



## THE CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS OF SECRETARIAL PROFESSION IN THE MODERN TECHNOLOGY ERA IN NORTH-WEST, NIGERIA

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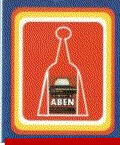
### Abstract

*The study investigated the challenges and prospects of secretarial profession in the modern technology era in North-west, Nigeria. Four (4) specific objectives and research questions guided the study. The study employed descriptive survey research design. The population of the study comprised four hundred (400) professional secretaries in North-west Nigeria, purposive sampling techniques was used in selecting One hundred and twenty (120) professional secretaries in Katsina and Zamfara state, North-west Zone, Nigeria. Four-point rating scale structured questionnaire was used for data collections. The instrument was validated by two experts, and the reliability of the instrument was determined using Cronbach Alpha method and 0.75 reliability co-efficient was obtained. Mean and standard deviation was used to analyze the data. The findings of the study revealed among others that technology skills are highly required by secretaries in this modern technology era and that technological information overload, constant learning, data security are the challenges of secretarial profession in this modern technology era among others. It was concluded that Information technology has drastically changed the office function and secretarial profession hence jobs are now done in a new way. It was recommended among others that, Secretaries should attend seminars, conferences and workshops to develop them on technological skills acquisition.*

**Keywords:** Challenges, Prospects, Secretarial Profession, Modern Technology Era

### Introduction

The secretarial profession has undergone significant transformations over the years, driven by technological advancements, changing business needs and shifting societal expectation. As the business world has become increasingly complex, the role of the secretary has evolved from a primarily clerical function to a more strategic and administrative roles. Historically, secretaries were tasked with manual duties such as typing, filling and answering phones. However, with the advent of technology, these tasks have become automated, freeing secretaries to focus on higher-value tasks. The impact of technology on the secretarial profession has been profound, enabling secretaries to take on more responsibilities and contribute to organizational decision making. Secretarial profession is the occupation of providing administrative assistance, support and services to individuals, organizations or businesses encompassing roles such as administrative assistants, executive secretaries and office managers (Akinleye, 2015). A secretary is an executive assistant who has mastery of office skills, demonstrates the ability to assume responsibility without direct supervision, exercises initiative and judgment, and makes decisions within the scope of assigned authority. According to Oladeji and Afolabi (2021), a secretary is as an officer, who is in charge of records, correspondence, minutes of meetings, and related affairs of an organization. A



secretary assists his/her boss and equally acts for the boss when directed. The secretary must accurately think and act rapidly, especially in an automated office.

The modern technology era has brought about unprecedented changes in the secretarial profession. Modern technology era is the contemporary period characterized by advanced computing, high-speed internet, and mobile devices, cloud computing, artificial intelligence, automation and virtual collaboration tools. The widespread adoption of digital tools, social media and cloud computing has transformed the way secretaries work. Digital technologies have enabled secretaries to work remotely, communicate effectively with stakeholders and access information instantly (Dosunmu, Bukki, and Akintola. 2017). However the digital transformation also poses challenges for secretaries including information overload and digital distractions and constant need for technological up skilling. "The secretarial profession must adapt to these changes to remain relevant and effective in the modern workplace (International Association of Administrative Professionals, 2020).

The secretarial profession must innovate and adapt to the changing demands of the modern workplace. According to Ayelotan (2012), Secretaries must develop skills beyond traditional clerical tasks, including communication, problem-solving and analytical skills. Organizations must also support secretaries in their professional development, providing training and resources to enhance their skills. According to Okoli (2019), organizations that invest in secretarial training and development reap benefits including increased productivity, improved morale and enhanced job satisfaction. Despite the growing importance of technology in the secretarial profession, there is a dearth of research on the specific challenges and opportunities faced by secretaries in the digital age. This study aims to address this research gap, exploring the impact of technology on the secretarial profession and identifying strategies for adaptation and innovation.

### **Statement of the problem**

The secretarial profession is at a crossroad, facing unprecedented challenges and opportunities in the modern technological era. The rapid advancement of technology has transformed the work environment, requiring secretaries to adapt to new tools, skills and responsibilities. According to Olatoye, Adebayo, Oladeji, & Oladire, (2024) technology has changed the nature of secretarial work, requiring secretaries to be proficient in various soft applications and technical skills. This technological shift has led to concerns about job security, as secretaries worry about being replaced by automation and artificial intelligence. The increasing use of technology has raised fears among secretaries that their jobs may become obsolete. Moreover, the constant influx of new technologies has created a sense of technological overload, making it difficult for secretaries to keep pace. Okoli (2019) emphasize AS above that "secretaries must possess the skills and knowledge to effectively utilize technology to enhance their productivity and efficiency". However, inadequate training and support have hindered secretaries' ability to adapt to these changes. Olatoye, et al (2024) found that "secretaries require continuous training and development to stay abreast of emerging technologies and trends. Unfortunately secretaries lack the necessary technological skills to effectively utilize modern digital tools and many organizations have failed to provide sufficient training, leaving secretaries vulnerable to technological displacement.

### **Research Questions**

The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What are the impacts of technology on the secretarial profession in the modern technology era in north-west, Nigeria?
2. What are the challenges faced by secretaries in adapting to technological advancements in the modern technology era in north-west, Nigeria?



3. What are the skills and training required by secretaries to remain relevant in the modern technology era in north-west, Nigeria?
4. What are the prospects for secretarial profession in this modern technology era in north-west, Nigeria?

### Methodology

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The rationale behind this choice was that it explains the challenges and prospects of secretarial profession in the modern technology era in north-west, Nigeria. The population of the study comprised four hundred (400) professional secretaries in North-west Nigeria, purposive sampling techniques was used in selecting one hundred and twenty (120) professional secretaries in Katsina and Zamfara state, North-west Zone, Nigeria that is sixty (60) secretaries in government organization from each state. A self-structured instrument tagged: "Secretarial Profession in the Modern Technology Era Instrument (SPIMTEI)" validated through face and content validity by three experts in the field of Business Education was used for the study. Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficient was used to determine the reliability coefficient of the instrument and the instrument yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.74 which was high enough for the instrument to be considered reliable. The instrument was designed on 4-point scale of Strongly Agree (SA) 4, Agree (A) 3, Disagree (D) 2 and Strongly Disagree (SD), for research question one, two and four. For research question three, Highly Required (HR), Required (R), Rare Required (RR), Not Required (NR), with numerical values of 4, 3, 2 and 1, respectively. Mean and standard deviation was used to answer the research questions. Any item equal or above 2.50 was considered strongly agreed, highly required, agreed and required while any item below 2.50 was considered strongly disagreed, Rare Required, disagreed and Not Required.

### Results

#### R.Q 1: What are the impacts of technology on the secretarial profession in the modern technology era in north-west, Nigeria?

Table 1: mean and standard deviation on the impacts of technology on the secretarial profession

S/N	ITEMS	MEAN	SD	REMARK
1	Technology has increased my productivity as a secretary	3.22	0.61	SA
2	Technology has improved my communication to client	3.01	0.51	SA
3	Technology has enhanced my job satisfaction	3.99	0.78	SA
4	Technology has reduced my errors	3.59	0.99	SA
5	I used digital tools frequently in my work as a secretary	3.50	0.96	SA
6.	I have experience time-saving benefits from using digital tools	3.20	0.71	SA
7	I regularly use video conferencing tools for meetings	2.88	0.72	SA
8	I have acquired new skills or certificate to keep up with technology advancements.	2.67	0.67	SA
9	I regularly participate in online training or webinars	2.59	0.73	SA
10	Technology has improved my communication to colleagues	3.16	0.81	SA
	<b>Weighted Average</b>	<b>3.18</b>	<b>0.74</b>	<b>SA</b>

Source: field survey, 2024.



Result in Table 1 showed the mean ratings and standard deviation on the impacts of technology on the secretarial profession in the modern technology era in north-west, Nigeria with mean ratings ranging from 2.67 to 3.99 and weighted average of 3.18, the standard deviation of all items were ranged from 0.51 to 0.99. The mean score of 3.18 indicates a moderate to high level of agreement with the statement regarding the impact of technology on secretaries. The standard deviation of 0.75 suggests a relatively moderate spread of responses around the mean, which implies that technology has a significant impact on the secretarial profession in the modern technology era in north-west, Nigeria.

**R.Q 2: What are the challenges faced by secretaries in adapting to technological advancements in the modern technology era in north-west, Nigeria?**

Table 2: mean and standard deviation on the challenges faced by secretaries

S/N	ITEMS	Mean	SD	REMARK
1	Technical issues hinder my ability to work efficiently	2.67	0.67	SA
2	Information overload is a significant challenge I face	3.80	0.74	SA
3	Cyber security concerns is a challenge to my work as secretary	2.88	0.72	SA
4	Lack of training on the usage of these modern gadgets	3.86	0.93	SA
5	I am concern about my job security due to automation	3.22	0.65	SA
6	High cost of purchasing of the modern technology	3.37	0.69	SA
7	High cost of maintenance of the modern technology	3.16	0.81	SA
8	Lack of constant power supply to use the modern technology	3.01	0.71	SA
9	Vulnerability to health hazard	2.59	0.73	SA
10	Resistance to change	3.20	0.71	SA
	<b>Weighted Average</b>	<b>3.18</b>	<b>0.74</b>	<b>SA</b>

Source: field survey, 2024.

Result in Table 2, showed the mean ratings and standard deviation on the challenges faced by secretaries in adapting to technological advancements in the modern technology era in north-west, Nigeria the average response score of 3.18 indicates that secretaries moderately agree that they face challenges in the modern technology era. The standard deviation of 0.74 suggests a relatively narrow spread of responses, indicating consistent opinions among secretaries, which implies that secretaries are aware of the challenges posed by technology, including the technological information overload, constant learning and data security concerns.

**R.Q 3: What are the skills and training required by secretaries to remain relevant in the modern technology era in north-west, Nigeria?**

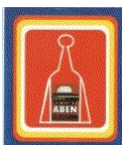


Table 3: mean and standard deviation on the skills and training required by secretaries

S/N	ITEMS	Mean	SD	REMARK
1	I need training on Microsoft office suite (word, excel, power point, outlook) to improve my productivity	3.16	0.87	HR
2	Familiarity with cloud-based productivity tools (google, drive, dropbox, onedrive) is essential for my secretarial work.	3.30	0.81	HR
3	I require training on customer relationship management (CRM)software	2.88	0.72	HR
4	Knowledge of database management system is necessary for my role.	3.80	0.74	HR
5	I need training on video conferencing tools (zoom, skype, webex)	3.86	0.93	HR
6	Effective email management and etiquette training would enhance my communication skills	3.25	0.78	HR
7	Training on data encryption and security measures is crucial for protecting sensitive information	3.34	0.73	HR
8	Training on task automation tools would streamline my workload	3.37	0.69	HR
9	Understanding basic web design principles would enhance our organization's online presence	3.16	0.81	HR
10	Training on interpersonal , conflict resolution and negotiation techniques would benefit my interactions	2.67	0.67	HR
	<b>Weighted Average</b>	<b>3.28</b>	<b>0.78</b>	<b>HR</b>

Source: field survey, 2024.

Result in table 3 shows the average responses score of 3.28 which indicates that secretaries strongly agree that acquiring technological skills is essential to remain relevant in the modern technology era. The standard deviation of 0.78 suggests a relatively narrow spread of responses, indicating consistent opinion among secretaries, which implies the importance of technological skills acquisition for secretaries to remain relevant in the modern technology era.

#### R.Q 4:What are the prospects for secretarial profession in this modern technology era in north-west, Nigeria?

Table 4: mean and standard deviation on the prospects for secretarial profession

S/N	ITEMS	MEAN	SD	REMARK
1	Technology has created new opportunities for career advancement in the secretarial profession	3.16	0.81	SA
2	Continuous professional development is crucial for staying relevant as a secretary	3.37	0.78	SA
3	Exposure to modern technology	3.25	0.99	SA
4	My job is secure despite technological advancements	3.86	0.93	SA
5	The future of the secretarial profession looks promising	2.67	0.67	SA
6	Technology will continue to enhance the secretarial role	3.50	0.96	SA
7	Ensuring meeting are effectively organized	3.59	0.69	SA
8	Preparing prompt record of the organization activities	3.34	0.73	SA
9	Maintaining effective records and administration	3.99	0.78	SA
10	promote better interaction	3.59	0.99	SA
	<b>Weighted Mean</b>	<b>3.39</b>	<b>0.81</b>	<b>SA</b>

Source: field survey, 2024.



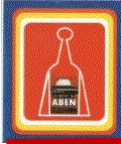
The results in table 4 shows the average response score of 3.39 which indicate that the respondents are moderately optimistic about the prospects of the secretarial profession in the modern technology era. The standard deviation of 0.81 suggests a moderate spread of responses, indicating diverse opinions among respondents. The results indicate a moderately optimistic outlook for the secretarial profession, with respondents acknowledging both opportunities and challenges.

### **Discussion of findings**

The finding of the study as shown in Table 1 revealed that technology has increase the secretaries productivity and efficiency, improved communication and increase job satisfaction, reduced work errors, save time. This shows that technology has a significant impact on secretarial profession in modern technology era in north-west, Nigeria. Similar studies have reported comparable results. A study by Abdul-Kahar (2015) found that technology has become an essential tool for secretaries, enhancing their productivity and efficiency.

The findings of the study as shown in Table 2 revealed that secretaries are aware of the challenges posed by technology, including technological information overload, constant learning, lack of train personnel, data security, high cost of purchasing the facilities and maintenance. The study is similar to that of Oladeji and Afolabi (2021), who reported that high cost of modern technological gadgets and facilities, lack of trained personnel on the usage of these modern gadgets, lack of fund to purchase the gadgets and facilities required to automate office, high cost of maintenance of this gadget and facilities and vulnerability to health hazard are the challenges of secretarial profession in this modern technology era. This study is in consonance with the findings of Abdul-Kahar (2015) who affirmed that Secretaries face a lot of challenges in their effort to carry out the onerous tasks and responsibilities conferred on them by the profession part of which include lack of fund for purchasing modern facilities and lack of skilled secretaries to handle modern technologies.

The findings of the study as shown in Table 3 revealed among others that Microsoft office suite (word, excel, power point, outlook), cloud-based productivity tools (google, drive, dropbox, onedrive), customer relationship management (CRM) software, database management system, video conferencing tools (zoom, skype, webex), Training on data encryption and security, Training on task automation tools, Understanding basic web design, Training on interpersonal , conflict resolution and negotiation techniques are skills and training highly required by secretaries in this modern technology era. The study also emphasizes the importance of technological skills acquisition and training for secretaries to remain relevant in the modern technology era. The study concurred with the findings of Oladeji and Afolabi (2021), who revealed that word processing skills, spreadsheet skills, PowerPoint skills, Internet surfing and networking skills, Data base management skills, Blackboard teaching skills, Computer related storage device skills, Website design skills, Computer graphic skills and File management and window explorer skill are highly required secretaries in this modern technology era. Also the findings of this study agreed with that of Olatoye, et al (2024) who contended that for efficient and effective office activities, information and communication technology skills such as spreadsheet, digital cameras knowledge, computer security knowledge and network skills application are paramount importance to office secretaries. The information showed in Table 4 revealed the prospects of secretarial profession in the modern technology era which include career advancement, professional development and enhancement of secretarial roles among others. The finding is in agreement with that of Oladeji and Afolabi (2021) who reveal that the prospects of secretarial profession which include among others explosion of secretaries to modern information technology, promotion of office activities and enhancement of confidentiality of information. This study is in agreement with the finding of Olatoye, et al (2024)



who noted that the effectiveness of a secretary in an organization strongly depends on the available office technology as well as the skills and competencies of such secretary to perform office duties. They further stated that secretarial profession promotes office production, enhance confidential of information and strengthening business activities.

### **Conclusion**

The study concludes that Information technology has drastically changed the office function and secretarial profession hence jobs are now done in a new way and by addressing the challenges and leveraging the opportunities presented by technology, the secretarial profession can continue to play a vital role in supporting organizations.

### **Recommendations**

1. Organizations should invest in secretarial training and development programs focusing on technological skills.
2. Secretaries should attend seminars, conferences and workshops to develop them on technological skills acquisition.
3. Educational institution should update secretarial curricula to reflect modern technology era requirement.
4. Professional associates should develop guidelines for secretarial training and certification and advocate for profession's relevance in the modern technology era.

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