

Operational Efficiency Of Digital Tools As Antidotes Towards Career Development Of Secretarial Students

By

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Abstract

The study examined the operational efficiency of digital tools as antidotes towards career development of secretarial students. Four research questions and two hypotheses guided the study. A descriptive survey research design was used. The population of this study comprised all undergraduate in secretarial studies unity under Business Education department in Tai Solarin University of Education, Ijagun, Ogun State. A total of 45 undergraduate in secretarial studies in the selected university were selected as sample size of the study through the use of purposive sampling technique. Researcher developed instrument tagged: Digital Tools and Career Development of Secretarial Students. Questionnaire (DTCDSSQ) with 0.90 as reliability coefficient was used for data collection. Research questions were analysis using mean and standard deviation. Hypotheses were tested using Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) and regression analysis. The findings of the study revealed that there was medium level of level of secretarial studies students' operational efficiency of digital tools. Data analytic, digital marketing, social media, artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, cloud computing, and e-mailing skills were among the required digital skills of secretarial studies students' operational efficiency of digital tools. Work faster than before, quick corrections of errors easy, increase performance level at work, innovative ways of business development, increases productivity level, and effectiveness towards career development were among role of digital tools in promoting career development of secretarial studies students. Lack of qualifications, not enough experience, self-doubt, changes in industry, time and fear, and uncertainty about goal were the challenges facing career development of secretarial studies students' career development. There was significant relationship between operational efficiency of digital tools and career development of secretarial studies students ($r = 0.322$, $p < .05$). There was significant influence of operational efficiency of digital tools on career development of secretarial students ($\beta = .976$, $t = 120.545$, $p < .05$). It was recommended that Business educators should undertake regular and consisted training in digital skills acquisition and that digital skills should have embedded in the business education curriculum.

Keywords: Operational Efficiency, Digital Tools, Career Development, Secretarial Students

Introduction

Career development is the lifelong process of managing and advancing career over time. It involves acquiring new skills, knowledge, and experiences, as well as making strategic

decisions and taking actions to enhance professional growth and achieve long-term career goals. Career development professionals specialize in helping individuals navigate their career paths, make informed decisions, and develop strategies to achieve their career goals. Those providing career development support may be careers assistants, careers advisers, careers leaders, careers coaches, career counsellors, careers consultants or career development experts. Career development support is always based on the needs of the individual and is provided to people in all situations from primary school to retirement planning, often focused on career transitions – taking the next step in education or training, moving into the first job, mid-career job changes and exploring ways of working longer as retirement approaches. Transitions can be driven by many factors including changes in life circumstances (such as increased caring responsibilities) or external factors such as redundancy and job loss.

Although career development is the major considerations for students opting for higher education (Jackson & Wilton, 2023), their preparedness to take advantage of the openings in the chosen career path is more important than the mere choice of a career. Traditionally, the term ‘career’ was conceived as a series of work experiences associated with a single paid employment within a fixed organizational setting. However, new ways of conceptualizing careers have emerged, driven by changes in organizational hierarchies, employment relationships and workforce demographics, which have resulted in greater opportunities for the mobility of employees, thereby making employment relationships less permanent (Gyansah & Guantai, 2022). Furthermore, the advent of information and communication technology (ICT) has brought about tremendous changes in the outlook of the present-day office environment (Efunboade, Adegoke, Ogunmesa & Daramola, 2020). Office Technology and Management (OTM), formerly referred to as Secretarial Studies in Nigeria, evolved out of a need to meet the technological and managerial demands of today’s workplace. In the curriculum document for secretarial students stated the core skills seeks to convey to students to prepare them for a career development. These skills include office, managerial, entrepreneurial, ICT, communication, and socio-psychological skills (Esene, 2019).

Abston and Soter (2020) defined career development as a sequence of attainment and demonstration of requisite competencies that broadly prepare students for a successful transition into the world of work. In other words, career development relates to helping individuals’ student make the most of work opportunities and includes the impacts on and relationships between

work roles and wider life roles. Career development is not just a decision that takes place at the entry point to a job; it is a lifetime process, which entails the different roles and responsibilities in which one engages throughout one's working adulthood into retirement, including one's education, family, leisure activities, paid or volunteer work, and so on. It involves the totality of an individual's psychological, sociological, and educational events which eventually result into occupational choice and other life roles. In other words, it describes one's growth and progress in one's chosen career path (Gyansah & Guantai, 2022). This growth in career improves the quality of individuals' lives in terms of who they become, their sense of purpose, socio-economic status and positive impact on the communities they belong to. Career development requires specialized training in a particular direction or path, and this makes the role of education prominent in preparing for a career.

Career development is defined in terms of having the requisite cognitive, academic, work and social skills, knowledge or experiences, which enable the individual's transition from school into the workplace and make viable a career path in the present-day context (Villares & Brigman, 2023). Digital tools have fundamentally changed the way individual student access information and elaborate knowledge. While raising the demand for new skills, they also create new opportunities for education and training. Digital tool is technology-based tool for learning that uses

gadgets such as laptops/netbooks and mobile phones to store information/content of textbooks, activities, exercises, reports, games, illustrations to deliver classroom instruction. Digital tool is a tool used for learning facilitated by technology that gives students some element of control over time, place, path and/or pace. The Internet and the proliferation of Internet access devices have given students the ability to learn anytime, anywhere. Learning is no longer restricted within the walls of a classroom. Learning is no longer restricted to the pedagogy used by the teacher. Interactive and adaptive software allows students to learn in their own style, making learning personal and engaging. New learning technologies provide real time data that gives teachers the information they need to adjust instruction to meet the unique needs of each student. Learning is no longer restricted to the pace of an entire classroom of students. Interactive and adaptive software allows students to learn at their own pace, spending more or less time on lessons or subjects to achieve the same level of learning (Carroll & Conboy, 2020). Teaching and learning are the bedrock of education and training. Lecturers and students, including office technology

and management students, are supposed to upgrade their skills in the use of modern computer facilities like multimedia, hardware and software among others.

Utilization of instructional technology at the higher institution level requires teachers having knowledge in the course area, as well as an understanding of how students learn using varied instructional resources, and a good level of technical expertise among the teachers. Chugbuson, Durtur and Nimfel (2019) insisted that the Office Technology and Management or secretarial studies programme being a skill acquiring discipline, remains a relevant channel for the transmission of the appropriate information and communication technology (ICT) skills and knowledge in order to make its graduates ICT savvy to embrace globalization and meet the demands of today's work place. The integration of digital tools in teaching is a central matter in ensuring quality of secretarial studies programme. But according to Johnson (2021), challenges to its use have been identified to include; availability of equipment, access to resources, training and support. Secretarial studies teachers and students are no exception. If there is no access to computers and fast internet connections, then implementing online teaching is not feasible. If teachers have not had sufficient training in technology, then they lack the necessary skills. Working on-line means teachers have to adapt to new pedagogical concepts and mode of delivery of teaching for which they have not been trained (Schlichter, 2020).

Digital tools instructional technology has so many advantages on teaching and learning. Digital tools technology improves research by providing students with tools to analyze and understand large amounts of complex disciplines and media, including data and photographs. Digital tools create an open environment where engagement in the form of inquiry and response can be asynchronous, allowing students' time to prepare answers, promoting the exchange of diverse views and collaboration. Teachers use digital classroom technology to streamline the assessment process. Equipping teachers and students with the ability to give and receive real-time feedback through online digital tools provide a powerful incentive for learners to take charge of their classroom outcomes. The effective use of digital learning tools in classrooms can increase student engagement, help teachers improve their lesson plans, and facilitate personalized learning. It also helps students build essential 21st-century skills (Anderson, 2020).

Statement of the Problem

This current relevance of global tool is underpinned by international economic competition, advances in technology, and greater diversity and mobility, all resulting from a

more globalized world. Increasingly, the students of the secretarial studies programme need to recognize that digital tools are crucial for success in the workplace and society at large. Possession of global relevant skills by prospective graduating students, specially the graduates of the OTME programme from colleges of education and universities is essential for effective job performance. However, the researcher observed that secretarial studies students do not graduate with adequate skills that are needed for employment in today's modern office. It has been discovered that: over 40 million graduates are unemployable in the industries because of lack of technical and digital skills required for available jobs. This implies that there is insignificance in the digital skills acquired in the programme offered in schools to the employment needs of individual learners. Based on this, there is a need for the secretarial studies programme to accommodate adequate and relevant digital tools for skills that will enhance the competencies, knowledge, and abilities of the students to be able to fit into the 21st century office, perform optimally and be self-employed. This study examined the operational efficiency of digital tools as antidotes towards career development of secretarial students.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of the study was to examine the operational efficiency of digital tools as antidotes towards career development of secretarial students. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. identify the level of secretarial studies students' operational efficiency of digital tools;
2. determine required digital skills of secretarial studies students' operational efficiency of digital tools;
3. find out the role of digital tools in promoting career development of secretarial studies students;
4. examine the relationship between operational efficiency of digital tools and career development of secretarial studies students;
5. ascertain the challenges facing career development of secretarial studies students' career development;
6. determine the extent to which operational efficiency of digital tools influence career development of secretarial students.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study:

1. What is the level of secretarial studies students' operational efficiency of digital tools?

2. What are the required digital skills of secretarial studies students' operational efficiency of digital tools?
3. What are the role of digital tools in promoting career development of secretarial studies students?
4. What are the challenges facing career development of secretarial studies students' career development?

Research Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested in this study:

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between operational efficiency of digital tools and career development of secretarial studies students.

H₀₂: There is no significant influence of operational efficiency of digital tools on career development of secretarial students.

Methodology

The study used a descriptive survey research design. The population of this study comprised all undergraduate in secretarial studies unity under Business Education department in Tai Solarin University of Education, Ijagun, Ogun State. A total of 45 undergraduate in secretarial studies in Tai Solarin University of Education, Ijagun, Ogun State were selected as sample size of the study. Purposive sampling technique was used in the process of selecting the sample size. Researcher developed instrument tagged: Digital Tools and Career Development of Secretarial Students. Questionnaire (DTCDSSQ). The questionnaire (DTCDSSQ) requested responses on a four (4) – point scale format which was a modification of 5-point Likert scale. The questionnaire was divided into 2 sections vis-a-vis sections A and B. Section A focused on demographic characteristics of the respondents while sections B examined items regarding the level of secretarial studies students' operational efficiency of digital tools; required digital skills of secretarial studies students' operational efficiency of digital tools; and the role of digital tools in promoting career development of secretarial studies students. Face and content validity of the instrument were done on the instrument. A copy of the instrument was made available to the researcher's supervisor in the department to review in content, grammar and structure. Reliability of the instrument was done using the Cronbach alpha. In this case, copies of the instrument were administered on 5 secretarial studies undergraduates in Olabisi Onabanjo University. The data

that were collected subjected to Cronbach alpha formula to get reliability coefficient of 0.90. Research questions were analysis using mean and standard deviation. Hypotheses were tested using Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) and regression analysis. Decisions were taken at 0.05 level of significance. Any mean score of 2.5 and above is regarded as agree while any one below 2.5 regarded as disagree. For PPMC, when p_{value} is less than significance level ($p < .05$), the null hypothesis is rejected.

Results

Research Question 1: What is the level of secretarial studies students' operational efficiency of digital tools?

Table 1: Mean and standard deviation on level of secretarial studies students' operational efficiency of digital tools

Items	Mean	SD
Mastery of word processing packages/Software.	3.18	.765
Ability to create and organize computer files and folders.	2.67	.899
Ability to use storage devices (hard disk, diskette, CD, flash etc.) for storing and sharing files.	2.97	.803
Generate MS office document using integrated application.	2.98	.885
Manipulate hardware devices like printer, scanner, digital camera and projector to create electronic records.	2.90	.901
Inserting pictures and symbols into a document.	2.69	.945
Opening and working with more than one application at a time (multi – tasking) for records creation.	3.02	.755
Using Word Art to create and shape text in a document.	2.84	.911
Use of electronic document imaging for the storage and retrieval of bitmapped documents.	2.77	.906
Use of Microsoft Access to generate management reports 3.41 0.73 Needed 12. Use of Microsoft.	2.84	.895
Cluster Mean	2.89	

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Table 1 revealed that cluster mean was 2.89 which greater than the bench mark mean 2.50. This implied that there was medium level of level of secretarial studies students' operational efficiency of digital tools.

Research Question 2: What are the required digital skills of secretarial studies students' operational efficiency of digital tools?

Table 2: Mean and standard deviation on required digital skills of secretarial studies students' operational efficiency of digital tools

Items	Mean	SD
Data analytic skills	2.87	.925
Digital marketing skills	2.96	.917
Social media skills	2.58	.904
Artificial intelligence skills	3.25	.754
Cybersecurity skills	2.99	.944
Cloud computing skills	2.78	.995
E-mailing skills	3.00	.699
Cluster Mean	2.92	

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Table 2 showed that cluster mean was 2.92 which greater than 2.50 bench mark mean. This implied that data analytic, digital marketing, social media, artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, cloud computing, and e-mailing skills were among the required digital skills of secretarial studies students' operational efficiency of digital tools.

Research Question 3: What are the role of digital tools in promoting career development of secretarial studies students?

Table 3: Mean and standard deviation on the role of digital tools in promoting career development of secretarial studies students

Items	Mean	SD
Digital tool helped me to work faster than before.	2.57	.807
Is more flexible and capacity in the office.	2.63	.799
It made corrections of errors easy.	2.69	.800
Increased performance level at work.	2.71	.844

More innovative ways of business development.	2.74	.841
Affected productivity level.	2.80	.893
Enhance my effectiveness towards career development.	2.59	.885
Cluster Mean	2.68	

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Table 3 revealed that cluster mean was 2.68 which greater than the bench mark mean. 2.50. This further implied that work faster than before, quick corrections of errors easy, increase performance level at work, innovative ways of business development, increases productivity level, and effectiveness towards career development were among role of digital tools in promoting career development of secretarial studies students.

Research Question 4: What are the challenges facing career development of secretarial studies students' career development?

Table 4: Mean and standard deviation on the challenges facing career development of secretarial studies students' career development

Items	Mean	SD
Lack of qualifications	2.57	.807
Not enough experience	2.63	.799
Self-doubt	2.69	.800
Changes in industry	2.71	.844
Time and fear	2.74	.841
Uncertainty about goal	2.80	.893
Cluster Mean	2.68	

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Table 4 revealed that cluster mean was 2.68 which greater than bench mark mean value 2.50. This further implied that lack of qualifications, not enough experience, self-doubt, changes in industry, time and fear, and uncertainty about goal were the challenges facing career development of secretarial studies students' career development.

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between operational efficiency of digital tools and career development of secretarial studies students.

Table 4.5: Relationship between operational efficiency of digital tools and career development of secretarial studies students

Variables	Mean	SD	df	r-value	p-value
Career development	45.76	19.02	43	.322	.003
Operational efficiency of digital tools	28.58	9.342			

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Table 5, showed that there was significant relationship between the independent variable and the dependent variable in the order of ($r = 0.322$, $p < .05$). On this premise, null hypothesis was rejected and the researcher concluded that there was significant relationship between operational efficiency of digital tools and career development of secretarial studies students.

H₀₂: There is no significant influence of operational efficiency of digital tools on career development of secretarial students.

Table 6: Influence of operational efficiency of digital tools on career development of secretarial students

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	12.555	.712		17.626	.000
	Operational efficiency of digital tools	2.417	.020	.976	120.55	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Career development of secretarial students

Table.6 showed that operational efficiency of digital tools was found to be significant and strongly determine career development of secretarial students with the P-value less than 0.05 and magnitude of operational efficiency of digital tools ($\beta = .976$, $t = 120.545$, $p < .05$). This implied null hypothesis was rejected and the researcher concluded that there was significant influence of operational efficiency of digital tools on career development of secretarial students.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of the study revealed that there was medium level of level of secretarial studies students' operational efficiency of digital tools. Data analytic, digital marketing, social media, artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, cloud computing, and e-mailing skills were among the required digital skills of secretarial studies students' operational efficiency of digital tools.

Work faster than before, quick corrections of errors easy, increase performance level at work, innovative ways of business development, increases productivity level, and effectiveness towards career development were among role of digital tools in promoting career development of secretarial studies students. Lack of qualifications, not enough experience, self-doubt, changes in industry, time and fear, and uncertainty about goal were the challenges facing career development of secretarial studies students' career development. There was significant relationship between operational efficiency of digital tools and career development of secretarial studies students ($r = 0.322$, $p < .05$). There was significant influence of operational efficiency of digital tools on career development of secretarial students ($\beta = .976$, $t = 120.545$, $p < .05$).

The above findings were in agreement with Utebor and Nwosu (2024) findings of the study revealed that Office Technology and Management Education graduates highly required digital foundation skills, and software management skills for global relevance. Findings also revealed that there is no significant difference in the mean responses of male and female respondents on the digital foundation skills required of office technology and management education graduates for global relevance, there is no significant difference in the mean responses of highly experienced and less experienced respondents on the digital software management skills required of office technology and management education graduate for global relevance. The study concluded that digital skills were very much needed by office technology and management education graduates for global relevance. Armah (2024) ICT is productive on its own, it is more productive in firms that combine high levels of ICT with high levels of organizational changes in the areas of production and efficiency practices. Ezenwafor, Olushola and Salisu (2024) revealed that the subjects agreed that prestige and vocational interest influence their choice of OTM. Fasae (2024) concluded that the dynamism in the world is also being affected by the office which greatly requires that the professional secretary updates his knowledge by reskilling and upskilling in order to meet up with modern challenges.

Furthermore, the findings of the study corroborated with Mshelia and Orheruata (2023) results of the study showed that for OTM graduates to remain relevant and have a decent work performance in a digital office, there is need for OTM graduates to be adequately equipped with relevant skills in mastery of word-processing packages/software, electronic spreadsheet skills, power--point presentation skill, desktop publishing skills, ability to create and organize computer files and folders, ability to use storage amongst others. However, certain factors like insufficient

fund allocation, poor lecturers' qualities, absence of laboratories, lack of computers laboratory, lack of computer systems (desktop and lap-top, word-processing machines, lack of internet facilities, mode of teaching aids by lecturers, lack of media facilities, shortage of electricity supply. stand as challenges faced by OTM graduates from decent work performance in the 21st century digital office. Ezeonwurie (2022) result of the study showed that for the secretarial profession to remain relevant in the work place, there is need for the secretaries across ministries, department and agencies to acquire requisite skills and competencies in digital work skill needs. The study was concluded that the secretaries need to be adequately equipped with relevant knowledge, attitude and competencies in digital work place skill needs to be relevant and also to be able to effectively and efficiently execute tasks. Adeyemi, Ige, Lawal and Bamidele (2024) revealed that there is a strong and positive relationship between digital transformation and OTM undergraduates' learning experience. The study found that digital transformation significantly and positively enhances students' learning experience in those selected Federal Polytechnics in South West, Nigeria.

Conclusion

Having examined the operational efficiency of digital tools as antidotes towards career development of secretarial students, the following conclusions were drawn based on the findings of the study that there was medium level of level of secretarial studies students' operational efficiency of digital tools. Data analytic, digital marketing, social media, artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, cloud computing, and e-mailing skills were among the required digital skills of secretarial studies students' operational efficiency of digital tools, Work faster than before, quick corrections of errors easy, increase performance level at work, innovative ways of business development, increases productivity level, and effectiveness towards career development were among role of digital tools in promoting career development of secretarial studies students. Lack of qualifications, not enough experience, self-doubt, changes in industry, time and fear, and uncertainty about goal were the challenges facing career development of secretarial studies students' career development. There was significant relationship between operational efficiency of digital tools and career development of secretarial studies students ($r = 0.322$, $p < .05$) and that there was significant influence of operational efficiency of digital tools on career development of secretarial students ($\beta = .976$, $t = 120.545$, $p < .05$).

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are provided:

1. Business educators should undertake regular and consisted training in digital skills acquisition and that digital skills should have embedded in the business education curriculum.
2. It was recommended, among others, that management of university should charge the guidance and counseling unit with the responsibility of providing vocational counseling and occupational information for new and old students on the career prospects of business education.
3. It is therefore imperative that efforts are put in place by the stakeholders to mitigate these challenges.
4. It was recommended amongst others that curriculum planners should recognize and appreciate the trend in technology and to examine local, global and inter-cultural issues that may be of benefit to training students in order to accommodate the required digital office skills identified in this study in the curriculum for training office Technology and Management students.

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