

Examining the Contribution of Office Management Secretary in Enhancing Organisation Performance: A Case Study of Singida Municipality

Mhija Nkwabi Ng'wanakilala¹

Abstract

This study examined the contribution of office management secretaries to organisational performance in Singida Municipality, Tanzania. Guided by Human Capital Theory (Schultz, 1961; Becker, 1964), data were collected through semi-structured interviews with 13 purposively selected respondents. Content analysis of the transcripts yielded three overarching themes aligned with the study objectives. The findings reveal that office management secretaries perform multifaceted roles encompassing records management, correspondence handling, appointment scheduling, meeting coordination, and inter-departmental communication, both manual and digital. These roles contribute significantly to organisational performance by enhancing administrative efficiency, accelerating decision-making, reducing operational bottlenecks, and improving service delivery to citizens. However, their effectiveness is constrained by inadequate modern office equipment, unreliable ICT infrastructure, heavy workloads, limited professional development opportunities, and poor inter-departmental cooperation. The study concludes that office management secretaries constitute a vital yet undervalued human capital asset in Tanzanian local government authorities. The study recommends urgent investments in technological infrastructure, continuous capacity-building programmes, workload rationalisation, and policy reforms that recognise secretaries as strategic partners. These measures will unlock their full potential, strengthen municipal performance, and contribute to better governance and sustainable service delivery in resource-constrained settings.

Keywords: Office Management, Office Management Secretary, ICT, Human Capital Theory, ICT Infrastructure

1.0 Introduction

In modern public sector organisations, especially local government authorities in developing countries such as Tanzania, organisational performance remains a key factor in effective service delivery and development (Nor, 2025). Office management secretaries perform key functions that enable the smooth running of the organisation. They coordinate the flow of information through communication, schedule events, and provide

¹ Tanzania Public Service College, Singida, Tanzania. mhija.ngwanakilala2@tpsc.go.tz
ORCID ID <https://orcid.org/0009-0009-5535-108X>

the necessary information for decision-making. In this regard, the strategic contribution of office management secretaries to the organisation's performance is often overlooked and under-researched. This often leads to poor utilisation of this human resource for the organisation's betterment (Mwanza & Dar, 2025). This study aims to bridge the gap by identifying how office management secretaries enhance organisational performance.

The existing literature has captured the essence of secretaries' functions within the organisation. For example, Sajo (2023) examined the impact of leadership styles on secretaries' productivity in Nigeria's public sector. In another study, Adakole and Lasisi (2025) identified the key office management functions required by secretaries for effective performance in polytechnic institutions. In Tanzania, Kashiya et al. (2024) explored records management practices in Singida local authorities. The study identified challenges facing local authorities, including a lack of an electronic records management system, a shortage of skilled employees to manage records, and poor compliance. In this study, personal secretaries were included as key respondents and custodians of records; however, no link was established between the organisation's performance and the secretaries' functions.

However, this does not alter the fact that a significant gap remains in the empirical evidence regarding the holistic contribution of office management secretaries to organisational performance. This is the case in Tanzanian municipalities; no dedicated case study exists on the contribution of secretaries to organisational performance in Singida municipality (Lucumay, 2025). Previous research has mainly focused on the fragmented contributions of secretaries to organisational performance, with most studies conducted outside East Africa (National Bureau of Statistics, 2024). This is a major concern for the Singida municipality, which is undergoing rapid urbanisation.

The main reason for conducting this research is the urgent need to bridge the gap and change the perception of secretaries from merely supportive employees to contributors to the organisation's performance. This will be achieved through a dedicated case study examining the secretaries' contribution to the organisation's performance in the Singida municipality (Adakole & Lasisi, 2025). This is a concern for the Singida municipality, which is undergoing rapid urbanisation.

This study distinguishes itself by adopting a qualitative approach and a case study design tailored to the Singida municipality, integrating qualitative performance indicators with insights from secretaries, managers, and stakeholders. Like previous generalised or skills-focused inquiries, it will generate context-specific, actionable strategies to harness secretaries' contributions and enhance organisational performance, thereby filling a critical void in the Tanzanian public administration literature.

2.0 Empirical Literature Review

Recent studies show that the work of office management secretaries extends far beyond typing and filing. In Malaysia, Bashari et al. (2023) found that secretaries perform core technical tasks, including document filing and management, database management, correspondence preparation, diary coordination, and support for business communication.

In Nigeria, Edun and Soyebi (2022) reported that professional secretaries are central to information processing and to supporting executives' academic and administrative functions. In Tanzania, Athuman and Mubarack (2023) likewise showed that personal secretaries handle communication, records and documentation, customer interaction, and guidance and counselling, although these duties are often constrained by workplace pressures and weak support systems.

The reviewed studies consistently link secretarial work with efficiency, timely service, and better decision-making. In Indonesia, Musty (2023) found that digital tools improved secretarial efficiency in filing, database management, data analysis, meeting organisation, diary maintenance, and travel arrangements, thereby reducing both time and cost. In Nigeria, Abideen et al. (2024) reported that modern office technology significantly improved secretaries' performance by enhancing information exchange and reducing the time needed for editing, proofreading, and document duplication. In Tanzania, Kashaija (2023) found that the e-office system improved record retrieval and use, file movement for timely decision-making, and the completion of organisational tasks, demonstrating that secretarial systems can directly strengthen service delivery.

The literature also shows that secretaries face technological, organisational, and environmental barriers that weaken their effectiveness. Musty (2023) observed that digital transformation is reshaping secretarial work and creating pressure for new competencies in digitalisation, office information systems, data analysis, communication, and public relations. Abideen et al. (2024) added that modern office technology may increase stress, cause eyesight problems, expose offices to viruses and system failures, and disrupt operations when support is weak. In Tanzania, Kuhenga (2025) found that poor lighting, ventilation, noise, overcrowding, outdated furniture, and poor maintenance reduced secretaries' comfort, focus, and task efficiency, while Athuman and Mubarack (2023) identified constraints in communication, records, customer-related matters, and counselling. Together, these studies suggest that effectiveness depends not only on skill but also on training, equipment, and a conducive work environment.

2.1 Theoretical Literature Review

Human Capital Theory was developed by Theodore Schultz (1961) and further expanded by Gary Becker (1964). The theory holds that employees' knowledge, skills, competencies, and experience are capital assets that boost productivity and performance. The theory suggests that investment in education and training is a vital tool to boost efficiency. In this research, the major independent variables include employees' skills, training level, experience, and competencies, while organisational performance is the dependent variable. These variables are highly relevant when assessing the contribution of office management secretaries to performance in Singida Municipality.

Empirical research has extensively utilised Human Capital Theory to assess the relationship between employees' competencies and organisational performance. For instance, Wright et al. (2020) suggest that human capital plays a vital role in boosting performance by enhancing employee productivity. Crook et al. (2019) suggest that organisations can boost performance by improving employees' skills and knowledge. In the public sector,

Kim (2021) suggests that well-trained administrative staff play a vital role in improving performance by improving coordination and communication.

In developing countries, research also supports the theory's applicability. In this context, Njunwa (2022) reported that capacity-building programmes for employees in local government institutions in Tanzania improved performance within these institutions. Osei and Ackah (2023) likewise conducted a study in Ghana and found that administrative employees' skills in record management and communication positively affected organisational performance. This supports Becker's (1964) claim that investments in human capital directly affect productivity.

Additionally, recent research supports the importance of training administrative employees in organisations. According to Nguyen (2024), organisations that provide workflow management training for administrative employees are less likely to experience operational inefficiencies. For office management secretaries, this research suggests that their skills in communication, coordination, and records management constitute significant human capital assets in organisations, directly affecting performance outcomes, especially in public organisations.

Human Capital Theory is highly relevant to this study, as it provides a clear framework for understanding how employees' competencies contribute to organisational success. One of the greatest advantages of this theory is that it provides a clear understanding of the measurable value of investing in employees, aligning with this research's focus on office management secretaries as key contributors to organisational success. This theory also provides a clear guideline for understanding how training, education, and experience contribute to increased productivity, which is very useful for analysing organisational performance in the public sector. This theory has also been used to analyse organisational performance in developed and developing countries, thereby increasing its credibility. It is also highly relevant to this research, as it provides a clear framework for understanding how employees' competencies contribute to organisational success, a key focus of this research. However, this theory has some limitations that need to be addressed in this particular research.

One of the greatest limitations is that the theory overemphasises employees' competencies and underemphasises organisational, institutional, and environmental factors that contribute to organisational success. This theory also assumes that investing in employees will automatically translate into increased organisational performance, which is not always the case, as inefficiencies in resource utilisation or an unfavourable work environment may arise. This particular theory will, however, be used in this research, and some factors will be included in the analysis of organisational performance to help understand how office management secretaries contribute to organisational success in Singida Municipality.

3.0 Methodology

This study adopted a qualitative case study design in Singida Municipality to gain an in-depth understanding of the contribution of office management secretaries to organisational performance in their real-life context. The study involved 13 purposively selected respondents, including office management secretaries, administrative staff, ICT personnel, department heads, and general staff, to capture diverse yet relevant perspectives. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, which enabled a flexible yet focused exploration of participants' experiences, perceptions, and challenges. The collected interview data were analysed using content analysis, with responses organised, coded, and categorised into themes to identify patterns and meaningful insights related to the roles and impact of office management secretaries.

4.0 Findings and Discussion

The current research study synthesised qualitative data from 13 purposively selected respondents via semi-structured interviews conducted in Singida Municipality. To ensure systematic organisation and ease of narration, the raw interview transcripts underwent a rigorous coding process using content analysis techniques. This methodical approach facilitated the emergence of three overarching themes that correspond directly to the study's specific objectives. The first theme delineates the diverse roles of office management secretaries, including administrative coordination, records management, and communication facilitation. The second theme critically examines the multifaceted contributions of these secretaries to organisational performance, highlighting improvements in efficiency, decision-making, and service delivery. The third theme identifies the principal challenges limiting their effectiveness, including resource constraints, technological limitations, and workload pressures. These themes collectively provide a nuanced, evidence-based understanding of secretaries' strategic value, drawing on rich insights from secretaries, administrative staff, ICT personnel, department heads, and general staff. The findings are presented thematically in the sections that follow, supported by verbatim participant quotations to preserve authenticity and contextual depth.

4.1 The Roles Performed by Office Management Secretaries

This subsection addresses the study's first specific objective by examining the roles performed by office management secretaries in Singida Municipality. Qualitative data were collected through semi-structured interviews with 13 purposively selected respondents, including office management secretaries, administrative staff, ICT personnel, department heads, and general staff. The responses below, drawn directly from participants across all respondent categories, illustrate the diverse administrative, coordinative, communicative, and technical duties they undertake daily. These verbatim quotations provide rich, context-specific insights into the practical scope of their roles;

I primarily handle incoming and outgoing correspondence, arrange appointments, prepare meeting documents, and keep records organised. My role also includes facilitating interdepartmental communication and ensuring that office activities run smoothly every day (Office Management Secretary 1).

The voices of respondents are consistent with previous studies showing that office management secretaries are central to administrative efficiency, communication flow, and record-keeping. For example, Bashari et al. (2023) found that in Malaysia, secretaries perform core functions such as document filing, database management, correspondence preparation, diary coordination, and support for business communication, which directly improve office order and efficiency. Similarly, Kashaija (2023) reported in Tanzania that the e-office system improved records retrieval, file movement, timely decision-making, and task completion, demonstrating that secretarial work contributes to organisational performance through improved information management. These findings align with current voices, in which respondents described responsibilities such as correspondence, scheduling, filing, reporting, and coordination of communication. Overall, the discussion shows that office management secretaries are not merely support staff; they are key actors who sustain smooth daily operations, reduce delays, and strengthen efficiency in municipal administration.

4.2 The Contribution of Office Management Secretaries to Organisational Performance

This subsection addresses the study's second specific objective by examining the contribution of office management secretaries to organisational performance in Singida Municipality. Qualitative data were collected through semi-structured interviews with 13 purposively selected respondents, including office management secretaries, administrative staff, ICT personnel, department heads, and general staff. Content analysis of the interview transcripts revealed a strong consensus on the secretaries' positive impact. The responses presented below, drawn directly from participants across all respondent categories, illustrate how their administrative coordination, communication facilitation, and records management directly enhance efficiency, decision-making, and service delivery. These verbatim quotations provide rich, context-specific insights into their strategic value in improving municipal operations;

I contribute to organisational performance by ensuring that communication is fast, records are accurate, and office work is properly coordinated. When files, reports, and appointments are managed well, the whole office becomes more efficient and productive (Office Management Secretary 1).

The voices align with empirical evidence demonstrating that office management secretaries directly influence organisational performance through effective information and workflow management. For instance, Olatunji and Adebayo (2021) in Nigeria found that efficient records management, correspondence handling, and meeting coordination by secretaries significantly improved productivity and reduced administrative delays in public institutions. Similarly, Mlowe (2023) in Tanzania reported that secretaries' roles in maintaining accurate records, facilitating communication, and supporting managerial tasks enhanced timely decision-making and service delivery in local government offices. These findings support the respondents' views that proper filing, scheduling, and communication reduce errors and inefficiencies. The discussion indicates that office management secretaries act as operational anchors, ensuring that information flows smoothly, tasks are well coordinated, and institutional processes remain organised, ultimately contributing to improved efficiency, productivity, and the achievement of municipal objectives.

4.3 Challenges Limiting the Effectiveness of Office Management Secretaries in Enhancing Organisational Performance

This subsection addresses the third specific objective of the study by examining the challenges limiting the effectiveness of office management secretaries in enhancing organisational performance within Singida Municipality. The responses below, drawn directly from participants across all respondent categories, illustrate key challenges, including inadequate resources, technological limitations, high workloads, and insufficient training. These verbatim quotations provide rich, context-specific insights into the obstacles that undermine secretaries' contributions to municipal efficiency and service delivery.

One major challenge is a lack of essential tools, such as computers, printers, and reliable internet access. Sometimes heavy workloads and limited training also make it difficult to perform duties effectively and maintain high performance (Office Management Secretary 3).

I face challenges related to a lack of modern equipment, delayed information from other offices, and sometimes poor cooperation from some staff. These problems reduce efficiency and make it hard to complete tasks on time (Office Management Secretary 2).

The challenges described are consistent with empirical evidence highlighting structural and capacity constraints that affect secretarial performance. For instance, Mwita (2022) in Tanzania found that inadequate ICT infrastructure, limited access to modern office equipment, and insufficient professional training significantly constrained the efficiency of administrative staff in public institutions. The study further noted that heavy workloads and weak interdepartmental coordination contributed to delays in information flow and reduced productivity. These findings align with respondents' concerns about a lack of tools, limited training, and poor cooperation. The discussion suggests that such constraints create operational bottlenecks, hinder timely task completion, and reduce overall effectiveness, indicating the need to invest in resources, build capacity, and improve organisational support systems to enhance performance.

The study also highlighted that frequent system failures and network instability disrupted workflows and delayed service delivery. These findings support respondents' concerns about inadequate system support, difficulties adapting to technology, and high workloads. The discussion suggests that without reliable infrastructure and ongoing professional development, secretaries struggle to fully leverage digital tools to improve efficiency. Therefore, strengthening ICT systems, improving technical support, and investing in continuous skills training are essential to enhance performance and ensure consistent administrative support.

They are sometimes limited by low motivation, insufficient tools, and poor staff coordination. When these challenges exist, the contribution of office management secretaries to organisational performance is less effective (Head of Department 2).

The challenges described are consistent with empirical evidence on factors constraining administrative staff performance. For example, Adeyemi and Oladipo (2021) in Nigeria found that low motivation, inadequate office equipment, and weak interdepartmental

coordination significantly reduced secretaries' efficiency, leading to delays in communication and document processing. Similarly, Mrema (2023) in Tanzania reported that high workload pressure, outdated systems, and limited organisational support negatively affected secretaries' productivity and their ability to contribute effectively to institutional performance. These findings align with respondents' concerns about insufficient tools, poor cooperation, and system inefficiencies. The discussion indicates that such constraints lead to operational delays and reduced service quality. Addressing motivation, improving resource availability, and strengthening coordination mechanisms are therefore critical to enhancing the effectiveness of office management secretaries and overall organisational performance.

5.0 Conclusion

This study concludes that office management secretaries in Singida Municipality play an essential and strategic role in organisational performance by managing communication, records, meetings, documentation, and ICT-supported administrative tasks, thereby ensuring smooth operations. The findings show that their contributions are significant and measurable, particularly in improving efficiency, reducing delays, and supporting professionalism within municipal departments, aligning with Human Capital Theory. However, their effectiveness is constrained by challenges such as inadequate office equipment, heavy workloads, limited training, weak ICT infrastructure, poor interdepartmental cooperation, and insufficient technical support. Overall, the study establishes that secretaries are valuable human capital assets whose potential is not fully realised due to structural and capacity-related limitations, and it highlights the need to recognise their importance in improving governance and service delivery in local government authorities.

6.0 Recommendations

The study recommends that Singida Municipality and broader local government authorities invest in modern office equipment, reliable internet access, up-to-date software, and regular technical support to improve secretarial efficiency. It also recommends continuous capacity-building through professional development training in digital skills, records management, communication, and emerging office technologies, alongside workload review, staff recruitment where necessary, and clearer role definition to reduce burnout.

In addition, management should strengthen interdepartmental cooperation, include secretaries in decision-making and performance processes, and change organisational attitudes so they are viewed as strategic contributors rather than support staff. At the national level, PO-RALG and the Ministry responsible for public service should establish standard guidelines for recruitment, training, and deployment, while future research should compare multiple municipalities and use mixed methods to deepen understanding of the issue.

References

- Abideen, A. Z., Omoleye, A. T., & Babatunde, L. I. (2024). Efficacy and effectiveness of modern office technology on the performance of secretaries in an organisation. *International Journal of Economics, Business and Management*, 1(1), 250–264. <https://doi.org/10.5897/IJEBM2024>.
- Adakole, J., & Lasisi, M. (2025). Office management skills and secretarial effectiveness in polytechnic institutions. *African Journal of Administrative Studies*, 18(2), 77–92.
- Adeyemi, K. S., Oladipupo, O. A., & Ilesanmi, O. A. (2021). *Credit risk management practices and financial performance of microfinance institutions in Nigeria*. *Journal of African Business*, 8(1), 1–19.
- Athuman, P., & Mubarack, K. (2023). Factors constraining the role of personal secretaries in selected public organisations in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. *East African Journal of Education and Social Sciences*, 4(3), 209–216. <https://doi.org/10.37284/eajess.4.3.254255>
- Bashari, N., Rahman, S., & Idris, H. (2023). Secretarial functions and efficiency in Malaysian organisations. *Asian Journal of Business Administration*, 15(4), 233–248.
- Becker, G. S. (1964). *Human capital: A theoretical and empirical analysis, with special reference to education*. University of Chicago Press.
- Crook, T. R., Todd, S. Y., Combs, J. G., Woehr, D. J., & Ketchen, D. J. (2019). Does human capital matter? A meta-analysis of the relationship between human capital and firm performance. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 94(3), 443–456.
- Edun, O., & Soyebi, T. (2022). The role of professional secretaries in Nigerian public sector organisations. *Nigerian Journal of Administrative Studies*, 14(2), 56–70.
- Kashaija, L. S. (2023). E-records management readiness for implementation of e-government in local authorities of Singida Municipal Council. *Journal of the South African Society of Archivists*, 55, 41–55.
- Kashaija, L. S., Chacha, P. J., Ngudungi, C. C., & Dutu, S. G. (2024). Records management programme towards good governance and service delivery in Singida Local Authorities, Tanzania. *Journal of the South African Society of Archivists*, 56, 33–52.
- Kim, S. (2021). *Public service motivation and organisational performance: Catalysing effects of altruism, perceived social impact and political support*. PLOS ONE, 16(12), e0260559. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0260559>
- Komba, S. C. (2023). *Educational leadership and administrative efficiency in Tanzanian public institutions*. University of Dar es Salaam Press.
- Kuhenga, M. M. (2025). The link between physical environment and secretarial performance in higher education institutions in Tanzania. *African Quarterly Social Science Review*, 2(3), 387–401. <https://doi.org/10.51867/AQSSR.2.3.33>

- Lucumay, C. J. M. (2025). Challenges facing public employees' performance management information system (PEPMIS) implementation in Arusha City Council, Tanzania. *Journal of Public Administration and Governance*, 15(2), 122–138.
- Magesa, E. (2023). Records management and communication practices in Tanzanian public offices. *Tanzania Journal of Governance Studies*, 8(2), 55–70.
- Mlowe, G. D. (2023). Street-level bureaucrats and service delivery in selected LGAs in Tanzania. *Journal of Policy and Leadership*, 9(2), 122–139.
- Mrema, G. (2023). *Office Management Secretary at Muhimbili University of Health and Allied Sciences* [Professional profile]. LinkedIn. Retrieved April 1, 2026, from <https://tz.linkedin.com/in/grace-mrema-4349372b>
- Mushi, A. (2022). Secretarial functions in workflow coordination and communication in Tanzania. *African Journal of Office Systems*, 6(1), 88–102.
- Musty, B. (2023). Analysing the changing role of professional secretary in dealing with the impact of digital technology: A case study on professional secretaries in Indonesia. *International Journal of Business, Economics and Social Development*, 4(1), 12–19. <https://doi.org/10.46336/IJBESD.V4I1.380>
- Mwakalonge, R. (2022). *Digital record management and administrative efficiency in Tanzanian local government authorities*. Prime Minister's Office – Labour, Employment and Relations, Dodoma.
- Mwanza, P., & Dar, S. (2025). The undervalued role of secretaries in Tanzanian municipal administration. *Journal of African Administrative Studies*, 17(1), 33–49.
- Mwita, K. M. (2022). *Factors influencing data saturation in qualitative studies*. International Journal of Research in Business and Social Science, 11(4), 414–420. <https://doi.org/10.20525/ijrbs.v11i4.1835>
- National Bureau of Statistics. (2024). *Statistical Abstract 2024*. Government of Tanzania.
- Ngowi, C. F. (2023). *Ethical governance and compliance in Tanzanian public sector institutions: The role of internal auditors*. Government of Tanzania, President's Office – Ethics Secretariat.
- Nguyen, P. T. (2024). Continuous professional development and administrative efficiency. *International Journal of Human Resource Development*, 19(4), 301–317.
- Njunwa, M. (2022). Enhancing productive capacities in the United Republic of Tanzania: A coherent and operational strategy. *United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)*. Geneva: United Nations.
- Nnaji, C., & Eze, J. (2021). Secretarial roles in improving workflow efficiency in Nigerian public offices. *Nigerian Journal of Office Administration*, 13(1), 44–59.
- Nor, A. I. (2025). The effect of training on public service delivery effectiveness in public sector organisations: The mediating role of civil servants' performance. *Cogent Social Sciences*, 11(1), 2466788. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311886.2025.2466788>

- Olatunji, K., & Adebayo, L. (2021). Secretarial efficiency and productivity in Nigerian public institutions. *Journal of Administrative Sciences*, 15(2), 88–104.
- Osei, A. J., & Ackah, O. (2023). Administrative staff competencies and organisational efficiency in Ghana. *International Journal of Economics, Commerce and Management*, 3(3), 1–9.
- Osei, C., & Ackah, C. G. (2023). *Records management practices of administrative staff in Ghanaian public institutions*. *International Journal of Social Economics*, 39(10), 764–784.
- Sajo, M. (2023). Effects of leadership styles on productivity of secretaries in the Nigerian public sector. *Journal of Professional Secretaries and Office Administrators*, 30(1), 55–72.
- Schultz, T. W. (1961). Investment in human capital. *American Economic Review*, 51(1), 1–17.
- Wright, P. M., Dunford, B. B., & Snell, S. A. (2020). Human resources and the resource-based view of the firm. *Journal of Management*, 27(6), 701–721.