

Effects of Advanced Office Technologies in the Secretarial Profession on Organisational Operations in Tanzania

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Abstract

This study is guided by the theory of Technological Determinism, propounded by Marshall McLuhan (1964), to explore the application of advanced office technologies in the secretarial profession in Tanzania. A mixed-methods approach was employed, with quantitative data collected from 112 survey respondents and qualitative data from 30 interviews with secretaries, human resource professionals, trainers, and secretarial studies students across eight regions of Tanzania. Quantitative data were analysed using IBM SPSS version 28.0, while qualitative data were analysed thematically. Findings indicate a growing application of advanced technologies in the secretarial profession, with significant effects on day-to-day organisational operations, including improved communication, greater efficiency and cost-effectiveness, enhanced workflow management, faster decision-making, easier handling of complex tasks, and reduced manual workload. The findings contribute to understanding how technological transformation is reshaping administrative work and the competencies required of contemporary secretaries. The study recommends that the government revisit and redefine the roles, responsibilities, and skill set of future secretaries to ensure alignment with ongoing technological advancements.

Keywords: Office Technologies; Secretarial Profession; Organisational Operations; Technological Advancement

1.0 Introduction

This study integrated Technological Determinism, as propounded by Marshall McLuhan (1964), to investigate the effects of Tanzanian secretaries' use of advanced office technology on organisational operations. In recent decades, the adoption and application of advanced office technologies, such as integrated software systems, cloud computing, and communication tools, have revolutionised organisational operations and the way secretaries perform their duties worldwide (Johnson & Carter, 2022). Also, the integration of digital technologies has significantly transformed organisational workflows, productivity, communication and service delivery across the globe (Smith, 2019). In the African context, the impact of advanced office technology on secretarial roles is evident but varies significantly across regions (Ngugi & Mwaura, 2023; Osei & Bediako, 2022). A study by Mwangi (2022) highlights that while technology adoption in African countries

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has increased, the pace and extent of integration differ, with some regions lagging due to infrastructural and resource constraints. The disparity in the adoption of advanced office technologies in Africa affects the skill development of secretaries, who may not have access to the same level of training and technology as their counterparts in more developed regions (Njeri, 2023).

In Tanzania, the adoption of advanced office technology has been relatively gradual. The introduction of digital tools and systems in Tanzanian workplaces is still evolving, with many organisations struggling to keep up with global technological trends (Kigoma, 2024). Despite the increasing use of digital tools, a significant gap exists in understanding how these technologies affect the roles and skills of professional secretaries in Tanzania (Mwangi & Omari, 2023; Kessy & Ndunda, 2024). Previous research has predominantly focused on broader African or global perspectives, leaving a gap in empirical evidence specific to the Tanzanian context (Mtemi, 2023). A comprehensive investigation into the effects of advanced office technology on Tanzanian secretaries and organisational operations is essential.

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Review

This study is guided by the theory of Technological Determinism, propounded by Marshall McLuhan (1964). This theory asserts that technology primarily drives social and cultural change (McLuhan, 1964). According to the theory, technological advancements shape human behaviour and societal structures, altering how individuals interact and perform their roles. The theory holds that assessing the application of advanced office technologies such as communication tools and systems, internet facilities and infrastructure and virtual meetings and their effects on organisational operations, such as fostering better communication, improved efficiency and cost-effectiveness, improved workflow management, fast decision-making processes, softening hard tasks and reducing the burden of manual work. Different researchers have recently applied the theory to study technological advancement. Rogers (2023) used the theory to analyse how digital transformation affects business operations, revealing that technological innovations lead to shifts in business processes and employee skill requirements. Chung and Koo (2022) applied the Theory of Technological Determinism to examine how emerging technologies such as AI and automation influence workplace dynamics and job roles, demonstrating that technological advancements drive changes in job functions and organisational structures. Kim and Lee (2021) explored the impact of technology on educational practices, demonstrating how technological tools alter teaching methods and learning experiences, consistent with the theory's view of technology-driven change. In this context, the theory is relevant and of current interest in academia.

2.2 Empirical Review

Several previous studies have contributed to knowledge regarding the adoption of advanced technologies in organisations globally, across Africa, and in Tanzania. A comprehensive study by Johnson and Carter (2022) explored the global impact of advanced office technology on the secretarial profession. Their research indicated a significant adoption

of digital technologies in data management. The study by Johnson & Carter (2022) reports high adoption rates of advanced technologies in the secretarial profession in developed countries, leaving a gap in understanding of how these changes are unfolding in developing regions such as Tanzania. A study by Brown and Smith (2021) investigated secretaries' technological adaptation and training needs across various international settings. They found that secretaries across regions face diverse challenges in technology adoption, including the need for ongoing training and adaptation (Brown & Smith, 2021). However, this study lacks a specific focus on the experience in Tanzanian contexts, suggesting the need for localised research. A study by Ngugi and Mwaura (2023) analysed the impact of advanced office technology on secretarial roles within various African countries. Their findings highlighted differences in technology adoption rates between urban and rural areas (Ngugi & Mwaura, 2023). Although the study provides valuable insights into regional variations, it does not delve deeply into the specific circumstances of other countries, such as Tanzania. Research conducted by Osei and Bediako (2022) examined the challenges and opportunities faced by secretaries in Africa due to advances in office technology. The study emphasised issues such as limited access to training resources and varying levels of technological infrastructure across the continent (Osei & Bediako, 2022). While the study offers a broad perspective, it does not provide a detailed analysis specific to the context, underscoring the need for targeted research. A study by Mwangi and Omari (2023) investigated how Tanzanian secretaries have adapted to advanced office technology. The study found progress in integrating digital tools (Mwangi & Omari, 2023). The research lacks an in-depth exploration of the specific effects on organisational operations, suggesting a gap for further investigation. Research by Kessy and Ndunda (2024) focused on the impact of advanced office technology on the skills and training of Tanzanian secretaries. The study did not examine the adopted technologies and their effects on organisational operations, highlighting a contextual gap and the lack of Tanzanian studies addressing it. The research indicates the need for a more detailed study to examine how these technological adoptions and their effects are unfolding in Tanzania.

Regarding the effects of adopting advanced technologies on organisational operations, several scholars have contributed to the field. The study by Dery et al. (2017) found that integration of advanced technologies into office environments had a profound impact on productivity, efficiency, and workflow management (Glore et al., 2017). Furthermore, software applications have automated various administrative and operational tasks, reducing the burden of manual work on employees (Brynjolfsson & McAfee, 2014). Existing literature (Mosha, 2022; Mbuya, 2023; Mtemi, 2023; Mwangi & Omari, 2023; Kigoma, 2024; Kessy & Ndunda, 2024) generally addresses technological advancement in Offices but lacks a detailed examination of the extent of such adoption and its effects on organisational operations. This study aimed to fill this gap by analysing how technological advancements have been adopted in the secretarial profession and how the application of office technologies has reshaped organisational operations in Tanzania.

3.0 Methodology

The study employed a mixed-methods research approach, specifically an exploratory sequential design, in which a quantitative approach was used primarily, supported by a qualitative approach. The mixed approach was used because it allows the problem to be studied both inductively and deductively, thereby enhancing the validity of the findings (Hay, 2016). The study employed a survey research design, chosen for its ability to facilitate data collection from a large number of respondents. Survey designs are particularly effective for describing and exploring human behaviour (Singleton & Straits, 2009).

In the case of Population and Sampling Procedures, the study's target population comprised 30 public institutions across eight regions of Tanzania: Arusha, Dar es Salaam, Dodoma, Kilimanjaro, Morogoro, Mtwara, Mwanza, and Tabora. The study sought to gather information from 26 secretarial trainers, 56 experienced professional secretaries, and 30 Human Resources (HR) professionals, all of whom served as key informants from the aforementioned public institutions. The study employed a mixed-method sampling approach, utilising distinct procedures to select respondents from different groups. The purposive sampling technique was used to select professional secretaries, HR professionals, and secretarial trainers because these groups are rich in information and their knowledge is essential for providing in-depth insights to address the research questions. This form of sampling is essentially strategic and requires establishing a good correspondence between the research questions and the selected sample (Bryman, 2004). Conversely, students pursuing secretarial studies were selected using Convenience sampling, in which students who were readily accessible and available during data collection participated in the focus group discussion.

The study primarily used questionnaires and structured interviews to collect data. The reason for adopting these methods was their complementarity, the mitigation of the weaknesses of one method, and the assurance of data validity. The questionnaires were distributed to secretaries, secretarial trainers, and Human Resources (HR) professionals. At the same time, interviews were conducted with 30 respondents to obtain nuanced data on changes in office technology and their effects. Quantitative and qualitative data analysis methods were used; quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics, including calculating percentages and mean scores. The qualitative data, derived from open-ended responses and interviews, were analysed thematically. In terms of ethical considerations, this study addressed all relevant issues and followed the research procedures. The research permits were obtained from the relevant authorities, from the Regional Secretary of all eight regions. Confidentiality was maintained, informed consent was obtained from respondents, and a plagiarism check was conducted to ensure the work's originality.

4.0 Findings and Discussion

4.1 Demographic Information

As presented in Table 1, the study focused solely on work experience, as it was deemed the most relevant factor for the study's objectives. Other demographic information, such as

age, gender, or education level of respondents, was not included because it does not affect the study's purpose.

Table 1: Respondents' Working Experience

Designation	Working Experience	No. of Respondents	Percentage(%)
Secretaries	1-5	19	33.9
	6-10	8	14.3
	11-15	11	19.6
	16-20	4	7.1
	20+	13	23.2
	Missing	1	1.8
	Total	56	100.0
Human Resource officers	1-5	10	33.3
	6-10	9	30.0
	11-15	9	30.0
	16-20	0	0
	20+	2	6.7
	Total	30	100.0
Trainers	1-5	9	34.6
	6-10	6	23.1
	11-15	4	15.4
	16-20	2	7.7
	20+	5	19.2
	Total	26	100.0

Source: Field Data (2025)

Table 1 shows that 65 per cent of respondents had more than 5 years of experience in a particular field. This indicates respondents' knowledge of how they view the secretarial profession and the technological changes occurring in daily office practice.

4.2 Application of Advanced Office Technologies in the Secretarial Profession

This section explains the identification of advanced office technology in the secretarial professions of public organisations in Tanzania. It focused on identifying current advanced office technologies adopted and used in daily office routines. In a questionnaire guide, human resource officers and professional secretaries were asked to identify the advanced office technologies currently used in daily office activities, with the question, 'What advanced office technologies are currently used by secretaries in your organisation?' The response to this question is shown in Figure 1 below, where the technology is accepted if supported by 40% of respondents.

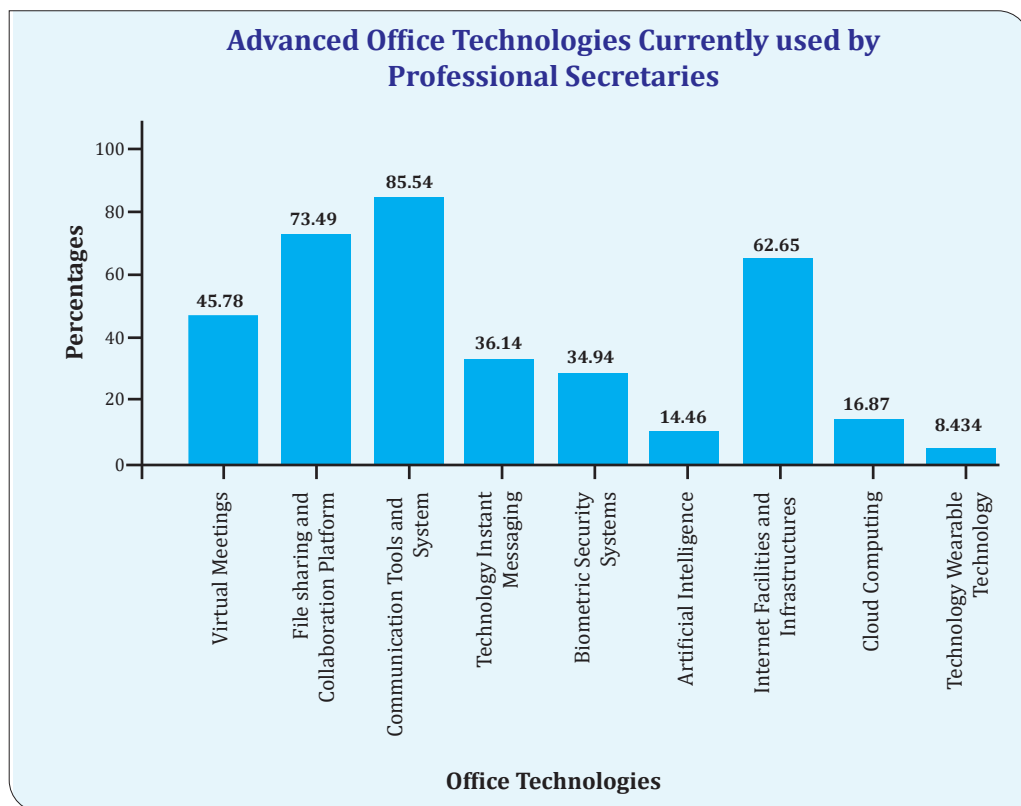


Figure 1: Advanced Office Technologies Currently Used by Professional Secretaries

Source: Field Data (2025)

According to Figure 1, secretarial professionals in Tanzania extensively use advanced office technologies. The most commonly adopted technologies are discussed under this section:

4.2.1 Communication Tools and Systems

85.5% of the 86 respondents agreed with this technology and adopted and used it in their daily secretarial activities. The results reveal that communication tools and systems are used within the secretarial profession in Tanzania. The findings relate to the pre-existing literature in different ways. For example, the study by Harris (2021) found that automated transcription services have reduced the need for manual note-taking, allowing secretaries to focus on coordinating and planning events. The study by Athuman & Mubarack (2023) in public organisations in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, found that most secretaries use technological tools and systems in their daily communication. Similarly, Masegenya & Mwila (2023) confirm that the use of Information and Communication Technology in the local government authority in the Mwanza region of Tanzania has increased the adoption of technological tools and systems in day-to-day office operations.

4.2.2 File Sharing and Collaboration Platforms

According to the data, most respondents (73.5% of 86) agreed that file-sharing and collaboration platforms are used in the secretarial profession in Tanzania. The study by

Smith and Brown (2023) found that online file-sharing and collaboration platforms are widely used and have shifted secretarial roles in modern offices (Smith & Brown, 2023). The study by Kashaija (2023) confirms that personal secretaries at the Ministry of Finance in Tanzania use electronic file-sharing and collaboration platforms. Also, the study by Abdallah (2023) found that in several activities, the management secretaries share files electronically and collaboratively.

4.2.3 Virtual Meetings

Virtual meetings were supported by 38 respondents, representing 45.8% of the 86 respondents. These results imply that virtual meetings, as an advanced office technology, have been adopted and used in day-to-day office operations by management secretaries in Tanzania. The results remain valid because they align with the existing literature. For example, Johnson (2024) documents that virtual technologies offer new ways to engage with colleagues and clients, potentially leading to more immersive and compelling communication experiences across different countries. Similarly, the study by Ekundayo et al. (2022) found that most company secretaries extensively used virtual meetings during the COVID-19 era and continued to do so afterwards. Also, Musty's (2023) study among Indonesian secretaries confirmed that, in recent decades, secretaries' roles have evolved to include conducting virtual meetings. Finally, Sambu (2021) found that, during COVID-19, secretaries facilitated various general meetings in Tanzania via video conferencing and continue to do so to this day.

On the other hand, data indicate limited integration of emerging technologies, including cloud computing, Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools, automated systems, and wearable technologies. Of 86 respondents, 14 (16.9%) were consistent with cloud computing, 12 (14.5%) with AI tools, and 7 (8.4%) with wearable technologies. The lower response rates for cloud computing, Artificial Intelligence, and wearable technologies may reflect relatively low usage of these technologies, suggesting they are less critical to current professional secretaries' roles.

4.3 Effect of Advanced Office Technologies on Organisations' Operations

This section examines the effects of advanced technologies currently used by professional secretaries on organisational operations. To gather data on this aspect, Professional Secretaries, who are the primary users of office technologies and Human Resource Officers, who oversee the effectiveness and alignment of these technologies with organisational goals, were asked, *'How has the introduction of these office technologies impacted the secretarial activities and general organisational operations?'* The statements were rated on a Likert scale from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). A range of 4.5-5.0 MS denoted 'Strongly Agree', 3.5-4.4 MS indicated 'Agree', 2.5-3.4 MS meant 'Neutral', 1.5-2.4 MS represented 'Disagree', and 1-1.4 MS signified 'Strongly Disagree', with the interpretation column indicating agreement levels. The response to this question is shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Effects of Advanced Office Technology on Organisations' Operations

S/N	Impact	Respondents	Mean	SD	Interpretation
1	Advanced office technology contributed to better communication and resource sharing	107	4.46	.872	Agreed
2	Improved efficiency and cost-effectiveness as a result of automation, remote working, minimisation of errors and fast access to stored information	101	4.30	.807	Agreed
3	The use of modern office technologies has raised productivity and improved workflow management	105	4.35	.866	Agreed
4	Advanced office technologies enhance decision-making processes	104	4.23	.873	Agreed
5	Requirement for continuous learning and adaptation to new technologies	52	4.06	.938	Agreed
6	Ability to take on more difficult and strategic tasks, such as project management and research	100	3.66	.966	Agreed
7	Reduce the burden of Manual work	103	4.25	.987	Agreed
8	No significant impact	52	1.90	1.034	Disagreement

Source: Field Data (2025)

The findings in Table 2 show that several respondents agreed that several aspects of organisational operations have contributed to the application of advanced office technologies in the secretarial profession and in organisations:

Better communication was rated with a mean of 4.46 and a standard deviation of 0.872, indicating slight variation in respondents' opinions. However, these data show that advanced office technology has contributed to improved communication within organisational operations.

Improved efficiency and cost-effectiveness in service delivery were supported with a mean of 4.30 and a standard deviation of 0.807. These data show that the application of advanced technologies has positively contributed to organisational operations in Tanzania by fostering Improved efficiency and cost-effectiveness in service delivery through automation, remote working, error minimisation, and faster access to stored information.

Improved workflow management and productivity: Several respondents (mean = 4.35, standard deviation = 0.866) supported the view that the use of modern office technologies

has improved workflow management and increased productivity across organisational operations in Tanzania. The results suggest that advanced office technology is more effective and should be made available to secretaries.

Fast decision-making processes, as measured by data in the table, are enhanced by advanced office technologies, with a mean of 4.23 and a standard deviation of 0.873. These results indicate that advanced office technology has enabled faster decision-making in the organisation's day-to-day operations.

Similarly, the Quantitative data from Table 2 remain valid due to being supported by qualitative data from key informants: Responding to the interview question, one HR professional was quoted;

Our department's operations have evolved due to technological changes, which have brought about the application of modern office technologies by ourselves and our secretaries, something which has reduced the burden of manual work, improved workflow management and fast decision-making processes, also improved efficiency and cost-effectiveness. (Respondent 7)

On the other hand, the professional secretary replied on the influence of advanced technology in the secretarial profession on office operations effectiveness;

The introduction of office technology has demonstrably simplified work processes and saved time compared to the previous period, when files had to be physically moved between offices, a task now superseded by modern technology. Nowadays, we can share files through office systems regardless of distance...It also streamlined management of administrative tasks such as scheduling appointments using digital systems like e-calendars. (Respondent 9)

In general, the quantitative and qualitative findings confirm that technologies in the secretarial profession have affected organisational operations by fostering better communication, improving efficiency and cost-effectiveness, enhancing workflow management, enabling faster decision-making, easing hard tasks, and reducing workload. These findings align with Technological Determinism theory propounded by Marshall McLuhan (1964). This theory asserts that technology primarily drives social and cultural change (McLuhan, 1964). According to the theory, technological advancements shape human behaviour and societal structures, altering how individuals interact and perform their roles. Therefore, the findings show distinct changes in organisational operations that directly respond to the theory's assumptions. Similarly, the findings align with prior studies. Musty (2023) showed that integrating office technologies has increased the efficiency of professional secretaries by reducing costs and time, ensuring secure, proper information storage, and automating secretarial tasks. The study by Al-Saudi & Flayyih (2024) found that new technology used by office bearers, including secretaries, has had significant positive effects, including increased effectiveness and efficiency. Also, the study by Abdallah & Kopoka (2024) confirms that advanced technology, particularly e-office, has improved communication, increased the speed of service delivery, and reduced paperwork.

5.0 Conclusion

In conclusion, the study highlights that there are different results on application of advanced office technologies, while some technologies such as Communication tools and systems, internet facilities and infrastructure and virtual meetings are highly applied in office operations, other technologies like cloud computing, Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools, automated systems, and wearable technologies are less adopted and rarely applied in office operations by secretaries in Tanzanian organisations. On the other hand, technologies have affected organisational operations by fostering better communication, improving efficiency and cost-effectiveness, enhancing workflow management, enabling faster decision-making, facilitating the handling of complex tasks, and reducing manual workload. Looking to the future of the secretarial profession under prevailing circumstances, training has to evolve to meet the emerging demands of the global, technology-driven workplace.

6.0 Recommendations

The study recommends that the Government, through the President's Office, Public Service Management and Good Governance (PO-PSMGG), in collaboration with key stakeholders such as the Tanzania Personal Secretaries Association (TAPSEA), Secretarial Training Institutions, and Employers, should revisit and redefine future secretaries' roles, responsibilities, and skill sets to ensure alignment with the ongoing technological advancements.

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