

## Levels of Employability Skills and Organisational Citizenship Behaviour of University Secretarial Staff In South-West, Nigeria

Adeyemi Muyiwa \*

Margaret Moronke Dosunmu \*\*

Abolaji Olugbenga Bukki \*\*\*

### Abstract

The skills and competencies exhibited by the secretarial staff in a University setting show how vast is such secretary in the art of delivery of his/her services. A secretarial staff has been considered to be the brain box of any organisation. They are in charge of all information emanating and disseminating from the establishment; as such the role of the secretarial staff as the custodian of information in the university cannot be over-emphasized. The aim of the study was to determine the levels of the University secretarial staff employability skills and organizational citizenship behaviour in South-West, Nigeria. The study adopted a descriptive research design of ex-post facto type. Two research questions were raised. The sample for the study consisted of 1,209 secretarial staff in 36 universities in South-West, Nigeria selected through stratified random sampling technique. Three instruments were used for data collection, namely: Demographic Data Form, Graduate Employability Scale (GESS), 'r'=0.86; Organisational Citizenship Behaviour Scale (OCBS), 'r'=0.96. Multiple Regression Analysis (MRA) and Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) were used to analyse the data at 0.05 level of significance. The results revealed that the University secretarial staff generally possessed a high level of employability skills (50.5%) and organizational citizenship behaviour (50.8%). It was concluded that the secretarial staff generally possessed the employability skills and organisational citizenship behaviour which are needed to perform optimally in their duties. The study recommended, among others, that the secretarial staff should endeavour to seek for more knowledge to equip them with relevant employability skills that will make them to be assets to the organization. The University secretarial staff should be exposed to regular training programmes with an emphasis on how to enhance their employability skills and further improve their knowledge. Also, there is need to compensate any secretarial staff who displays the traits of organizational citizenship behavior. This will serve as motivation for other secretarial staff.

**Keywords:** Employability skills, Organisational Citizenship Behaviour, University Secretarial Staff

### Introduction

The performance of any secretarial staff in every organisation depends on the skills and competencies possessed by such secretarial staff. Secretarial staff is expected to be proactive and use his/her initiatives in everyday challenging and ever-changing work environment. Gone are the days when secretaries were meant to type letters, take dictations and do some other assignments as being directed by the boss. With the gradual exclusion of shorthand dictations in the office, office managers are looking for

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\* Dr. Olabisi Onabanjo University, Nigeria  
Email: akinmoe2007@yahoo.com

\*\* Olabisi Onabanjo University, Nigeria  
Email: akinmoe2007@yahoo.com

\*\*\* Olabisi Onabanjo University, Nigeria  
Email: abarngebenga@yahoo.co.uk

secretarial staff who are vast in the use of the English language, both in written and oral expressions. As opined by Ibraheem and Aslinda, (2013), the secretarial staff is to work with the organisational members, express themselves physically, emotionally, and cognitively at the time of performing their roles in the University. In the past, the secretaries' role was defined in terms of how well a task was completed when assigned. However, recent theoretical and empirical evidences suggest that the need of secretarial staff's willingness to go above and beyond the call of duty in achieving the mission of the organisation is imperative and quite important. The success of any organisation depends on the secretarial staff's willingness to go voluntarily beyond their stipulated role expectations. The secretarial staff are expected to display more discretionary behaviours that are not explicitly recognised by the formal organisation reward system. Van der Heijde and Van Heijden (2003) defined employability skills as continuously fulfilling, acquiring or creating work through the optimal use of competencies. According to Hillage and Pollard (1998) in Hind and Moss (2011), employability refers to a person's capability for gaining and maintaining employment. Hillage and Pollard (1998) viewed employability as having the capability to gain initial employment, maintain the employment and obtain new one if need be.

For secretarial staff, employability depends on the knowledge, skills and abilities they possess, the way they present those assets to employers and in the context of personal circumstances and working environment (Hind & Moss, 2011). Brown and Hesketh (2004) defined employability skills as the relative chances of getting and maintaining different kinds of employment. Employability skill not only depends on whether one is able to fulfill the requirements of specific jobs, but also on how one stands relative to others within an hierarchy of workers (Brown & Hesketh, 2004). There had been series of complaints on the employability skills expected from employees by the employers; as such, all the employability skills cannot learnt while in school. Some of these skills had to be learnt while on the job. The dimensions of employability skills as explained by Orji (2013) are problem solving and analytic, decision making, organization and time management, communication, interpersonal relations and secretarial skills. Problem solving is the ability to identify problems, prioritizing it, solve problems, contribution to group problem solving, identifying essential components of the problem; and sorting out the relevant data to solve the problem. Decision making is making decisions in a short time period, assessing long term effects of decisions, making decisions on the basis of thorough analysis of the situation and identifying political implications of the decision to be made, knowing ethical implications of decisions, and recognising the effects of decisions to be made. Organisational and time management are the act of establishment of the critical events to be completed, assigning/delegating responsibilities, monitoring progress against the plan, integrating strategic considerations in the plans made, revising plans to include new information, setting priorities, allocating time efficiently, managing/overseeing several tasks at once and meeting deadlines. Communication is the conveyance of information from one-to-one, communicating ideas verbally to groups, making effective business presentations and making impromptu presentations. It also entails writing reports, writing external business communication, writing internal business communication and using proper grammar, spelling, and punctuations. Interpersonal Relations is the ability to work well with fellow employees, relating well with supervisors, establishing good rapport with subordinates, empathising with others and understanding the needs of others. Lastly, the secretarial skills are the technical and professional skills which include: accuracy in note-taking, application of the computer to secretarial duties; general knowledge of the secretarial work; good quality of work/output of work among others, Orji (2013).

Organisational citizenship behaviour is the willingness of an employee to go above and beyond the call of duty to achieve the aims and objectives of the organisation. The characteristics of organizational citizenship behaviour are that it needs not be covered by the secretarial staff's work descriptions and regulations. This is when a secretarial staff goes beyond what is being required of him/her in an office. Some secretarial staff goes to the extent of doing other people's work, standing in for an absent staff, staying late in the office and deciding not to go on leave in order to achieve a specific objective. According to Organ (1997),

organizational citizenship behaviour is vital to the survival of an organisation and it maximises the efficiency and productivity of both the employees and the organisation which ultimately contributes to the effective functioning of an organisation. Organ (1988) as cited in Modassir and Singh (2008) named the dimensions of organizational citizenship behaviour as: altruism, conscientiousness, sportsmanship, civic virtue and courtesy.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The duties of the secretarial staff in modern day University system has been viewed beyond the functions of typing of letters, keeping of records and correspondences to the overall management of the office system which include managing subordinates/super-ordinates; and the application of modern technologies in the performance of duties. Managers are looking for secretaries who possessed knowledge, skills and abilities in handling information and new technologies. They are also looking for secretarial staff who exhibits some discretionary behaviour and are ready to go beyond the prescribed schedule of duties. To this extent therefore, this study focuses on the levels of employability skills and organizational citizenship behaviour of University secretarial staff in South-West, Nigeria.

### **Research Questions**

This research work has been designed to answer the following questions:

- i. What is the level of employability skills possessed by University secretarial staff in South-West, Nigeria?
- ii. What is the level of organizational citizenship behaviour possessed by University secretarial staff in South-West, Nigeria?

### **Research Design**

The research design being adopted for the study is a descriptive survey research where no variables were manipulated.

### **Population**

The population for this study consisted of 3,292 secretarial staff in Universities in South-West Nigeria. There are 36 Universities in South-West, Nigeria (*NUC database, 2015*) comprising of three (3) Universities in Ekiti State (with 247 secretarial staff); five (5) Universities in Lagos State (with 647 secretarial staff); ten (10) Universities in Ogun State (with 706 secretarial staff); six (6) Universities in Ondo State (with 542 secretarial staff); eight (8) Universities in Osun State (with 567 secretarial staff); and four (4) Universities in Oyo State (with 583 secretarial staff).

### **Sample and Sampling Technique**

The sample for this study consisted of one thousand two hundred and nine (1,209) secretarial staff representing 37% of the total population of the secretarial staff in the Universities in South-West, Nigeria.

### **Research Instrument**

The measuring instruments used in gathering the data for the study are as follows:

- i. Demographic Data Form (DDF)
- ii. Graduate Employability Skills Scale (GESS)
- iii. Organizational Citizenship Behaviour Scale (OCBS)

### Method of Data Analysis

Data collected was grouped based on the various objective and research questions postulate for testing in this study. The data was subjected to statistical test and analysis using descriptive and inferential statistics.

### Results

Research Question 1: What is the level of employability skills possessed by University secretarial staff in South-West, Nigeria?

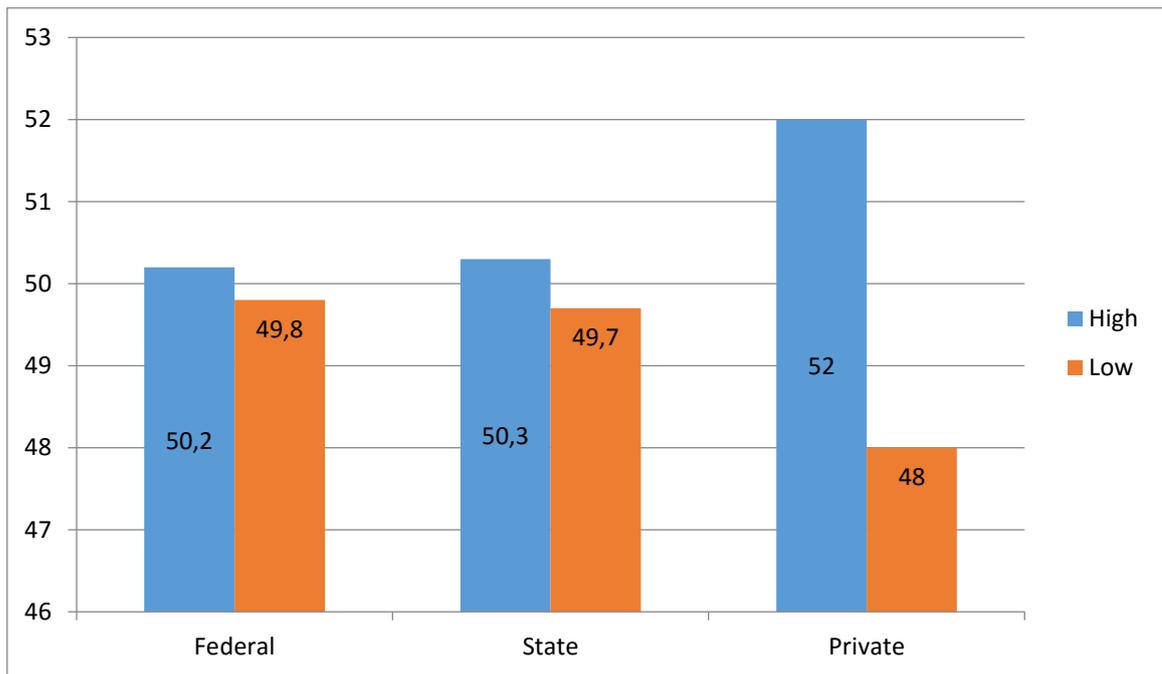
To answer this question, the respondents' score on employability skills were classified into 2 groups. Those who are above the mean score of 142.87 were categorized as high and those who scored below the mean score of 142.87 were categorized as low. Based on this classification, the scores of the respondents on employability skills were subjected to descriptive statistics. The results are presented in Table 4.4.

**Table 1:** Levels of employability skills

Institutions	Level of employability skills					
	High		Low		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
<b>Federal</b>	280	50.2	278	49.8	558	100.0
<b>State</b>	231	50.3	228	49.7	459	100.0
<b>Private</b>	78	52.0	72	48.0	150	100.0
<b>Total</b>	589	50.5	578	49.5	1167	100.0

Source: Responses from questionnaire

Table 1 indicated that 50.2% of the secretarial staff in the Federal University possessed high level of employability skills and 49.8% possessed low level of employability skills. Among the respondents in the State Universities; 50.3% of the secretarial staff possessed high level of employability skills; while 49.7% possessed low level of employability skills. 52% of the secretarial staff from the Private Universities possessed high level of employability skills and 48% possessed low level of employability skills. On the whole 50.5% of the secretarial staff possessed high level of employability skill and 49.5% possessed low level of employability skills. The implication of this is that substantial number of the secretarial staff who participated in the study possessed high level of employability skills. Specifically, the secretarial staff from the Private Universities possessed the highest level of employability skills, followed by the secretarial staff from State and Federal Universities respectively. The graphical representation is presented below.



**Figure 1:** Bar chart showing the levels of employability skills of respondents based on Institution status

**Research Question 2:** What is the level of organisational citizenship behaviour (OCB) possessed by University secretarial staff in South-West, Nigeria?

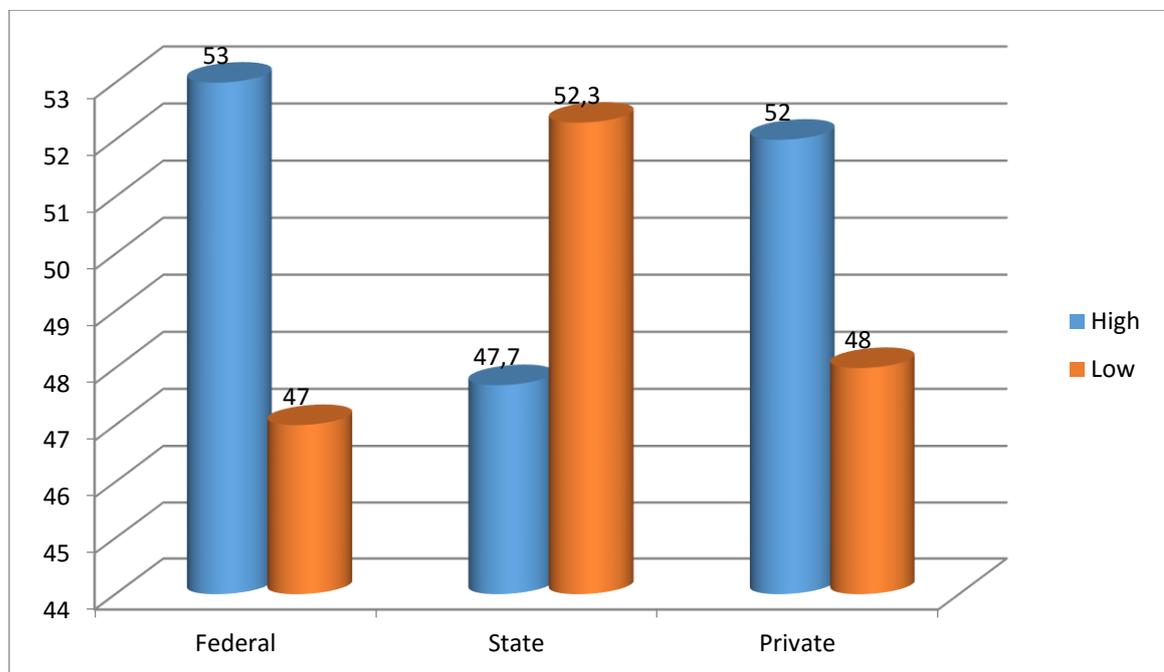
To answer this question, the respondents' score on organisational citizenship behaviour were classified into 2 groups. Those who are above the mean score of 59.68 were categorized as high and those who scored below the mean score of 59.68 were categorized as low. Based on this classification, the scores of the respondents on organisational citizenship behaviour were subjected to descriptive statistics. The results are presented in Table 4.5.

**Table 2:** Level of organizational citizenship behaviour

Institutions	Level of organizational citizenship behaviour					
	High		Low		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
<b>Federal</b>	296	53.0	262	47.0	558	100.0
<b>State</b>	219	47.7	240	52.3	459	100.0
<b>Private</b>	78	52.0	72	48.0	150	100.0
<b>Total</b>	593	50.8	574	49.2	1167	100.0

Source: Responses from questionnaire

Table 2 indicated that 53% of the secretarial staff in the Federal University possessed high level of organisational citizenship behaviour and 47% possessed low level of organisational citizenship behaviour. Among the respondents in the State Universities; 47.7% of the secretarial staff possessed high level of organisational citizenship behaviour; while 52.3% possessed low level of organisational citizenship behaviour. 52% of the secretarial staff from the Private Universities possessed high level of organisational citizenship behaviour and 48% possessed low level of organisational citizenship behaviour. On the whole 50.8% of the secretarial staff possessed high level of organisational citizenship behaviour and 49.2% possessed low level of organisational citizenship behaviour. The implication of this is that substantial number of the secretarial staff who participated in the study possessed high level of organisational citizenship behaviour. Specifically, the secretarial staff from the Federal Universities possessed the highest level of organisational citizenship behaviour, followed by the secretarial staff from Private and State Universities respectively. The graphical representation is presented in Figure 2 below.



**Figure 2:** Bar chart showing the levels of organisational citizenship behaviour of respondents based on institution status

## Discussion of the Findings

The level of the employability skills possessed by the University secretarial staff was investigated in research question one. The result revealed that secretarial staff generally possessed high level of employability skills. The result further revealed that the secretarial staff in the Private universities possessed the highest level of employability skills. The reason of their being in possession of the highest level of the employability skills could be as a result of their development while on the job and it could also be as a result of their attendance of workshops, seminars and conferences. The employability skills possessed by the employees are very important as it affects their job performance level. In actual fact, all these skills cannot be learnt while in school, it can only be acquired through further training and development. This is corroborated by Mistura, Iman and Osman

(2013) who posited that employability skills correlates task performance. In the context of this study, where the employability skill of secretarial staff in private and public Universities is being investigated, there is actually no difference in the employability skill between secretarial staff of private and public universities; as each of the categories possessed high level of employability skills. This is in corroboration of the works of Jonck and van der Walt (2015), who asserted that the differences between employability skills in the private and public sectors are becoming less marked. Their findings further suggested that the employability skills that are sought by the public sector are similar to those that are sought by the private sector. In essence, the results of their study indicated that both the private and the public sectors require mostly the same employability skills from employees in order to be employable in these sectors. This study established that secretarial staff in the private universities possessed more employability skill than their counterparts in the public universities; the reason for this is supported by Chelechele (2009) who noted that poor service delivery is as a result of inefficiency and ineffectiveness in the public sector with the resultant effect of lack of skills. Ibrahim and Dandajo (2013) revealed that higher institutions should incorporate in the Business Education curriculum contents some attributes that will enhance employability skills in the students. It is on this note that, they recommended that all major skills in the modern technologies needed by the Nigerian labour market should be integrated into the curriculum of Business Education programme in Nigerian universities, be it Federal, State or Private. The findings also corroborated the works of Ediagbonya and Oyadongha (2013) who revealed that the employability skills required by the Business Education graduates are very relevant for their future employment.

The level of the organisational citizenship behaviour possessed by the University secretarial staff in South-West, Nigeria was examined in research question two. The findings revealed that University secretarial staff in general possessed high level of organisational citizenship behaviour. The findings further revealed that secretarial staff in the Federal Universities possessed the highest level of organisational citizenship behaviour. The findings of this research disagree with the work of Agyemang and Ofei (2013) who posited that employees of private organisations had a higher level of organisational citizenship behaviour than employees in public organisations. The findings are also in disagreement with Acheampong's (2003) conclusion that most private organisations are known to offer several incentives and packages to keep their members performing higher as compared to the public organisations. The result is in agreement with the findings of Sharma, Bajpai and Holani (2011) which showed that employees in public sector have greater degree of organisational citizenship behaviour in comparison to private sectors. In other words, public sector employees have exhibited higher degree of organisational citizenship behaviour as compared to private sector employees. Chowwen and Ogunsakin (2013) observed that there was no difference between employees in public and private organisations in citizenship behaviour. This is particularly important and emphasized the salient role of organisational citizenship behaviour in facilitating the exhibition of discretionary behaviour irrespective of the type of the organisation. This is of relevance in the public sector where discretionary behaviour is rife, since most often government work is seen as "nobody's work", and employees' salaries will be paid at the end of the month whether goals are achieved or not. This have implication for management in both private and public organisations as it emphasized that if employees are treated fairly enough, they will be motivated to give more of themselves cognitively, affectively, and behaviorally in support of the organisations they represent.

## Conclusion

It was concluded that the University secretarial staff in South-West, Nigeria possessed a high level of employability skills and organizational citizenship behaviour.

## Recommendations

1. Employability skills and organizational citizenship behaviour should be enhanced that the innovative work behaviour of University secretarial staff would be improved. This could be achieved by encouraging the secretarial staff with conducive working environment.
2. The staff should be involved in the day-to-day running of the University system and be made to take key positions by playing active roles in the decision making policies, this will further give them a sense of belonging.
3. The curriculum should be fashioned in a way to meet the current requirements a modern office systems demands.
4. Secretarial staff should also endeavour to seek for more knowledge to equip themselves with relevant employability skills that will make them to be an asset to the organisation.

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