

The null hypothesis was rejected when the significant value is less than the 0.05 level of significance and when the significant value is more than the 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis was not rejected.



## Results

The result of the study is presented according to the research questions and hypotheses that guided the study.

### Research Question 1

What are the word processing skills needed by secretaries of small scale enterprises for job performance in Enugu State?

**Table 1:** Mean ratings and standard deviation of the respondents on the word processing skills needed by secretaries of small scale enterprises for job performance in Enugu State

S/N	ITEMS	Male		Female		Overall		Decision
		N = 201		N = 123		N = 324		
	Word Processing skills needed by secretaries of small scale enterprises include ability to:	$\bar{x}_1$	SD <sub>1</sub>	$\bar{x}_2$	SD <sub>2</sub>	$\bar{x}_G$	SD <sub>G</sub>	
1	Type documents	3.46	0.50	3.43	0.49	3.44	0.50	HN
2	Edit documents	3.07	0.90	3.13	0.87	3.12	0.87	HN
3	Proof read documents	2.88	0.57	2.90	0.57	2.89	0.57	HN
4	Save documents	3.18	0.95	3.25	0.90	3.23	0.92	HN
5	Preparing official reports	3.08	0.88	3.18	0.51	3.15	0.87	HN
6	Arrange documents in computer	3.46	0.65	3.26	0.86	3.36	0.74	HN
7	Retrieve documents from	3.33	0.74	3.12	0.67	3.23	0.75	HN
8	Delete documents from computer	3.20	0.56	3.13	0.58	3.18	0.59	HN
	<b>ClusterMean/SD</b>	<b>3.21</b>	<b>0.72</b>	<b>3.18</b>	<b>0.68</b>	<b>3.20</b>	<b>0.73</b>	HN

*X = Mean; SD = Standard Deviation; N = Number of Respondents HN = Highly Needed*



The result of data analysis presented in Table 1 above shows that the overall mean rating of the respondents ranged from 2.89 to 3.44 for the eight items showing that the word processing skills were needed by secretaries of small scale enterprises for job performance in Enugu State. The cluster mean of 3.20 further indicates highly needed. The aggregate standard deviation of 0.73 shows that the respondents have similar opinions to all the items.

### **Hypothesis 1**

There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female managers of small scale enterprises with respect to word processing skills needed by secretaries for job performance in Enugu State.

**Table 2:** Summary of t-test analysis of mean rating of male and female managers of small scale enterprises with respect to word processing skills needed by secretaries for job performance in Enugu State

Variables	N	t	df	Sig. (2tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Decision
Male	201						
Female	123	1.385	324	.208	4.02200	2.17991	NS

The result of t-test analysis presented in Table 2 shows that the t-value at 0.05 level of significance and 324 degree of freedom for the eight items is 1.385 with a significant value of 0.208. Since the significant value of 0.208 is more than the 0.05 level of significant the null hypothesis is not significant. This depicts that there is no significant difference with regards to the eight items on the mean ratings of male and female managers of small scale enterprises with respect to word processing skills needed by secretaries for job performance in Enugu State.

### **Research Question 2**

What are the communication skills needed by secretaries of small scale enterprises for job performance in Enugu State?

**Table 3:** Mean ratings and standard deviation of the respondents on the communication skills needed by secretaries of small scale enterprises for job performance in Enugu State



S/N	ITEMS Communication skills needed by secretaries of small scale enterprises for job performance include ability to:	Male N= 201		Female N= 123		Overall 324		Decision
		$\bar{x}_1$	SD <sub>1</sub>	$\bar{x}_2$	SD <sub>2</sub>	$\bar{x}_{1G}$	SD <sub>G</sub>	
9	Speak the business language	3.31	0.71	3.42	0.70	3.37	0.69	HN
10	Listen attentively	3.29	0.84	3.44	0.73	3.34	0.78	HN
11	Write business language	3.27	0.66	3.31	0.53	3.33	0.62	HN
12	Retain the attention of audience	3.12	0.86	3.20	0.63	3.15	0.77	HN
13	Write mailable letters	3.18	0.92	3.30	0.67	3.25	0.85	HN
14	Answer oral communication appropriately	3.11	0.75	3.29	0.71	3.21	0.73	HN
15	Speak English fluently	3.15	0.83	3.17	0.66	3.24	0.77	HN
16	Answer telephone calls	3.20	0.82	3.32	0.67	3.27	0.77	HN
17	Write minutes of meetings	3.42	0.49	3.46	0.49	3.45	0.49	HN
18	Reply business correspondences	3.29	0.97	3.37	0.64	3.33	0.71	HN
	<b>Cluster Mean/SD</b>	<b>3.23</b>	<b>0.79</b>	<b>3.33</b>	<b>0.64</b>	<b>3.29</b>	<b>0.72</b>	<b>HN</b>

*X = Mean; SD= Standard Deviation; N= Number of Respondents HN= Highly Needed*

The result of presented in Table 3 above depicts that the overall mean ratings of the respondents ranges from 3.15 to 3.45 for the 10 items showing that the items are the communication skills needed by secretaries of small scale enterprises for job performance. The cluster mean of 3.29 further indicates highly needed. The low standard deviation of 0.72 shows that the respondents have consensus opinions to the items as the communication skills needed by secretaries of small scale enterprises for job performance in Enugu State.

### Hypothesis 2

A significant difference does not exist between the mean ratings of male and female managers of small scale enterprises with respect to word processing skills needed by secretaries for job performance in Enugu State.

**Table 4:** Summary of t-test analysis of mean ratings of male and female managers of small scale enterprises with respect to word processing skills needed by secretaries for job performance in Enugu State

Variables	N	t	df	Sig. (2tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Decision
<b>Male</b>	201						
<b>Female</b>	123	1.325	322	.889	4.0730	3.79681	NS

The result of t-text analysis presented in Table 4 shows that the t-value at 0.05 level of significance and 322 degree of freedom for the nine items is 1.325 with a significant value of 0.889. Since the significant value of 0.889 is more than the .05 level of significance the nullhypothesis is not significant. This indicates that there is no significant difference with regards to the 10 items on the mean ratings of male and female managers



of small scale enterprises with respect to word processing skills needed by secretaries for job performance in Enugu State.

### **Discussion of Findings**

The findings of the study according to research question one showed that word processing skills needed by secretaries of small scale enterprises for job performance include ability to type documents, edit documents, proof read documents, save documents, prepare official reports, arrange documents in computer, retrieve document from computer and delete documents from computer. This indicated that small scale enterprises need competent secretaries that will possess the identified skills in word processing. This finding is consistent with that of Agomuo (2014) who explained that the contemporary office worker are required to acquire broad based skills in computer application and the knowledge of information technology. This finding is also in consonance with that of Okoli (2015) who opined that every secretary entering the labour market today needs to understand the importance of word processing in carrying out office functions. Also, the findings of the study showed that there was no significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female managers of small scale enterprises with respect to word processing skills needed by secretaries for job performance in Enugu State. This agreed with the observation of Ezeabii (2017) that sex roles and professional status do not affect possession of skills. This means that gender of a secretary had no influence on the skills they ought to possess.

Further, the findings of the study on research question two depicted that the communication skills needed by secretaries of small scale enterprises for job performance includes ability to speak the business language, listen attentively, write business language, retain the attention of audience, write mailable letters, answer oral communication appropriately, speak English fluently, answer telephone calls, write minutes of meetings and reply business correspondences. The findings of the study indicated that secretaries of small scale businesses are expected to have adequate knowledge of communication skills in order to perform their job properly. The finding of the study was in congruence with Ezeabii, Nwokike and Jim (2018) stated that communication skills are needed by secretaries of business organizations as they are coordinators of daily routines of an office and organizes the office schedules and paper works. In essence, secretaries need the skills for job performance. The findings on the null hypothesis indicated that there was no significant difference on the mean ratings of male and female managers of small scale enterprises with respect to communication skills needed by secretaries for job performance in Enugu State. The implication of no significant difference was that gender of the respondents had no influence on the identified communication skills.

### **Conclusion**

The study investigated the employability skills needed by secretaries in small scale businesses for job performance. The study identified employability skills in word processing and communication as to be highly needed by secretaries of small scale enterprises for job performance in Enugu State. This implies that for effective job performance in the contemporary society, the skills are highly needed and training for their acquisition should not be gender biased. In other words, graduate seeking for employment in small scale businesses as secretaries need to acquire among other things the enumerated skills as found by the study.



### **Recommendations**

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

1. Administrators of Institutions of higher learning should increase funding and emphasis on ICT to train future secretaries on information technology for effective job performance.
2. Secretaries of business enterprises should be trained more on word processing skills to effectively manage business enterprises for job performance.
3. Communication skills should be given special attention in training and retraining of secretaries to improve their work performance in their various enterprises.

### **References**

- Agomuo, E.E. (2014). *Modern Office Technology Issues, Procedures and Practice*. Nsukka: University of Nigeria Press Ltd.
- Alaye-Ogan, O.N. (2012). Employee's office skills competencies and SMEs employer's preferences. *Business Education Journal* 11(2): 11-116.
- Campbell, C.T. (2016). Management and strategies for economic growth. *Journal of social science* 7(2) 270-282.
- Etonyeaku, D.J. (2008). Competencies expected of national diploma accounting graduates of polytechnics as perceived by employers of labour. *Journal of Business and Office Education*. 1(2):43-50
- Ezeabii, I.C., Nwokike, F.O. & Jim, E.U. (2018). Competencies required of secretaries in small scale business organizations in Enugu State for national development. *Nigerian Journal of Business Education* 5(1), 143-153.
- Ezeabii, I.C. (2017). Entrepreneurial planning and organizational skills needed by business education students in public universities in South East States of Nigeria for self-employment. *Nigerian Journal of Business Education*. 4(2), 195-2004.
- Hatten, T. I. (2012). Small and medium enterprise; growth and poverty. Retrieved on 4/9/2019 from <https://openknowledge.Worldbank.org/handle/10986/17742>.
- Igwe, J. (2015). *Theory and practice of business for developing countries*. Owerri, Firs African Publishers.
- Mayer, J.O. (2006). Information technology skills required by business education office workers. *Journal of Business Education and Office Education*, 3(2),5-14.
- Mbah, C.O. & Umurhurhu, E. B. (2016). Improving the teaching learning of computer aided drafting and designing (CADD) for effective skill development in Nigerian tertiary institution. *International Technology Research Journal (INTERJ)* 4(1), 24-29.
- Nwobibia, A.M. (2012). Challenges in running a small scale business enterprises as a survival strategy for employment generation in Nigeria. *Journal of sustainable Development* 4(1)200-206.



Nworgu, B.G. (2015). *Educational Research; Basic issues and methodology*. Nsukka; University Trust Publishers.

Obayi, A.U. (2009). Empowering Business Education Graduates through Entrepreneurial Education. *Journal of Professional Secretaries and Office Administrators*. 23(1), 74-83.

Okoli, B.I. (2015). Needs and problems to measure employability. *Journal of Research in Education and Training* 2(3) 178-185

Okoli, C. N. (2017). *Communication Skills in Contemporary Society*. Enugu. Chikas press Ltd.

Omeje, I.C. (2002). Secretarial profession in the modern office and information technology. *Journal of Technology Education*. 4(1): 118-123.

Spencer, J.O. (2011). *Entrepreneurship and Small Scale Enterprise*. New York: Free Press.