

COVID-19 BORN DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY, RECEPTIVITY AND READINESS AS PREDICTORS OF SECRETARY JOB PERFORMANCE IN OGUN STATE OWNED PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES

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Abstract

The study examined the extent to which Covid-19 born digital technology, receptivity and readiness predict secretary job performance in Ogun State owned public universities. A descriptive survey research design was used. The population of the study comprised fifty-nine secretaries' in Tai Solarin University of Education, Ijagun, Ogun State. Since the population was manageable by the researchers, there is no need for sampling. The whole population was studied. Researchers Instrument tagged 'Covid-19 Born Digital Technology, Receptivity, Readiness and Job Performance Scale (COVIDDTRRS)' with reliability coefficient 0.805 was used for data collection. Descriptive statistics of mean and bar-charts were used for answering research questions. Multiple Regression analysis was used for testing hypothesis at 0.05 significance level. The findings revealed that teleconferencing solutions, interactive voice response, telework, dashboard and electronic collaborative work were among Covid-19 born digital technology. It was also indicated that readiness in terms of skills and competencies which includes readiness in digital publication, communication, collaboration, image processing, office management, online meeting and scheduling might drive secretary job performance. The receptivity natures of secretary such as willingness to use new digital tools, to acquire new idea, listen to new ways of work, seeks knowledge on digital tools, acceptance of new work-shift, listen to colleagues, improves on work strengths, weakness and self-image drive secretary job performance during the current Covid-19 pandemic. The findings also shown that about 89.1% of the variance in secretaries' job performance during the current Covid-19 pandemic was accounted for by the linear

combination of the independent variables (Covid-19 born digital technology, receptivity and readiness). Special online training and workshop should be given to secretaries on the new Covid-19 born ICT, in order to improve their efficiency and effectiveness in using such digital technology tools towards enhancing productivity and job performance.

Keywords: Covid-19, Digital Technology, Receptivity, Readiness, Secretary Job Performance

Introduction

The outbreak of Covid-19 seems to have met the nations of the world unprepared, resulting to several lockdown procedures towards curtailing the spread of the virus. Covid-19 was first recorded in Wuhan City of China in December, 2019. Globally, as at 20th January 2021, a total of 97,078,572 confirmed cases of Covid-19 with 2,077,038 deaths and 69,625,500 recovered have been reported by the World Health Organization (WHO). Nigeria recorded its first case of Covid-19 on 27th of February, 2020 when an Italian citizen returned to Nigeria from Milan, Italy to Lagos, Nigeria. As at 20th January 2021, Nigeria has recorded a total of 113,305 cases of Covid-19, 91,200 discharged cases, 1464 deaths recorded and only 20,641 active cases throughout the 36 states of the country. A person can become infected with the virus by being in close contact (within 2 metres) of an infected person. Infection can also spread by touching a surface or object that an infected person coughed or sneezed on. In order to curb the spread of the virus, Nigeria government imposed lockdown that force organizations to shutdown their activities except those on essential duties. Organizations either private or public played significant role in driving economic activity, even during the Covid-19 pandemic. The lockdown seems to have impacted organizations in different ways as observations shown that some employees' loss their job, pay-cut, delay in salary payment, turnover reduction among others effects in this period of Covid-19 era.

Employees' performance seems to have experienced inverse influence from the outbreaks of Covid-19, including secretary job performance as a result of observing social distancing protocol. Abosede and Akintola (2015) defined a secretary as employee of an organization who has acquired capital skills on secretarial knowledge such as practical experience and shorthand for office work effectiveness. Secretary can also be refers to assistant manager or information manager. Secretary can be termed the driver of an organization as he/she receives visitors, share information among the clients and must be in cheerful mode as he/she sometime represents image of the organization. However, secretary job performance is of important to organization success. This covers the knowledge and competencies of a secretary to effectively carry out a responsibility in line with organization procedure and time framework. Salleh, Musa and Sulaiman (2017) defined secretary job performance as an efficient, effective and timely delivery of work done. According to them, this depends on the availability and effective usage of the ICT tools mapped by sound knowledge and secretarial skills of the secretaries. Secretary in most of the organization either private or public in nature, do carried out the functions of coordination and management of the office environment, the management of his boss official activities and many other job that could be assigned to him/her. This suggests that secretary received official information of the organization, recorded and processed it, and transmitted such information to the appropriate office for

organization effectiveness (Musa, 2016). Some of the functions and responsibility of a secretary involves direct contact with the organization clients and visitors and the Covid-19 protocols against this work procedure. More reasons, organizations introduces different work schedules for their employees especially secretary to keep their productivities and performance constant. Work-from-home was among the work schedules with the introduction of new information and communication technology (ICT) tools. Observation have shown that teleworking and other ICT tools played significant role in increasing and sustaining employee job performance during the current Covid-19 challenges.

Telework has been crucial to sustain production during the crisis and the job performance could improve to the extent that the crisis catalyses wider and smarter adoption of efficient telework practices, raising worker well-being and efficiency and lowering firms' costs (Morikawa, 2020). Teleworking refers to ICT tool that ensure employees work-from-home or home-office and has been crucial to sustain production during the Covid-19 crisis. International Labour Organization (ILO, 2020) defined telework as application of ICT tools that comprised desktop computer, laptop, Smartphone, tablets among others for work done that was carried out outside secretaries' workplace. This further suggests that telework assists secretaries with the application of information and communication technology to effectively carry out their responsibilities outside employer or workplace location. Ozimek (2020) reiterated that teleworking could improve productivity and job performance of workers, raise their well-being and efficiency and lowering organization capital and recurrent costs. In developed nations, evidence had shown that almost 4 in 10 employees in Europe started teleworking, close to 60 per cent of employees switched to working from home in Finland, in Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Belgium, and Denmark, over 50 per cent, in Ireland, Austria, Italy, and Sweden, around 40 per cent of employees were teleworking (Eurofound, 2020).

However, the extent to which secretaries can telework might depend on their level of readiness in effective usage of ICT facilities. Readiness in this case refers to the acquisition of appropriate skills needed by a secretary to effectively use ICT tools application for improve job performance and at the same time observes Covid-19 protocols. Caballero, Walker and Matthew (2018) defined readiness as the extent to which a secretary or an employee posses the needed characteristics that prepared for work success in ICT driven era. They also see readiness as personal attributes of secretary such as enthusiasm, motivation, ambition, and personal presentation. However, observations have shown that the extent to which secretary is work ready, seen as indicative of potential in terms of job performance, success, and promotion for career advancement. Casner-Lotto and Barrington (2006) defined readiness as the preparedness, general skills and good attributes. Readiness might play significant role in improving job performance as it represents the acquisition of skills and knowledge that will drive productivities and in the long run contribute to organization success.

Meanwhile, observations have also shown that the level of secretary readiness towards work might not yield desire job performance if such not comprised the ability and willingness to take in information and novel ideas. That is to say, secretary level of receptivity must open to new ideas or opinions from different segments of the organization. Receptivity refers to willingness and capacity of secretary to receive new ideas towards acceptance of new innovation in carrying out work responsibilities. Ryan, Brutus, Greguras and Hakel (2014)

stated that the job performance of an employee's determines or transform into organization performance and success and they further suggest that employee of an organization must willingly and ready to accept changing nature of work. According to them, secretary receptivity must always be positive, willingness and ready to accept change in the way work is done. Most especially, in this period of Covid-19 crisis that is changing ways of life and how office works were carry out. Ryan *et al* (2014) reiterated that factors such as self-awareness and self-esteem might play significant roles in secretary receptivity towards work environment changing. Self-awareness in this case refers to secretary strengths and weakness to adopt to change in terms of new skills in utilizing ICT tools for job performance while observing Covid-19 protocols of social distancing. Self-esteem in this study relates secretary strive to maintain a consistent self-image. That is, secretary who is ready for constant job performance must be ready and willingness to open to new novel ideas of delivery work. However, in Nigeria, studies on the composite influence of Covid-19 born digital technology, receptivity and readiness on secretary job performance particularly in Ogun State owned public universities have received less attention. Therefore, this called for new study.

Statement of the Problem

The outbreaks of Covid-19 had brought new changes that might reshape work environment schedules and increase the usage of ICT tools. The mode of contacting the Covid-19 has prompted many organizations to observe it is protocols through the application of ICT tools. However, observations have shown that there are still challenges faced by secretaries such as inadequate availability of ICT equipments, inadequate infrastructure networking, high cost of data connection to the internet, delay in salary payment, absence of capacity building programme on new ICT tools among others. Even, the nature of secretary personality in terms of readiness and receptivity towards new changes of work responsibilities remained an issues to organization as it might erode their job performance. The psychological stress and anxiety of contacting the Covid-19 among the secretaries' might also affect job performance. As Subuola and Akintola (2015) reported that adequate provision of information and communication technology tools and facilities with sound capacity building serves as predictors for secretary job performance, while Almaiah, Al-Khasaweh and Althunibat (2020) lamented that the bottle neck facing secretary job during Covid-19 was lack of modern ICT tools and nature of secretary skills on readiness and receptivity towards the usage of the equipments.. Purwanto, Asbari, Fahlevi, Mufid, Agistiawati, Cahyono and Suryani (2020) said secretaries 'job performance during Covid-19 recorded low level and which could be attributed to factors such as inadequate work motivation and high internet costs. However, previous studies have recorded low level of secretary job performance during the Covid-19 pandemic, but most of them were carried out outside Nigeria. This prompted the current researcher to examine the extent to which Covid-19 born digital technology, receptivity and readiness could predict secretary job performance in Ogun state owned public universities.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of the study was to assess the Covid-19 born digital technology, receptivity and readiness as predictors of secretary job performance in Ogun State owned public universities. Specifically, the sought to assess:

1. Covid-19 born digital technology for secretary job performance in Ogun State owned public universities.

2. Secretary readiness for the application of Covid-19 born digital technology for job performance in Ogun State owned public universities.
3. Secretary receptivity of Covid-19 born digital technology for job performance in Ogun State owned public universities.
4. Composite contribution of Covid-19 born digital technology, receptivity and readiness on secretary job performance in Ogun State owned public universities.

Research Questions

1. How accessible is Covid-19 born technology for secretary job performance in Ogun state owned public universities?
2. How is the secretary's readiness for Covid-19 born digital technology for job performance in Ogun State owned public universities?
3. What are the natures of secretary receptivity towards Covid-19 born digital technology for job performance in Ogun State owned public universities?

Hypothesis

H0: There is no significant composite contribution of Covid-19 born digital technology, receptivity and readiness on secretary job performance in Ogun State owned public universities.

Scope of the Study

The study was conducted in Tai Solarin University of Education, Ijagun, Ogun State. Readiness was measured through acquisition of needed competencies among secretaries' for effective usage of Covid-19 digital technology. Receptivity was also measured through the ability and willingness of secretary to adopt the new digital technology. However, the composite contribution was done in order to determine the degree level at which independent variables influence dependent variable.

Review of Related Literature

Theoretical Framework

Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)

The study was based on Technology acceptance model (TAM) postulated by Davis, Bagozzi and Warsaw (1989) as an information systems theory. The model is based on how users come to accept and use technology in terms of facilities. The theory was adopted from the Theory of Reason Action (TRA) which was developed by Ajzen and Fishbein (1980). TRA was designed to explain virtually any human behaviour and it consists of two factors that affect human skills. TAM models suggest that when users are faced with new technological challenges due to innovation in computer-based facilities. By assuming other variables are constant, the easier the technology to be used, the higher and its possibility to be adopted by users. The characteristics of secretaries' user are grouped within the individual context; the technological context refers to the characteristics of the technology itself; while the implementation context refers to the specific professional environment of the user. Davies (2009) believed that using particular computer facilities will enhance job performances and productivity. It also indicates general determinants of secretary acceptance of innovation in computer-based facilities and can be applied to explain or predict secretary behaviours across a broad range of user computing technology. This model/theory is relevant to this study

because it is important to understand the important of digital technology on secretary's job performance. The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) suggests that when users are presented with a new software package, a number of factors influence their decision about how and when they will use it. These factors play a crucial role in understanding individual (secretary) response to information technology. User acceptance is defined as the demonstrable willingness within a user group to employ Information Technology for the tasks it is designed to support. It is believed that digital technology with his potentials and application are nearly every endeavours of mankind, can cause many changes in the way people seek information, and can influence secretary job performances most especially during the current Covid-19 pandemic.

Empirical Review

In the study of Ryan, Brutus, Greguras and Hakel (2014) on the employee characteristics as impacted on receptivity to management development feedback, revealed that employee receptivity played significant role on job performance in terms of self-report of work done. Caballero, Walker and Fuller-Tyszkiewicz (2019) examined impact of work readiness on college graduates job performance. They found out employee work readiness is a multidimensional construct that might have long term influence on job performance of college graduates. Almaiah, Al-Khasaweh and Althunibat (2020) examined the likely challenges facing e-learning systems and the factors affecting its usage during Covid-19 pandemic Era. They conducted interview among 61 experts in e-learning systems at six universities from Jordan and Saudi Arabia. They found out that ICT, e-learning system quality and self-efficacy were among the factors affecting the usage of e-learning and that change management issues, e-learning system technical issues and inadequate finance were among the challenges that erode the usage of e-learning system during this Covid-19 Era.

In Japan, Wolor, Solikhah, Fidhyallah And Lestari (2020) examined the impact of e-training, e-leadership, work-life balance, and work motivation on millennial generation employees' performance in today's work life amid the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. Their findings indicated that independent variables directly impacted employees' job performance. Zain, Eryanto and Marsofiyati (2019) examined the significance of ICT on secretary office administration in Jakarta, Indonesia. They found out that ICT has help secretary in scheduling activities and enhance work schedules within and outside the organization. The findings of Armah (2015) revealed that digital technology tools, that is, information and communication technology instruments have assisted secretaries in their workplace in saving time, performance level in their offices and efficiency practices. The findings of Purwanto, Asbari, Fahlevi, Mufid, Agistiawati, Cahyono and Suryani (2020) in Indonesia revealed that employees job performance during Covid-19 is confronting with lose work motivation, to bear electricity and internet costs, can cause data security problems challenges.

The findings of Sahni (2020) indicated that employees of an organization during Covid-19 were confronted with work-life conflict and overload of work challenges which indirectly affect their job performance. Subuola and Akintola (2015), a total sample of three hundred secretaries from private and public universities in Ogun State, Nigeria participated in examining the influence of information and communication technology (ICT) facilities utilization on their job performance. They indicated that there was a positive influence of ICT

tools on secretaries' job performance. In the Takoradi Metropolis, Asorh and Seidu (2016) examined the effects of modern office technology equipment on the secretary performance. They found out that modern office technology aided secretaries job performance.

Methodology

A descriptive survey research design was used in this study. The study was carried out in Tai Solarin University of Education (TASUED), Ijagun, Ogun State, Nigeria. The population of the study comprised fifty-nine secretaries' in the above named university. However, since the population was manageable by the researcher, there is no need for sampling. The whole population was studied. Researchers Instrument tagged 'Covid-19 Born Digital Technology, Receptivity, Readiness and Job Performance Scale (COVIDDTRRS)' was used for data collection. The instrument was validated by an experts from relevant field. The reliability of the instrument was carried out twice among 10 secretaries' in Olabisi Onabanjo University (OOU), Ago-Iwoye, Ogun State, Nigeria and the data collected were subjected to Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) formula and yielded 0.805 as reliability coefficient. Descriptive statistics of mean and bar-charts were used for answering research questions. Multiple Regression analysis was used for testing hypothesis at 0.05 significance level.

Decision Criteria: Based on the cut-off point of 2.50 (strongly agree (SA) 4, agree (A) 3, disagree (D) 2 and strongly disagree (SD) 1). Any mean score equal to 2.50 or greater than 2.50 was regarded as agreed while any items with less than 2.50 was disagreed. When p-value is greater than the significance level ($p > .05$) null hypothesis is accepted, otherwise, the hypothesis is rejected.

Results and Discussion

Research Question 1: How accessible is Covid-19 born technology for secretary job performance in Ogun State owned public universities?

Table 1: Mean Responses on Covid-19 Born Digital Technology accessibility for Secretary Job Performance in OgunState Owned public universities

Items Raised	Mean	Remarks
Teleconferencing Solutions	2.78	Available
Web-Based-Applications	2.37	Not Available
Interactive Voice Response	2.88	Available
Telework	2.66	Available
Dashboard	2.96	Available
Wearable/Sensor	2.22	Not Available
Electronic Collaborative Work	2.89	Available

Source: Field Survey, 2021.

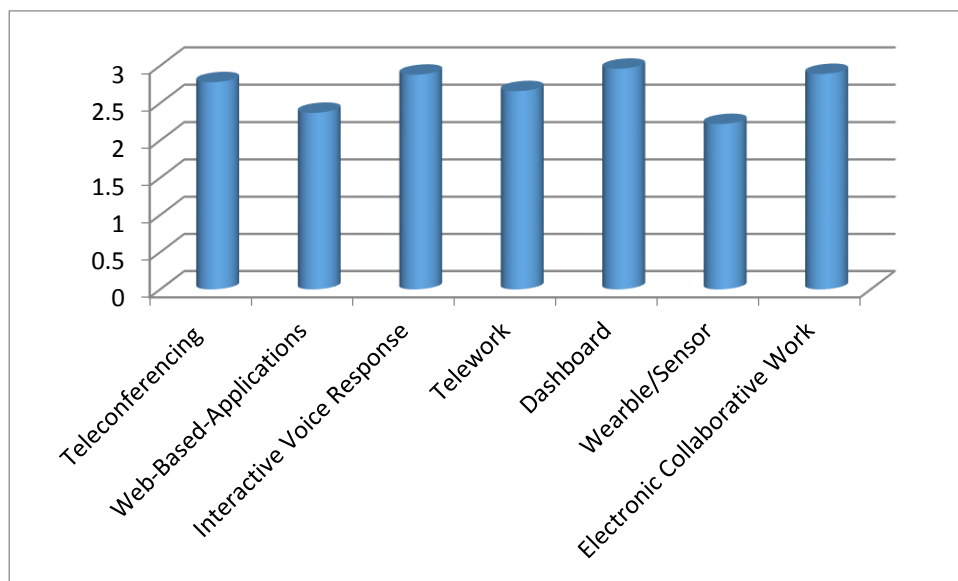


Figure 1: Bar-chart representing the extent Covid-19 born digital technology accessibility for secretary job performance in Ogun State owned public universities

Table 1 revealed that out of seven digital technologies raised, respondents agreed on five as the Covid-19 born digital technology accessible for secretary job performance in Ogun State owned public universities.

Research Question 2: How is the secretary's readiness for Covid-19 born digital technology for job performance in Ogun State owned public universities?

Table 2: Mean Responses on the Natures of Secretary Readiness towards Covid-19 Born Digital Technology for Job Performance in Ogun State Owned Public Universities

Items Raised	Mean	Remarks
Digital publication readiness	2.51	Agreed
Digital communication	3.02	Agreed
Digital collaboration	2.72	Agreed
Digital image processing	2.59	Agreed
Digital office management	2.91	Agreed
Digital meeting readiness	2.75	Agreed
Readiness on digital scheduling	2.78	Agreed

Source: Field Survey, 2021.

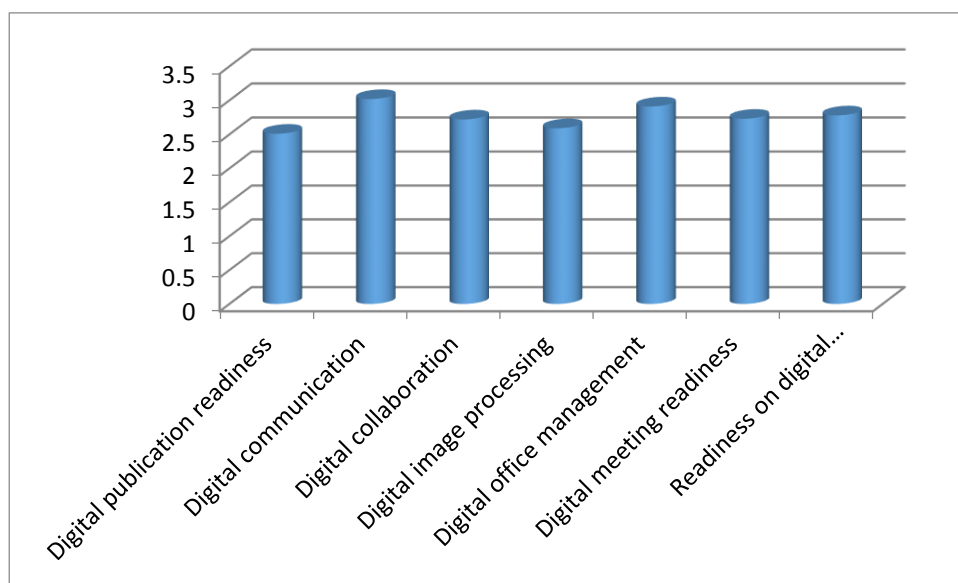


Figure 2: Bar-chart representing the natures of secretary readiness towards Covid-19 born digital technology for job performance in Ogun State owned public universities

Table 2 revealed that secretaries' readiness in terms of skills and competencies in Covid-19 born digital technology could drive their job performance. However, their readiness must include digital publication, communication, collaboration, image processing, office management, online meeting and scheduling.

Research Question 3: What are the natures of secretary receptivity towards Covid-19 born digital technology for job performance in Ogun State owned public universities?

Table 3: Mean Responses on the Natures of Secretary Receptivity towards Covid-19 Born Digital Technology for Job Performance in Ogun State Owned Public Universities

Items Raised	Mean	Remarks
Ready to use new digital tools	3.82	Agreed
Willingness to acquire new idea	3.21	Agreed
Listen to new ways of work	2.82	Agreed
Seeks knowledge on ICT tools	2.65	Agreed
Acceptance of new work-shift	2.87	Agreed
Listen to colleagues	2.56	Agreed
Improves on work strengths	2.78	Agreed
Improves on work weakness	2.64	Agreed
Improves on self-image	2.85	Agreed

Source: Field Survey, 2021.

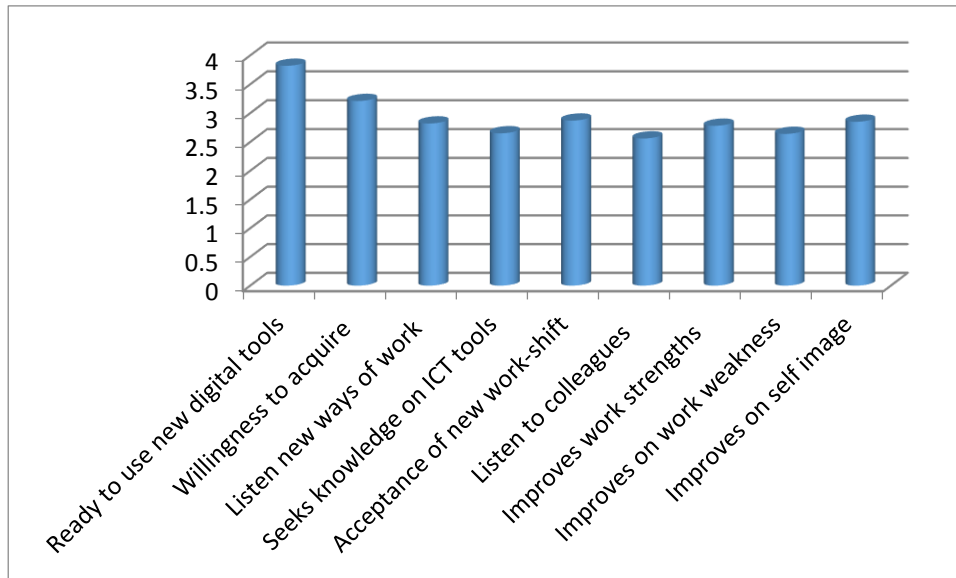


Figure 3: Bar-chart representing the natures of secretary receptivity towards Covid-19 born digital technology for job performance in Ogun State owned public universities

Results from Table 3 indicated that for secretary job performance to increase in this period of Covid-19 era, they must be receptivity in natures such as ready to use new digital tools, willingness to acquire new idea, listen to new ways of work, seeks knowledge on ICT tools, acceptance of new work-shift, listen to colleagues, improves on work strengths, weakness and self-image.

Hypothesis Testing

H0₁: There is no significant composite contribution of Covid-19 born digital technology, receptivity and readiness on secretary job performance in Ogun State owned public universities.

Table 4: Composite Contribution of Covid-19 Born Digital Technology, Receptivity and Readiness on Secretary Job Performance in Ogun State owned Public Universities

R = .927					
R ² = .911					
Adj R ² = .891					
Std. Error =2.819					
ANOVA					
Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F-ratio	P _{value}
Regression	1482.02	3	832.721	10.892	.001
Residual	1292.63	55	71.222		
Total	1383.92	58			

Source: Field Survey, 2021

Table 4 above revealed that there was significant composite contribution of independent variables on dependent variable; R = 0. 927, p< .05. The Table further indicated that {89.1% (Adj. R² = 0.891)} that about 89.1% of the variance in secretaries' job performance during

Covid-19 pandemic Era was accounted for by the linear combination of the independent variables (Covid-19 born digital technology, receptivity and readiness).

Discussion of Findings

The findings revealed that teleconferencing solutions, interactive voice response, telework, dashboard and electronic collaborative work were among Covid-19 born digital technology. It was also indicated that readiness in terms of skills and competencies which includes readiness in digital publication, communication, collaboration, image processing, office management, online meeting and scheduling might drive secretary job performance. The receptivity natures of secretary such as willingness to use new digital tools, to acquire new idea, listen to new ways of work, seeks knowledge on digital tools, acceptance of new work-shift, listen to colleagues, improves on work strengths, weakness and self-image drive secretary job performance during the current Covid-19 pandemic. The findings also shown that about 89.1% of the variance in secretaries' job performance during the current Covid-19 pandemic was accounted for by the linear combination of the independent variables (Covid-19 born digital technology, receptivity and readiness). These findings corroborate with the findings of Ryan, Brutus, Greguras and Hakel (2014) who found out that employee receptivity played significant role on job performance in terms of self-report of work done. Caballero, Walker and Fuller-Tyszkiewicz (2019) found out employee work readiness is a multidimensional construct that might have long term influence on job performance of college graduates.

The findings also correlate with. Zain, Eryanto and Marsofiyati (2019) who found out that ICT tools has help secretary in scheduling activities and enhance work schedules within and outside the organization. Armah (2015) revealed that digital technology tools, that is, information and communication technology instruments have assisted secretaries in their workplace in saving time, performance level in their offices and efficiency practices. Subuola and Akintola (2015) indicated that there was a positive influence of ICT tools on secretaries' job performance, while Asorh and Seidu (2016) found out that modern office technology aided secretaries' job performance.

Conclusion and Recommendations

To continue production and work progress, observations have shown organizations are now adopting more digital technology tools in their daily operations with the view to observe Covid-19 protocols. However, this study had examined the extent to which Covid-19 born digital technology, receptivity and readiness predict secretary job performance in Ogun State owned public universities. The study concluded based on the findings that teleconferencing solutions, interactive voice response, telework, dashboard and electronic collaborative work were among Covid-19 born digital technology. Readiness in terms of skills and competencies which includes readiness in digital publication, communication, collaboration, image processing, office management, online meeting and scheduling might drive secretary job performance. The receptivity natures of secretary such as willingness to use new digital tools, to acquire new idea, listen to new ways of work, seeks knowledge on digital tools, acceptance of new work-shift, listen to colleagues, improves on work strengths, weakness and self-image drive secretary job performance during the current Covid-19 pandemic and that about 89.1% of the variance in secretaries' job performance during the current Covid-19 pandemic was

accounted for by the linear combination of the independent variables (Covid-19 born digital technology, receptivity and readiness). The following recommendations are raised based on the findings of the study:

1. The authority of the university should invest more on digital technology tools that can be used by their employees while working from home.
2. Special online training and workshop should be given to secretaries on the new Covid-19 born ICT, in order to improve their efficiency and effectiveness in using such digital technology tools towards enhancing productivity and job performance.
3. There is need to sustain the above recommendations and the usage of the new Covid-19 born ICT, in order to sustain the efficiency and effectiveness of digital technology tools on secretaries' job performance in the advent of the fact that the entire world is aware of the fact that Covid-19 pandemic is not yet a thing of the past. Hence, the need to sustain and improve on Digital Technology tools for Secretaries' job performance.

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