



**PERCEIVED EFFECT OF TECHNOSTRESS ON THE JOB PERFORMANCE OF SECRETARIES IN BUSINESS ORGANIZATIONS IN ABAKALIKI METROPOLIS IN EBONYI STATE, NIGERIA**

**Igwe, Kingsley Ogazi**

*Department of Business Education,  
Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki  
igwekingsleyogazi@gmail.com*

**Chukwu, Chinasa Miracle**

*Department of Business Education,  
Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki*

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**Abstract**

*This study examined the perceived effect of technostress on job performance of secretaries in business organizations in Abakaliki Capital Territory, Ebonyi State. Three research questions and one hypothesis guided the study. The population of the study was 47 secretaries in business organizations in Abakaliki Capital Territory, Ebonyi State. There was no sampling since the population was manageable. The instrument for data collection was a questionnaire. Mean and standard deviation techniques were used to analyze the data collected while t-test was used to test the hypotheses. Results from the data analyzed showed that the techno-overload, techno-invasion, techno-complexity, techno-insecurity and techno-uncertainty were technostressors experience by secretaries in business organizations. The study also revealed that the effect of technostress include low productivity, job dissatisfaction, lack of commitment, cardiac arrest, migraine headaches, hypertension, persistent negative thinking, momentary confusion, inability to concentrate, mental fatigue depression, anxiety, irritability and impatience. There is no significant difference in the mean responses of male and female secretaries regarding the effect of techno-stress on the job performance of secretaries in business organizations. Based on the findings, the study recommended among others that: secretaries should continually engage in information and communication technology (ICT) training in a proactive manner to be abreast with the current trend globally, as to reduce unnecessary anxiety associated with techno-stress; managements should introduce tools that are user-friendly as this will make work easier and more interesting; secretaries should be made to adapt freely to their environment to enhance efficiency and effectiveness and in-turn will lead to productivity.*

**Keywords:** *Technostress, Job performance, Secretaries, Business organizations.*

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**Introduction**

Advancements in Information and Communication Technology (ICT) provide business organizations opportunities to access information and enable new work arrangements that were previously not possible (Emmanuel, Jonathan, and Ayodeji 2014). However, milestone achievements credited to the use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) in the 21st century has been allegedly tinted with gloom due to consequent effects of ICT on users especially secretaries who mandatorily (inevitably)



succumb to its application in their day-to-day official duties in office. Thus, Brod in Saganuwan, Ismail and Ahmad (2013) warned that the love for technologies/ICTs is blind and that people devote long hours on its application at work and play without seeing the possible consequences of its usage to human.

In this present technological age in business organization, it is important to understand the antecedents to techno-stress, since stress in the work place is recognized as contributing to lower productivity and employee higher health costs for business organizations (Cooper, 2006). This is consistent with a special report in information week which opined that advances in technologies (virtual office/technologies, internet, inter-banking, e-banking and ICTs interface) contribute to increased burnout (McGee, 2006). Similarly, Harper in Sola, Ayooluwa, and Oluwsaina, (2015) opined that in the process of adapting to the increasingly complex technologies in business organizations, secretaries have been experiencing physical and emotional stress. This has resulted in higher levels of absenteeism and turnover, higher cost of retraining new staff and increase in litigation costs related to workplace stress.

Technostress is defined by Tagurum, Okonoda, Miner, Bello, and Tagurum (2017), as any negative effect on human attitudes, thoughts, behaviours, and psychology that directly or indirectly results from technology. They further held that it is the feeling of anxiety or mental pressure from over-exposure or involvement with technology (computer) by the secretaries. Brod in Pengzhen, Robert, Ji, and Lianga (2014) opined that technostress is a modern disease of adaptation caused by an inability to cope with new computer technologies in a healthy manner. Technostress according to Weil and Rosen, in Odoh, Ben, and Onwumere, (2013) is the general feeling of anxiety and the negative impact on thoughts, behaviours, attitudes, and body when a person is expected to deal with technology. It also refers to the state of mental and physiological arousal, and consequent pressure, observed in employees who are dependent on technology for their work. Tarafdar, Tu, Ragu-Nathan, and Ragu-Nathan (2011) listed that the technostressors experienced by ICT users including secretaries in business organizations to include techno-overload (forcing the user to work faster for long hours), techno-invasion (reaching out to the user anytime regardless work hours), techno-complexity ( technology threatening users' skills), techno-insecurity (users feeling threatened of being replaced by more skilful candidates) and techno- uncertainty (the pace of change make the users unsettled). This implies that *technostress has brought about increasingly complicated ways of doing business in the workplace with its attendant physical and emotional stress on workers which resulted in higher levels of turnover and absenteeism, higher cost of retraining staff and negative effect on productivity of secretaries*

In this study secretary is defined as a person, whose work consists of supporting management, including executives, using a variety of professional ethics and communication and organizational skills. Wordnet (2008) defines secretary as a person who assists a member of staff or top management level, and who undertakes a lot of



administrative tasks for the smooth running of the office. This definition was confirmed by wikipedia (2018) where a secretary is seen as a person employed to write orders, letters, dispatch public or private papers, records and the like, an official scribe, one who attends to correspondence and transacts other business for an association, a public body, or an individual. A secretary is an indispensable element in achieving organizational goals. He serves as a memory bank in his organization, scrutinizes visitors so as to give the executive enough time to do some other office activities, keep records so as to prevent embracement and the lost of important document which could consequently have a negative effect to the organization.

Job performance is defined by Omoneye (2016) as the execution of a task in a situation that allows optimal outcome. It is also defined as the ability of an employee to achieve set organization's objectives. Secretaries are seen to achieve good performance when they meet up with the set goals and objectives of an organization and as such, their job performance could have a great influence on the organization's overall performance. Thus, secretaries job performance is very important for organizational survival and can be considered the most important job outcome, especially for organizations or companies that have high investment in human capital, such as business organizations.

Business is an organization that uses economic resources or inputs to provide goods or services to customers in exchange for money or other goods and services (*William and Griffin, 2014*). Business organization in this study is an entity formed for the purpose of carrying on commercial enterprise. Such an organization is predicated on systems of law governing contract and exchange, property rights, and incorporation. According to Igwe (2017), a business organization is an entity aimed at carrying on commercial enterprise by providing goods or services, to meet needs of the customers. All business organizations: have the common features such as formal structure; aim to achieve objectives, use of resources, requirement of direction, and legal regulations controlling them. The different forms of business organizations in Abakaliki metropolis in Ebonyi state are Sole Proprietorship, General Partnership, Limited Partnership, Corporation, "S" Corporation, and Limited Liability Company. Igwe further added that in Abakaliki Metropolis generally, people regard business as any endeavour in which people engage in making money through buying and selling of commodities or services. It can take place in the open or closed market. An open market is experienced in Ebonyi State is buying and selling either in the market square or among the group of people with effective bargaining. It can also be in an organized supermarket or shopping Mall. Also in the a closed market is a practice, where by buyers such as middlemen go from house to house to meet procedures especially of farm products to buy from them on individual basis.

Tagurum, et al (2017) revealed that the causes of technostress among secretaries and managers in business organizations in Nigeria include the quick pace of technological change, lack of proper training, increased workload, lack of standardization with technologies and the unreliability of hardware and software. The authors further stated that



technostress is divide into four which includes physical, emotional, behavioural and psychological. Physical aspects of technostress include eye strain, backaches, headaches, stiff shoulders, increased blood pressure, and chest pain amongst others. Emotional aspects of technostress are irritability, loss of temper, having high state of anxiety when separated from computer monitor, frustration, depression, paranoia that leads to avoiding computers amongst others. Behavioural aspects consist of being overly comfortable with computers, overspending on computers, insomnia, uncooperativeness and unwillingness, using computer terms in non-computer conversations, smoking, drinking alcohol amongst others. Psychological aspects of technostress include information overload to find, analyze, evaluate and apply it in right context of resources; under work and routine jobs leading to frustrations when under employed or when the work done involves only routine operations; job security, where secretaries have a fear that computer may replace human roles; professional jealousy produced by technological competency; de-motivation due to prolonged periods of any technologic activity; and uncertainty about job role caused by an increased time working with technology amongst others

Tarafdar, Tu, Ragu-Nathan, and Ragu-Nathan (2011) revealed that technostress has negative effects on the users of technology, which in turn have an adverse effect on productivity and job satisfaction. In the same view, Shu, Tu, and Wang (2011) revealed that technostress has a health related problems such as cardiac arrest, migraine headaches and hypertension. Saganuwan, Ismail and Ahmad (2013) stated that the effects and symptoms of technostress include persistent negative thinking, momentary confusion, inability to concentrate, poor judgment, distorted ideas, mental fatigue depression, anxiety, irritability and impatience.

The essence of information and communication technology (ICT)in business organization is to boost productivity but if the stress hinders its use, there is likely to be a downward trend in productivity of secretaries. It is based on this that the researcher's is motivated to examine the perceived effect of technostress on job performance of secretaries in business organizations inAbakaliki metropolis in Ebonyi state, Nigeria.

### **Statement of the Problem**

There has been a long ongoing argument among scholars which posits that evolution of information technology has positive and negative effects because they reflect and affect social attitudes towards the use of ICT. This argument has created a discursive context for the introduction of information technology in many business organizations. Information technology that has revolutionized modern day life, has also brought with it new problems in the organization known as techno stress. However, business organizations today have increased in complexity their business activities and use of technology virtually in every facets of business transactions had shown that technology infiltration generate a lot of stress to their employees in carrying out office task. This growing anxiety on the use of information



and communication technologies (ICTs) and its devastating effects are seen in terms of multitasking, workaholism, occupational stress, need achievement orientedness, technology-obedient organization, introvertism (poor social worker), and smart phone techno-mindedness. Also these cut across the physiological, psychological, and neurological aspects of human life in the course to achieving high productivity and performance. The overbearing effect of technology usage has caused tension/anxiety, fatigue, burnout/stress, unhealthy condition of worker emotion and relationships, techno-anxiety, techno-overload, techno-complexity, technophobia, techno-mania/techno-freaks, techno-geek, computer phobia etc. The chains of these effects have undermined the margin of outcome expected of secretaries in the usage of information technology over time. The concern of this paper is that the effect of technostress on the job performance of secretaries in business organizations is uncertain.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The main purpose of this study was to examine the perceived effect of technostress on the job performance of secretaries in business organizations in Abakaliki metropolis in Ebonyi State. Specifically the study sought to:

1. Identify the technostressors experienced by secretaries in business organizations in Ebonyi State.
2. Determine the causes of technostress among secretaries in business organizations in Ebonyi State.
3. Identify the effect of technostress on job performance of secretaries in business organizations in Ebonyi State.

### **Research Questions**

1. What are the technostressors experienced by secretaries in business organizations in Ebonyi State?
2. What are the causes of technostress among secretaries in business organizations in Ebonyi State?
3. What are the effects of technostress on the job performance of secretaries in business organizations in Ebonyi State?

### **Null Hypothesis**

There is no significant difference between the means ratings of male and female secretaries on the perceived effect of technostress on the job performance of secretaries in business organizations in Abakaliki metropolis in Ebonyi State.

### **Method**

The design for this study was descriptive survey design. Abakaliki capital territory was the study area. The study covered the thirteen business organizations in Abakaliki capital territory in Ebonyi state. The population of the study was made up of 47 secretaries in



the thirteen business organizations. The entire population was used for the study; therefore, no sample size was drawn. Structured questionnaire titled “Perceived effects of Technostress on Job Performance of Secretaries (PETJPS)” was designed and used for data collection. The questionnaire was structured on 4 point likert scale as follow: SA = Strongly Agree, A = Agree; D = Disagree and SD = Strongly Disagree. The instrument was validated by two experts from Business Education. The questionnaire was made up of two parts, A and B. Part “A” was designed to elicit information on the background of the respondents while part B has three sections. In order to establish the reliability of the instrument, 20 copies of the questionnaire was distributed to secretaries outside the studied area. Their responses were correlated using Cronbach Alpha, a reliability coefficient of 0.83 was established. Forty seven (47) copies of the questionnaire were distributed to the respondents with the help of trained research assistants. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions while t-test was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. Any item with a mean rating of 2.50 or above was regarded as accepted while mean rating less than 2.50 was regarded as not accepted. For the hypotheses, any item with t-calculated value greater than critical value was rejected, otherwise the hypothesis of no significant difference was accepted.

**Results**

**Research Question One**

What are the technostressors experienced by Secretaries in business organizations in Ebonyi State?

**Table 1:** Mean Rating Responses of on the technostressors experienced by secretaries in Business organizations.

S/N	Items	X	SD	Decision
1	Techno-overload	2.9	1.00	Accepted
2	Techno-invasion	3.1	0.94	Accepted
3	Techno-complexity	3.2	0.96	Accepted
4	Techno-insecurity	3.3	0.99	Accepted
5	Techno-uncertainty	3.1	1.00	Accepted
6	System breakdown	3.2	1.02	Accepted
<b>Grand Mean</b>		<b>3.13</b>	<b>0.99</b>	

The analysis in Table 1 reveals that all the six item statements received mean ratings above the cut-off point of 2.50. The mean ratings of these items range from 2.9 to 3.3. Therefore, the respondents accepted all the six items as technostress experienced by secretaries in Business organizations.

**Research Question Two**

What are the causes of technostress among secretaries in business organizations?



**Table 2:** Mean Rating Responses of on the causes of technostress among secretaries in business organizations.

S/N	Items	X	SD	Decision
7	Quick pace of technological change	3.1	0.92	Accepted
8	Inadequate training	3.1	0.98	Accepted
9	Insufficient staffing	3.0	0.84	Accepted
10	Increased information/workload	3.2	0.83	Accepted
11	Lack of standardization with Technology	3.1	0.98	Accepted
12	Unreliability of hardware and software	3.3	0.76	Accepted
13	Poor user interface	2.8	1.08	Accepted
14	Slow network response time	3.0	0.98	Accepted
15	Increasing users demand	3.2	0.94	Accepted
16	Health related issues of technology usage	3.3	0.69	Accepted
17	Complicated work environment	3.2	0.82	Accepted
18	Software application problems	2.9	0.97	Accepted
<b>Grand Mean</b>		<b>2.97</b>	<b>0.89</b>	

The analysis in Table 2 shows that all the twelve item statements achieved mean scores ranging from 2.8 to 3.3 all of which are above the cut-off point of 2.50. Therefore, the respondents accepted all twelve item statements as causes of technostress among secretaries in business organizations.

**Research Question Three**

What are the effects of technostress on the job performance of secretaries in business organizations?

**Table 3:** Mean rating responses of on the perceived effect of technostress on the job performance of secretaries in business organizations.

S/N	Items	X	SD	Decision
19	Decreases productivity of workers	3.5	0.86	Accepted
20	It brings job dissatisfaction	2.9	0.97	Accepted
21	It leads to high rate of absenteeism and turnover	3.2	1.02	Accepted
22	It causes cardiovascular disorder to secretaries	3.1	0.93	Accepted
23	It causes hypertension and psychosomatic ailments	3.0	0.99	Accepted
24	It brings lack of commitment to organizational goal	3.3	0.99	Accepted
25	It brings high cost of retraining secretaries	3.1	1.00	Accepted
26	It causes distorted ideas to secretaries	2.9	1.08	Accepted
27	It brings loss of temper	3.0	1.04	Accepted
28	It causes mental fatigue depression	3.0	0.84	Accepted
29	It brings anxiety and frustration while working	3.2	0.83	Accepted
30	It brings irritability and impatience	3.1	0.98	Accepted
31	It brings persistent negative thinking	3.3	0.76	Accepted
32	It brings momentary confusion	2.8	1.08	Accepted
33	Inability to concentrate at work	3.2	1.02	Accepted
<b>Grand Mean</b>		<b>3.11</b>	<b>1.02</b>	



The analysis in Table 3 shows that all the fifteen item statements ranging from achieved mean score ratings from 2.8 to 3.5 all of which are above the cut-off point of 2.50. Therefore, the respondents accepted all fifteen item statements as the perceived effects of techno-stress on the job performance of secretaries in business organizations.

**Table 4:** T-test Analysis on the difference between the responses of male and female regarding the effect of techno-stress on the job performance of Secretaries in business organizations

Gender	N	Mean	SD	DF	T.cal	T. crit.	Decision
Male	20	22.30	6.34	45	0.374	2.687	NS
Female	27	21.60	6.31				

The data in the Table 4 reveals that the calculated t-value of (0.374) is less than the critical t-value of 2.687 at 45 degree of freedom and 0.05 level of significance. This shows that there is no significance difference in the mean responses of male and female secretaries regarding the effects of techno-stress on the job performance of secretaries in business organizations.

### Discussion

The study indicated that the technostressors experienced by secretaries in business organizations includes techno-overload, techno-invasion, techno-complexity, techno-insecurity and techno- uncertainty. This agrees with the study of Tarafdar, *et al.*, (2011) who outlined the technostressors experienced by computer users to include techno-overload (forcing the user to work faster for long hours), techno-invasion (reaching out to the user anytime regardless work hours), techno-complexity (technology threatening users' skills), techno-insecurity (users feeling threatened of being replaced by more skilful candidates) and techno- uncertainty (the pace of change make the users unsettled).

The study also reveals the causes of technostress among secretaries in business organizations. It was revealed that, the quick pace of technological change, lack of proper training by secretaries and managers, slow network response time, increased work load on secretaries and managers, poor user interface, technological breakdown are the causes of technostress among secretaries in business organizations. This study corroborates with the study of Saganuwan, Ismail and Ahmad (2013), who found that internet security (viruses), language/jargons of technology, system breakdown, increased management expectation, aged technology (software and hardware), software application problems, obsolete computer skills and unavailability of technical support are among the causes of techno stress in business organizations.

The effects of technostress on the job performance of secretaries in business organizations were also highlighted. The study revealed that technostress has affected the job performance of secretaries in business organizations. The finding has bearing with the





study of Shu, Tu, and Wang (2011) who revealed that health related problems such as cardiac arrest, migraine headaches and hypertension are associated with technostress. The findings of the study is also in consonance with the findings of Saganuwan, Ismail and Ahmad (2013) who opined that the effects and symptoms of technostress include persistent negative thinking, momentary confusion, inability to concentrate, poor judgment, distorted ideas, mental fatigue depression, anxiety, irritability and impatience.

The study shows that techno-stress has negatively affected the job performance of secretaries in business organization. It is important to note that the if the percentage of staff that is affected negatively is high enough, it can pull down any organization, especially when those involved are occupying very critical positions like the secretaries, or who keep records of information coming in and going out.

The study also revealed that techno-stress has increased the rate of ill-health of majority of staff in Nigerian business organizations, but supposing the few whose ill-health are affected are those occupying very sensitive positions such as secretaries, such organization(s) will still be adversely affected, too.

### **Conclusion**

The advent of computers and other information technology gadgets into business organizations has indeed brought with it great innovations, improvements in services delivery and products' qualities. But its hazards on the users should not also be overlooked if the benefits are to be optionally reaped. One of such hazards is techno-stress which add to the executive-stress syndrome. Secretaries are direct victims because of their strategic position and the critical roles they play in their organizations. This can be solved through attitudinal change and continual engagement in improved ICT training in relation to work and home environment to ensure job satisfaction and improved job performance in the new global industrial culture of today.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the findings and the conclusions of the study, the study makes the following recommendations:

- i) Management of business organizations should consult from time to time the services of clinical psychologists and occupational therapists to deliver lectures that would enable secretaries and managers overcome the fear, illness, job complication and increased work load which stimulate resistance to change towards the dictates of information technology.
- ii) Secretaries in business organizations should continually engage in ICT training in a proactive manner to be abreast with the current trend globally, so as to reduce unnecessary anxiety associated with techno-stress.



- iii) Management of business organizations should organized programmes like seminars to educate and inform staff about technostress. Technology related training on how to use computer gadgets, relevant software and new hardware and good ergonomic practices should be regularly organized. This will help individuals to be more conversant with using the relevant and available hardware and software in a bid to make them less predisposed to experiencing technostress.
- iv) Secretaries in business organizations should develop as much as possible some level of positive attitude to change and challenges associated with global ICT revolution, complications, complexities and occupational strains in the workplace by accepting and believing that more transformation should be expected.

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