

# **THE IMPORTANCE OF PROFESSIONAL ETHICS TO SECRETARIAL PROFESSION**

**BY**

**ANIFOWOSE MARY FUNMI**

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## **APPROVAL PAGE**

This research work has been read and approved by the undersigned on behalf of the Department of Office Technology and Management, Institute of Information and Communication Technology, Kwara State Polytechnic, Ilorin in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of Higher National Diploma in Office Technology and Management.

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**MRS. ASONIBARE, E.M**  
**(Project Supervisor)**

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**DATE**

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**MRS. ASONIBARE, E.M**  
**(Head of Department)**

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**DATE**

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**MRS. ASONIBARE, E.M**  
**(Chairman Project Committee)**

---

**DATE**

---

**MR. IYIOLA, M.A.**  
**(External Examiner)**

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**DATE**

## **DEDICATION**

This project is dedicated to the Almighty God, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful, for granting me the strength, wisdom, and perseverance to complete this work.

I also dedicate it to my beloved parents, the one who is no more and my mom, my prayer warrior, whose constant prayers, love, and support have been my source of motivation throughout my academic journey.

To my lecturers and mentors who guided me and to all future secretaries who strive to uphold professionalism and ethical standards in their duties may this work serve as a light and encouragement to you all

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## **LIST OF TABLES**

Table 4.1	The secretary is a confidant of the organization.	40
Table 4.2	Honesty is another important ethics of the secretarial profession.	41
Table 4.3	Honesty is an organizational moral standard expected of the secretary.	42
Table 4.4	A secretary should be very polite at all times as politeness is one of the most cherished qualities of a secretary.	43
Table 4.5	The secretary should cultivate an atmosphere in which the boss will rely on him/her to carryout and complete assignments unsupervised.	44
Table 4.6	The secretary should be organised at all times. Plan his/her work and avoid time wastages in order to achieve maximum result within a short time.	45
Table 4.7	The secretary should exhibit a great deal of tact in the performance of duties, especially when handling members of the public and other colleagues in the organization.	46
Table 4.8	The secretary must be loyal to the organization and his/her boss; show respect to other top officers of the organization and respect constituted authority.	47
Table 4.9	The secretary should maintain good working relationship with other members of staff.	48
Table 4.10	The secretary must make punctuality his/her watch-word on all occasions.	49

Table 4.11	The secretary should not be tempted to accept gifts or favours from members of the public in case there is a hidden reason for such gifts or favours.	50
Table 4.12	The Confidential Secretary should not be involved in partisan politics.	51
Table 4.13	Merit is one of the ethical requirements of the Confidential Secretary.	52
Table 4.14	Whatever the secretary does in the performance of his/her duties is on behalf of the organization and the immediate boss.	53
Table 4.15	The secretary should dress corporately and smart always.	54
Table 4.16	Professional Secretary should know how to operate all office machines and equipment appropriately.	55
Table 4.17	A Secretary must be specially trained and groomed to make him/her perform effectively.	56
Table 4.18	Regardless of a particular job situation, every secretary should be responsible for office duties that require business skills.	57
Table 4.19	Professional Secretarial Organizations should be encouraged in Nigeria to set standard for secretaries.	58
Table 4.20	The secretary's body, office and surrounding environment should always be clean. Importantly, the secretary should avoid body odour.	59

## **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

Title page	i
Approval Page	ii
Dedication	iii
Acknowledgements	iv
List of Tables	v
Table of contents	vii
Abstract	ix

### **CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION**

1.1	Background to the study	1
1.2	Statement of the Problem	6
1.3	Objectives of the Study	7
1.4	Research Questions	7
1.5	Significance of the Study	8
1.6	Delimitation	9
1.7	Limitations of the study	10

### **CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW**

2.1	Introduction	11
2.2	Concept of Secretary	12
2.3	Duties of Confidential Secretaries	14
2.4	Concept of Professional Ethics	18
2.5	Importance of Ethics in Organizations	20
2.6	Ethics and Human Relations	22

2.7	Code of Conduct	23
2.8	Ethical Issues for Secretarial Administration	27
2.9	Unethical Behaviours in Secretarial Profession	32

### **CHAPTER THREE:        METHODOLOGY**

3.1	Instrument Used	38
3.2	Population of the Study	38
3.3	Sample and Sampling Techniques	38
3.4	Distribution and Collection of Data	39
3.5	Reliability	39
3.6	Validity	39
3.7	Method of Data Analysis	39

### **CHAPTER FOUR:        DATA ANALYSIS**

4.1	Introduction	40
4.2	Results	40

### **CHAPTER FIVE:    SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

5.1	Summary	60
5.2	Conclusion	61
5.3	Recommendations	62
	References	63
	Appendix	65



## **ABSTRACT**

*Professional ethics play a crucial role in the secretarial profession, serving as a foundation for integrity, trust, and efficiency in the workplace. Secretaries are often entrusted with sensitive information, confidential documents, and the smooth coordination of organizational tasks. Adhering to ethical standards such as honesty, confidentiality, loyalty, accountability, and professionalism is essential for maintaining the credibility and reputation of both the secretary and the organization. This paper explores the significance of professional ethics in the secretarial field, highlighting how ethical conduct fosters trust, enhances productivity, and ensures compliance with organizational policies and legal regulations. The study emphasizes the need for continuous ethical training and awareness to help secretaries navigate the challenges of modern office environments while upholding the values of their profession. The result of this study revealed that the secretary should be dedicated and committed to work in order to enhance the growth of the organization. Professional ethics and morals are good attributes of a secretary and prospective secretaries should imbibe in them for a better performance in the future. The study recommended that secretaries are expected to pay proper attention to the professional ethics and morality at their workplace so as to be on the alert not to jeopardize the secretarial profession. Secretaries are expected to add moral sense to ethical issues. In conclusion, professional ethics are essential to the secretarial profession, guiding secretaries in their daily practice and ensuring that they maintain the highest standards of integrity, confidentiality, and professionalism. By prioritizing professional ethics, secretaries can build trust, maintain confidentiality, and demonstrate their commitment to excellence in their role.*

**Keywords: Importance, Professional Ethics and Secretarial Profession.**

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.1 Background of the Study**

The secretarial profession is a vital component of any organization, providing administrative support and ensuring the smooth operation of day-to-day activities. As the primary point of contact for clients, customers, and colleagues, secretaries are entrusted with sensitive and confidential information, making them guardians of organizational integrity. However, the increasing complexity of the modern work environment, coupled with the rapid advancement of technology, has created new challenges for secretaries, highlighting the need for a strong foundation in professional ethics.

Professional ethics are the moral principles and values that guide an individual's behavior and decision-making in their profession. In the context of the secretarial profession, professional ethics encompass a range of principles, including confidentiality, integrity, loyalty, and respect for authority. These principles are essential for building trust, maintaining confidentiality, and ensuring that organizational goals are achieved in an ethical and responsible manner. Professional ethics play a crucial role in the secretarial profession, as secretaries often have access to sensitive and confidential information.

Ethics, according to Ikelegbe (2018) is synonymous with morality. He added that there is no doubt that ethics should be an important part of business activities.

Ethical behavior according to Braimoh (2017) is knowing the difference between right and wrong and consciously choosing to do right. He emphasized that workplace ethics are important especially to the secretarial profession because ethical standard when adhere to, promote organization culture based on shared values of integrity, accountability, transparency and respect. In addition, ethical standard enhances teamwork, provide emotional security, protect institutional property and enhance positive public image. Secretaries with good work ethics often possess generally strong character. This means they are self-discipline, pushing themselves to complete work tasks instead of requiring others to intervene. They are also often very honest and trustworthy, as they view these traits as befitting the high-quality employees they seek to become. Secretaries are expected to demonstrate strong character in order to distinguish themselves from others (Ikelegbe, 2018).

Agholor and Agholor (2020) stated that the ethics of a secretary are moral principles relating to the job that he/she will be bound by. These requirements are automatically taken on board when one accepts any position as a secretary and one will be expected to uphold them at all times. In the views of Segunda (2019), some of the professional ethics which secretaries must adhere to include confidentiality, honesty, loyalty, reliability, responsibility, work unsupervised, multi-tasking, flexibility, commitment, teamwork, accountability, reliable, strong character exhibition and dedication to the job. This implies that adherence to professional ethics would assist secretaries in the performance of their functions.

Professional ethical standard constitutes standards or codes of conduct set by people in a specific profession (Braimoh 2017). Some professions that maintain moral and ethical standard does not abhor bad, dishonest or irresponsible behavior from any of their members. This is achieved by setting out expected behaviours in the form of professional ethics; therefore, all professionals must work together or try to uphold a good reputation. The concept of professional ethics according to Braimoh (2017) comprises what a professional should or should not do in the workplace and professionals are expected to uphold professional ethics by not getting involved in any type of conflict of interest.

According to Donaldson and Davis in Braimoh (2017), professional ethics programme in any organization legitimize managerial actions, strengthens the coherence and balance of the organizations culture, improves trust in relationships between individuals, supports greater consistency in standards and qualities of product, cultivate greater sensitivity to the impact of the enterprise values and messages. Others are that; ethical programme cultivate strong team work, support employee growth, help avoid criminal act, lend a hand in managing values and serve as an insurance policy, because they help ensure that policies are legal. Therefore, the need to inculcate professional ethical standard in secretarial practice will no doubt enable secretaries contribute optimally to organizations productivities.

The secretary, because of the nature of his/her job, faces a lot of unethical challenges. These challenges put the ethical posture of the secretary to test in an

unethical work environment. An unethical work environment, according to Emeti (2012) is an environment in which the secretary works under intimidation, threat of sack if he/she refuses to act on instructions that are not right and which go against good conscience, equity, justice and fair-play.

Traditionally, a secretary was one who supported an executive by helping to manage their schedules, receive visitors, take minutes of meetings and produce communications and other documents. However, today's secretaries (also known as administrative assistants, office coordinators, executive assistants, office managers etc.) are using computers, the internet, and other advance office technologies to perform vital "information management" functions in the modern office.

Large and small organizations and other institutions in the public and private sectors of the Nigerian economy always need secretarial services because these services greatly assist the organizations and institutions in carrying out their main functions and ultimately achieve their respective objectives. No organization or institution can easily function without secretarial duties and the secretary. The secretary is very important personnel in the success and growth of the organization or institution. The secretary here, refers to the confidential secretary who act as an assistant to an executive in the various organizations and institutions and apart from being skilled in shorthand and computer word processing, is also skilled in handling all types of correspondences, office procedure and administration and function to provide communication support services and other issues that are routine in nature.

A secretary is a person or an individual who are employed by employer with the purpose of performing certain responsibilities in the attainment of the organizational goal. Secretary is someone who contributes to the success of the organization. They also use their expertise knowledge to achieve the organization goals.

A secretary is a person or executive who has office skill in handling correspondences and has the ability to assume responsibilities without direct supervision to provide communication support services on matters or routine and administrative issues (Cletus 2014) various office workers perform some aspects of secretarial work, but not all office workers are secretarial. Secretaries have more responsibilities for their work. A professional secretary performs task similar to an executive or administrative assistant. Secretarial function is just central in very organization and no office can easily function without a secretary. This brings about the importance of secretaries to the successful growth and development of the organization (Adam 2015).

Generally, secretary coordinates the daily routines of an office and organizes the office schedules and paper work which includes analysis of prevailing situations judgment, technical knowledge and creativity (Adebayo and Akinleye 2015). The number and type of activities are assigned depend whether they are generalists (multifunctional secretaries) or specialist (such as legal or word processing secretaries). Secretaries use many different talents and work with many different people. As an

office professional, the secretary has the responsibility to organize the work flow so that the employer will feel that everything is under control, with all project completed when needed (Chrissy, 2014). Modern professional secretaries are now referred to as office managers by some people because of their activities, skill acquisition, knowledge and even expectations from their bosses, customers, clients and even the general public whether called a secretary, a manager or a personal assistant, a professional secretary is no more the man or woman sitting behind the typewriter, taking shorthand dictations and attending to visitors. It is against this background that this study assesses the Importance of Professional Ethics to Secretarial Profession.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problems**

Despite the importance of professional ethics in the secretarial profession, there is a growing concern that many secretaries are not adhering to these principles. This can lead to a breakdown in trust, confidentiality, and integrity, ultimately damaging the reputation of the organization and the profession as a whole.

Professional ethics and morality are part of the requirements for efficiency and productivity in the conduct of a secretary's job. The secretary is required to keep the secrets of her employer and the entire organization in which she works with, as this is part of what determines her success as a secretary.

The researcher observed that many secretaries were not adequately performing their duties and functions in line with moral and ethical standard expected of them in an office. As a result, this makes it difficult for successful performance and

achievement of secretary in an office. Therefore, this study aims to explore the importance of professional ethics to the secretarial profession, examining the key principles, benefits, and challenges associated with ethical practice in this context.

### **1.3 Objectives of the Study**

The major objective of this study is to determine the Importance of Professional Ethics to Secretarial Profession. The specific objectives are to:

1. Examine the key principles of professional ethics in the secretarial profession.
2. Investigate the importance of professional ethics to the secretarial profession.
3. Identify the consequences of not adhering to professional ethics in the secretarial profession.
4. Determine the benefit of moral and professional ethics as a tools for effective performance of secretaries in organization.
5. Examine threat posed by moral and professional ethics decadence of secretaries to her effective performance in an organization.

### **1.4 Research Questions**

The following research questions guided the study;

1. What are the key principles of professional ethics in the secretarial profession?
2. How important is professional ethics to the secretarial profession?
3. What are the consequences of not adhering to professional ethics in the secretarial profession?



4. How does organizations determine the benefit of moral and professional ethics as a tools for effective performance of secretaries?
5. Does organizations perceive moral and professional ethics decadence of secretaries as a threat to effective performance?

### **1.5 Significance of the Study**

The following individuals and groups will benefit from understanding the importance of professional ethics to the secretarial profession:

**Administrators (management):** There is no single organization that can do without professional ethics of its staff especially secretaries. As such this study will provide adequate information to the management that will go through it to get a foreknowledge of and ethical standard needs of their staff and the condition that determine that. They could adopt the findings to plan and organize training programmes for their staff.

**Secretarial staff:** The executive secretaries will be made to realize that adequate and ethical standards enable them to possess the level of intellectual skills with which they can perfectly and proficiently handle the demands of their daily routines and to understand that adequate job ethics will help to ensure job satisfaction. The results of the study will hopefully stimulate further research on the moral and ethical standard needs of other cadres of the secretarial staff by opening the frontiers of information on more and ethical standard programmes.

**Organization and Employers:** organizations will benefit from this study by gaining insights into the importance of promoting a culture of professionalism and ethics among their secretarial staff, leading to improved relationships, productivity, and reputation.

**Educational Institutions:** Educational institutions can benefit from understanding the importance of professional ethics in the secretarial profession, enabling them to develop more effective curriculum and training programs.

**Professional Associations:** this will help them by prioritizing professional ethics, professional associations can enhance member benefits and provide more effective support and resources to their members.

**Researchers and Academics:** researchers and academics will benefit from this study by gaining a deeper understanding of the significance of professional ethics in the secretarial profession, providing a foundation for further research and study.

**Society:** this will benefit them by promoting a culture of professional ethics in the secretarial profession, society as a whole can benefit from increased trust and confidence in organizations and institutions. Professional ethics in the secretarial profession can contribute to improved governance and accountability, enabling organizations and institutions to operate more effectively and responsibly.

**Student:** Finally, Office Technology and Management students would benefit from the findings of the study. They would understand better benefits of upholding sound moral and ethical standard as secretaries in organization. This will in turn improve job performance and efficiency.

## **1.6 Delimitation**

The study is delimited clearly what will be benefited; the moral and ethical standards as a tools for effective performance of secretaries in institution. The case

studies used by the researcher are secretaries in Kwara State College of University, Ilorin and Kwara State Polytechnic, Ilorin, in the conduct of their job for better performance.

### **1.7 Limitations of the study**

The peculiarities of any research work usually have one form of limitation or the other. Typically, one of the lingering limitations in any research work of this nature is the ability to manage efficiently time and resources available. The time constraint may not pave way for adequate financial resources or information required to carry out the study.

This study is also limited by inadequate financial resources required to effectively gather the much-needed information and resources from various offices and departments of the two case studies. Hence, it will be carried out in accordance with the resources available.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

This chapter provides a review of the literature on the importance of professional ethics to the secretarial profession. The chapter begins by defining professional ethics and exploring its significance in the secretarial profession. It then examines the key principles of professional ethics, including confidentiality, integrity, loyalty, and respect for authority. The chapter also discusses the benefits of professional ethics, including improved job performance, enhanced career prospects, and increased job satisfaction.

#### **2.1 Introduction**

Every organization, be it one-man business, a supermarket, a church, a hospital, a university, a bank, a manufacturing outfit, etc must have its own ethics and moral written or unwritten. Since ethics is associated with a way of doing things, a way of life, then our actions and inactions are regulated by it, in private and public life. Organization are aware that without members adopting ethical standard, resources are bound to be wasted and achieving goals made impossible. The term ethics and morality are used interchangeably in our everyday speech as meaning the same thing, since they are seen to be interlined and part of a general subject, each having effect upon the other. For instance, if you are common person to define morality and ethics, he will most likely define these terms as being good and bad versus being right and wrong. However, these terms are distinct in meaning.

## **2.2 Concept of Secretary**

Secretary has been a very popular profession among the people from time immemorial. This is because no establishment ever existed without a secretary infact a secretary is indispensable in any organization as without whom the principal will find it difficult if not impossible to succeed such an indispensable to be able to perform well needs to be motivated.

However, the word secretary was derived from the Latin word “Secretarius” the word secretary is controversial, almost any woman who works in an office may refers herself as secretary or almost any employer may speak of “my secretary” in describing his clerk, in both cases the term is for prestige. However, this is probably to lump-ups in the profession. It is a time difficult to distinguish a secretary from typist in an office; this is because the practical aspect of the work is hardly differentiated. For the purpose of this project work, secretary can be defined as an official who has charge of the correspondence, records and other affairs of an organization and also handles secret and confidential matters.

Webster (2014) defined a secretary as one entrusted with the secret or confidence of superior, one employed to handle correspondence and manage routine and detail work for a superior.

The above definition emphasizes the fact that a secretary is the person who keeps secret of her executive and also handles other administrative routines related her job.

A secretary is the bedrock which an organization rest upon in terms of data and information. Secretary is a title often used in organizations to indicate a person having a certain amount of authority, power or importance to handle confidential matters in the organization. Secretaries announce important events and communicate to the organization. A secretary is also known as an administrative assistance. She has many administrative duties to deal with. The responsibility of secretary has evolved so much more and advance for example they have to master Microsoft office application; word, power point and excel to name a few. The role may vary according to the nature and might include managing budgets, bookkeeping, attending telephone calls, handling visitors, maintain websites travel arrangements, and preparing expense reports, secretaries might also manage all the administrative details of running a high level conference or meeting and be responsible for arranging the catering for a lunch meeting. Often ask to take the minutes at meetings and prepare meeting documents for review. In addition to the minutes, the secretary may be responsible for keeping all of the official records of a company or organization.

A secretary is the one who arrange meeting by passing out circular to all those concerned to attend the meeting; she takes down the minutes of a particular meeting and later developed it after which it will be circulated to the members, and the secretary should be able to manage budgets and doing bookkeeping, maintaining websites, and making travel arrangement for his/her boss. A good secretary must know how to take dictation in shorthand and at the same time be able to transcribe with the use of a machine for example on computer and she should understand the complex rules regarding visa and immigration.

### **2.3 Duties of Confidential Secretaries**

In both the public and private sector, secretaries of whatever rank and position are expected to perform all or most of the following general duties as identified by Edun and Ajetunmobi (2016) and put forward by Ahukunnah and Ugoji (2015). The understanding of these duties will assist the various chief executives, personnel directors and managers and other middle level executives to know what to expect from their respective secretaries. These duties will in one way or the other tempt the code of ethic of the secretary. The general duties of secretaries are: Take dictation and transcribe same on the computer; Dispatch letters; Do filing;

Open new files; Read and sort mails; Answer the telephone and make outgoing calls; Take messages; Make appointments for the boss and keep records of them; Act as memory aid to the boss; Compose letters and help prepare reports; Order supplies for the office; Type materials from longhand or shorthand notes; Make hotel reservations and other travel arrangements; Keep financial records and handle imprest accounts; Prepare agenda and notice of meeting and dispatch same to members; Type minutes of meetings; Type materials to be published; personal banking and local purchases; Keep press cuttings, files and scrapbook about employer's interests; Act as a go-between for the boss; Supervise other employees and act as officer manager and take speeches in shorthand at conferences, seminars; Take down and transcribe board/tribunal proceedings; Advise where necessary; Read travel time-tables and plan itineraries for the boss; Check all travel documents.; Run errands for the boss; Change

calendar date every morning; Prepare relevant briefs for the boss concerning interviews; Send out invitations and replies to invitations received; Write congratulatory letters or letters of condolence when necessary and the website for e-mail.

In addition to the general duties, there are specific duties that are applicable to junior and senior secretaries in the Organization in addition to the specific requirements of the office, division, department and unit of postings (Ahukannah and Ugoji, 2015). The specific duties applicable to Junior Secretaries such as Confidential Secretary Grade IV and similarly placed secretaries in the private sector are: Works as assistants to the more senior secretaries; Prepare the office tea; Do copy typing on the computer; Take notes in shorthand from the more senior secretaries and do the transcription; Maintain good sanitation of the office if a cleaner is not available; Work as secretaries to middle-level management and Photocopy documents.

Senior Secretaries from Confidential Secretary Grade III upwards and similarly placed secretaries in the private sector will be working with top or middle management. They are expected to perform the following specific duties appropriate to their rank in addition to the specialised duties relating to their individual departments or offices: Serve as executive assistant to top or middle management as the case may be; Supervise other senior or junior secretaries or clerical staff and take general control of the office; Spend the imprest money and keep the impress accounts; May be authorised to open envelopes containing confidential documents; May represent the boss at functions when he cannot attend; Will train his/her junior in office procedures



and report on their performance; Use the computer to produce various documents needed in the office and accompany the boss to conferences and handle the PowerPoint presentations of his conference papers etc (Ahukannah and Ugoji, 2015).

Top flight secretaries are expected to be very innovative in whatever they do, as such are expected to be up-to-date and improve upon what is expected of him/her but not to be static to the enumerated duties and those of the office or department of postings. The duties of top-flight Confidential Secretaries (i.e. secretaries to chief executives) according to Obadailki (2016) are:

- (i) **Administrative Services:** This include managing the reception function, planning meetings and conferences, man aging transportation and travel, managing mail processing, coordinating officer parties and administering business continuity programmes such as b business insurance, liability insurances etc.
- (ii) **Information Technology:** This refers to the use of desktop software (word processing, e-mail, spreadsheets and presentation); use of database systems, administering a file server and local area network, data and system security, system monitoring and reporting, digital graphics and design and publishing and even view editing and streaming, communication systems, cell phones, 2-way radios broadband, internet access and document collaboration systems); record management/organization, retention, storage, retrieval, disposal and security.

- (iii) **Facilities, Equipment and supplies:** This is made up of office space costing and leasing, office moves and relocation, signage, interior design and decor, overseeing cleaning, maintenance and repairs arranging for office equipment and supplies, and arranging for commercial printing.
- (iv) **Management:** This has to do with the top flight secretary applying principles and functions of management (planning, organizing, leading, controlling) documenting the management organization and chain of command and establishing office etiquette and business ethics guidelines.
- (v) **Communication:** This include writing letters and reports, establishing phones procedures; formatting and proof-reading documents; using paper and electronic forms; putting together a corporate style manual and making presentations etc.
- (vi) **Skills:** These include conceptual skills, people skills and technical skills. Conceptual skills include ability to analyse problems and come up with solutions and to identify potential problems and prevent them; ability to work without supervision, demonstrate sound reasoning and judgement; and also have ability to make decisions. People skills which enable the secretary to work with others include good oral and written communication, ability to read people, work with different people and to be fair and firm, ability to listen and give others the opportunity to provide input and other meaningful suggestions. These skills are very important for a confidential secretary because they are

the liaison between the chief executives and all kinds of other employees from professional, technical and managerial staff to clerk and blue collar workers.

The Technical skill on the other hand include ability to use computer technology, specialized knowledge and abilities in communication system, records management, finance, human resources, facilities, commercial printing, mail processing, and business insurance to name a few.

## **2.4 Concept of Professional Ethics**

Professional ethics are the moral principles and values that guide an individual's behavior and decision-making in their profession. In the context of the secretarial profession, professional ethics encompass a range of principles, including confidentiality, integrity, loyalty, and respect for authority. These principles are essential for building trust, maintaining confidentiality, and ensuring that organizational goals are achieved in an ethical and responsible manner. (Baker, 2017).

Professional ethics are essential to the secretarial profession, as they promote credibility, trust, and job satisfaction. Secretaries who prioritize professional ethics demonstrate integrity, confidentiality, and respect for authority, while also committing to ongoing professional development. By adhering to professional ethics, secretaries can enhance their productivity, decision-making, and overall performance, while reducing the risk of errors and mistakes.

Therefore, the ethics of a secretary are moral principles relating to the job that he/she will be bound (Onifade, 2015). In short secretary's ethics are principles or

norms that state how secretaries should conduct themselves in the course of carrying out their official duties. A secretary is an assistant to an executive, possessing mastering of shorthand, computer word processing and office skills together with the ability to assume responsibility without direct supervision and displays initiative within the scope of his/her authority (Onifade, 2015). In order for the secretary to put his skills into full use, he/she needs an organization. An organization, according to Denyer (1983), is a framework within which people act, it involves the arranging of staff and the allocation of duties. These organizations can be a government ministry, tertiary institution, parastatal or a commission.

Ethics can be defined as the art and discipline of applying principles and frameworks to analyze and resolve complex moral dilemmas, Rossy (2014).

According to Trevino (2015) ethics are moral principles that explain what is right or wrong, good or bad and what is appropriate or inappropriate in various setting. Candy (2015) defines ethics as the system of rules that govern the ordering of values. Miner (2018) also defines ethics as a philosophy of human conduct; reflecting prevailing values especially those of moral nature.

Ethics may be defined as the science of the moral rectitude of human acts in accordance with the first principles of natural reason. Ethics not only directs a man how to act if he wishes to be morally good, but sets before him the absolute obligation he is under of doing, good and avoiding evil. (The Wikipedia).

To sum-up the above definitions, ethics can be defined as standards of morality that guides individuals and organization in following certain norms of conduct when dealing with each other. Ethics involves some hard features, like duties and rights (most of them legal), that are mandatory for all and soft components, like values, aspirations or best practices that are desirable but not compulsory and can vary from one organization to another.

## **2.5 Importance of Professional Ethics in Organizations**

Organizational ethics are the policies, procedures and culture of doing the right things in the face of difficult and often controversial issues, ethics topics that challenge organizations include but aren't limited to discrimination, social responsibility and fiduciary issues. Ethics issues and how any organization practices ethics are more important than ever because social media readily exposes issues that might have been swept aside in previous generations.

### **1. Builds a Positive Corporate Culture**

An organization devoting resources to developing policies and procedures that encourage ethical actions builds a positive corporate culture. Team member morale improves when employees feel protected against retaliation for personal beliefs. These policies include anti-discriminatory rules, open door policies and equal opportunities for growth. When employees feel good about being at work, the overall feeling in the organization is more positive. This breeds organizational loyalty and productivity, because employees feel good about showing up for work.

## **2. Boosts Consumer Confidence**

An organization can lose consumer confidence very quickly with a few bad online reviews. Organizations have to retain consumer loyalty through ethical practices that start with fair and honest advertising methods and continue through the entire sales process. One area that organizations can lose consumer confidence is failing to honor guarantees or negatively deal with complaints. This is why consistent policies and employee training is imperative. Companies must direct employees on how to treat customers according to its core values.

When an organization takes the time to identify what is important to consumers and its target market, it is better able to set value statements and protocols to meet higher ethical standards. For example, a coffee distributor that focuses on fair trade and farming sustainability builds a brand supporting environmental and social responsibility.

## **3. Reduces Financial Liabilities**

Organizations that don't develop policies on ethical standards risk financial liabilities. The first liability is a reduction in sales. For example, a real estate development company can lose customer interest and sales if its development reduces the size of an animal sanctuary. This doesn't mean a company must abandon growth. Finding an ethically responsible middle ground is imperative to sway public opinion away from corporate greed and toward environmental responsibility.

#### **4. Minimizes Potential Lawsuits**

The second area of financial liability exists with potential lawsuits. No organization is exempt from a disgruntled employee or customer who claims discrimination. Sexual discrimination in the workplace is costing CEOs, politicians and celebrities their livelihood because they are not appropriately dealing with accusations and harassment claims. Organizations must maintain policies and procedures addressing various types of harassment and discrimination. Moreover, organizations must remain consistent in the execution of policies dealing with accusations. This helps reduce frivolous lawsuits that could bankrupt smaller organizations.

#### **2.6 Ethics and Human Relations**

Ethics as professional standards that had to be maintained, imbued human relations in the office. Human relations are very important and indispensable asset which secretaries should always maintain. Human relations are something that can make a secretary like his/her job or dislike the job. Therefore, the ability of the secretary to maintain good working relationship with colleagues makes her/him a very efficient and reliable secretary who will be able to achieve the objective of his/her office. A human relation is the relationship which subsists among people employed and working in an organization. It involves the formal and informal activities and relationship resulting from the interactions of two or more people in the office or organization (Ahukannah and Ugorji, 2015).

As one of the employees in an organization, the secretary is bound to work in an office with other people either in the same room or outside the office and will have to take to them in the course of the work. Some of these people might be junior secretaries and clerks; others might be senior. If the secretary has to enjoy his/her work, it is very essential that the secretary should “get on” with all these people.

One of the first elements of handling people is to like and be interested in them. Every human being is different, but very few will fail to respond pleasantly if the secretary is pleasant to them. As such, the secretary should develop the habit of smiling as it makes him/her a warmer person and people are always drawn to warmth. Also as a secretary, a helpful attitude towards people which will show that the secretary liked them (everyone wants to be liked) at the same time, the secretary should know that everyone is entitled to respect regardless of status.

In addition, there might be occasions when people are discourteous or unpleasant to the secretary, this might be because the people are not well, are worried or feel insecure. It is advisable in this situation that the secretary should not retaliate by being rude or unpleasant in return, rather the secretary should take notice and remain unperturbed and continue to be pleasant (Stanwell, Shaw, Fasu and Odina, 1978).

## **2.7 Code of Conduct**

Code of conduct is a set of rules and guidelines and outline the expected behavior and ethical standards of an organization, profession, or individual. It provides a framework for decision-making and ensures that individuals understand their responsibilities and obligations.



Code of conduct refers to professional ethics prescribing or stipulating certain moral relationship among people who belong to professional groups. It also states method of validating these codes, which may be of socially, culturally and humanitarian purpose of the particular profession. Code of conduct could also have been seen as the principles of conduct that govern the actions and behaviour of an individual within the organization or within any professional body. Such principles are provided in terms of a given situation.

The following are purpose of code of conduct:

- (i) Establishes ethical standards: A code of conduct establishes the ethical standards and principles that guide an organization's or profession's behavior.
- (ii) Provides guidance: A code of conduct provides guidance on expected behavior and decision-making.
- (iii) Promotes accountability: A code of conduct promotes accountability and ensures that individuals are responsible for their actions.
- (iv) Enhances reputation: A code of conduct of an organization or profession by demonstrating its commitment to ethical standards.

A professional secretary should maintain the following codes of professional conduct:

- (i) **Mode of Dressing:** A secretary shall appear in the office or anywhere in her official capacity dressed in a manner that is appropriate and modest.

- (ii) **Absent without permission:** A secretary should not absent herself from duty, without leave or reasonable cause, if he does so, she renders herself liable to be dismissed from the work.
- (iii) **Copying of Official Documents:** Every secretary is subjected to the official secrets; she is prohibited from disclosing to any person except in accordance with official routine or with the special permission of his boss.
- (iv) **Secret/Personal Records:** A secretary shall not as a general rule have access to official or secret records of staff and making such documents open to not permitted persons.
- (v) **Removal of Organization Records:** No secretary on account of leaving should take with him any organizational records without the written permission of the manager or superior.

The professional secretary's position is that of trust which implies ethical obligations upon her to act for the benefit of employers, clients and the public members. Code of ethics is one of the basic tools for correct performance as professionals. The professional ethics for secretaries have as objectives the establishment of procedures for the professional to perform their jobs, regulating their relations with their own category of public affairs and with the society. Consequently, secretaries required to show the following professional traits:

- (a) Acting a trusted agent in professional relations, implementing responsibilities in the most competent manner and exercising knowledge and skill to promote the interests of the immediate and corporate employer.
- (b) Striving to maintain and enhance the dignity, status, competence, and standard of the profession and its practitioners.
- (c) Insisting that judgments concerning continued employments, compensation, and promotions be based upon professional knowledge, ability, experience and performance.
- (d) Refusing to cooperate with or condone by silence the actions of co-workers personal, non-professional advantages.
- (e) Refusing, and if possible reporting to the appropriate authority, instances of discriminations in sex, creed, race or age.
- (f) Informing the employer of any changes in conditions of employment, including fringe benefits, which can encourage inefficiency, or made difficult the proper performance of prescribed assignments.
- (g) Promoting and preserving safety and welfare practices
- (h) Keeping absolute secrecy about budgets and documents confided to them.
- (i) Identifying with the philosophy of the company, being a catalyst and teammate in the implementation of administrative and political changes.
- (j) Being a key part in the flow of information.

- (k) Forbidden from taking advantage of nearness to superiors to embarrass the organization.
- (l) Being prohibited from chauvinism in dealing with other professionals in the workplace.

## **2.8 Ethical Issues for Secretarial Profession**

The Secretarial profession just like every other profession has a well-articulated code of ethics that guides its member's behaviour and conduct. The followings are some of the ethics for secretaries as provided by Onifade (2015) and Emeti (2014):

- (i) **Confidentiality and Privacy:** The secretary is a confidant of the organization. He/she should be able to maintain a sealed lip, avoid unnecessary discussion and keep secret all issues guarding his/her work in the organization. Secretaries often have access to confidential information, such as employee records, financial data, and personal correspondence. Maintain confidentiality and respecting individuals' privacy is crucial to upholding ethical standards.
- (ii) **Honesty:** Honesty is another important professional ethics of the secretarial profession. Honesty is a standard expected of the secretary. He/she should be honest in his/her dealings in order to maintain a very good reputation and integrity; anything to the contrary will render him/her unfit for employment in the organization.

- (iii) **Politeness:** A secretary should be very polite at all times as politeness is one of the most cherished qualities of a secretary. The secretary must not allow the pressure and complex nature of the job affect his/her dealing with the public and fellow staff.
- (iv) **Reliable:** Reliability is an essential trait for secretaries, demonstrating dependability and trustworthiness. Secretaries should follow through on commitments and meet expectations, taking ownership of their tasks and responsibility. By being reliable, secretaries can build trust with colleagues, clients and superiors, essential for effective working relationships. Reliability also ensures that tasks are completed efficiently and effectively, reducing errors and misunderstanding. The secretary should cultivate an atmosphere in which the boss will rely on him/her to carry out and complete assignments unsupervised.
- (v) **Orderliness:** orderliness is critical for secretaries, requiring organized systems for managing documents, records, and tasks. By maintaining organized systems, secretaries can ensure that information is easily accessible and up-to-date, saving time and reducing errors. Orderliness also enables secretaries to work more efficiently, increasing productivity and reducing stress. An organized workspace and systems demonstrate a secretary's attention to detail and commitment to their role.

- (vi) **Tactfulness:** Tactfulness is an essential trait for secretaries, requiring effective communication and diplomacy. Secretaries should use discretion when interacting with others, particularly in sensitive or difficult situation. By communicating tactfully, secretaries can resolve conflicts and difficult situations professionally, maintaining positive relationships and avoiding escalation. Tactfulness also demonstrates empathy and understanding, being sensitive to the needs and feeling of others. The secretary should exhibit a great deal of tact in the performance of duties, especially when handling members of the public and other colleagues in the organization.
- (vii) **Loyalty and Conflict of Interest:** The secretary must be loyal to the organization and his/her boss; show respect to other top officers of the organization and respect constituted authority. Secretaries may face conflicts of interest when their personal interests or relationships clash with their professional duties. They must prioritize their loyalty to their employer and maintain a professional detachment from personal relationships.
- (viii) **Cooperativeness:** Cooperativeness is an essential trait for secretaries, reflecting their ability to work collaboratively with colleagues, clients, and superiors. Cooperative secretaries demonstrate a willingness to assist others, share information and, support team goals. This trait is vital in today's fast-paced and often complex work environment, where effective collaboration can significantly enhance productivity and job satisfaction. The secretary should

maintain good working relationship with other members of staff. He/she should cooperate with other members of staff so that the main objective of the organization could be achieved.

- (ix) **Punctuality:** The secretary must make punctuality his/her watch-word on all occasions. The secretary must be in office before his/her boss so as to organize the day's work and deal with outstanding matters before the arrival of his/her boss and also should leave office after the boss to make sure the table is cleared of the day's tasks.
- (x) **Bribery:** Bribery is a serious ethical issue that can have significant consequence for both individuals and organizations. In the context of the secretarial profession, bribery can manifest in various forms, such as accepting gifts or favor in exchange for preferential treatment or confidential information. The secretary should not be tempted to accept gifts or favours from members of the public in case there is a hidden reason for such gifts or favours. They must establish clear guidelines and communicate with their employer about acceptable practices.
- (xi) **Multi-skilling:** Multitasking is a key aspect of a secretary's role, requiring effective prioritization and time management. Secretaries must manage multiple responsibilities without compromising quality or deadlines, adapting to changing priorities and deadlines while maintaining their composure and professionalism. By prioritizing tasks effectively and managing their time efficiently, secretaries can ensure that tasks are completed efficiently and

effectively. The secretary should as much as possible acquire skill of operating photocopying machine, shredding machine, computer programmes and other positions in the organization.

- (xii) **Impartiality:** Impartiality is a critical ethical consideration for secretaries. They should treat all individuals fairly and without bias, avoiding favoritism or discrimination based on personal relationships, preferences, or characteristics. By demonstrating impartiality, secretaries can build trust and credibility with colleagues, clients and superiors, essential for effective working relationships. Impartiality also ensures that secretaries make decisions based on merit, rather than personal opinions or biases. The Confidential Secretary (i.e. working in any government organization) should not be involved in partisan politics.
- (xiii) **Whistleblowing and Reporting:** Secretaries may encounter situations where they need to report unethical behavior or wrongdoing. They must understand their organization's policies and procedures for whistleblowing and reporting, ensuring that they can address concerns without fear of retaliation.
- (xiv) **Anonymous:** Whatever the secretary does in the performance of his/her duties is on behalf of the organization and the immediate boss. He/she should not claim credit for it.
- (xv) **Good dressing:** Good dressing is an important aspect of a secretary's professional image. A well-dressed secretary projects themselves and their



organization, demonstrating respect for colleagues, clients, and superior. By dressing professionally, secretaries can boost their confidence and credibility, enabling them to interact effectively with others. Moreover, good dressing shows attention to detail and a commitment to one's role, which are essential qualities for a secretary.

- (xvi) **Cleanliness:** Maintaining a clean and organized workspace is crucial for productivity, health, and safety. A clean workspace demonstrates a secretary's attention to detail and commitment to their role, ensuring that tasks are completed efficiently and effectively. Cleanliness also shows respect for colleagues and clients, creating a positive and professional environment. By prioritizing cleanliness, secretaries can ensure a healthy and safe working environment, which is essential for themselves and others. The secretary's body, office and surrounding environment should always be clean. Importantly, the secretary should avoid body odour.

## **2.9 Unethical Behaviours in Secretarial Profession**

Unethical behaviours are actions which are against the ethics of a profession. Most organizations have at one point or the other been confronted with the problems of unethical behaviours from their members of staff. Unethical problems have become cankerworms that are eating deep into the bone marrows of Secretaries in the Public and Private services of the Nigerian economy (Adeyinka, 2014). However, there are some unethical behaviours that are often demonstrated among secretarial staff in both the public and private sectors:

## **Types of Unethical Behavior**

- (i) **Confidentiality Breach:** Confidentiality is a cornerstone of the secretarial profession. Secretaries often have access to sensitive and confidential information about their employers, colleagues, and clients. Breaching confidentiality by sharing this information with unauthorized individuals or using it for personal gain is a serious unethical behavior. A breach of confidentiality occurs when this information is disclosed without authorization. This can happen through gossip, sharing confidential documents without permission, or discussing sensitive matters in public areas.
- (ii) **Misuse of Office Resources:** Secretaries may misuse office resources such as computers, internet, and phones for personal purposes, including browsing social media, online shopping, or making personal calls. This can include using company resources for personal projects, making personal long-distance calls on company time, or using company supplies for personal use.
- (ii) **Time Management Issues:** Secretaries may engage in time-wasting activities during work hours, such as chatting with colleagues, taking extended breaks, or engaging in personal activities, can be considered unethical behavior if they impact the secretary's ability to fulfill their responsibilities. This can lead to delays, missed deadlines, and additional work for colleagues.
- (iv) **Dishonesty and Deception:** Secretaries may engage in dishonest or deceptive behavior, such as falsifying records, misrepresenting information, or covering up mistakes. Dishonesty and deception can lead to a loss of trust between the secretary and their employer or clients, damaging professional relationships.

- (v) Unprofessional Conduct: Secretaries may exhibit unprofessional conduct, such as using abusive language, being rude to colleagues or clients, or engaging in gossip. This type of behavior can create a hostile work environment and negatively impact team morale.
- (vi) Conflict of Interest: Secretaries may have a conflict of interest, such as using their position for personal gain, accepting bribes, or engaging in activities that compromise their objectivity. This can include situations where a secretary has a personal relationship with a vendor or supplier and fails to disclose this relationship when making purchasing decisions.
- (vii) Negligence and Carelessness: Negligence and carelessness occur when a secretary fails to exercise reasonable care in work, leading to errors, mistakes, or damage to company property. This can include failing to follow procedures, ignoring safety protocols, or being careless with company equipment. Negligence and carelessness can lead to decreased productivity, compromised work quality, and increased risk.

### **Causes of Unethical Behavior**

Unethical behavior in secretarial professions can arise from various factors, including individual, organizational, and environmental influences. Understanding these causes is crucial for developing effective strategies to prevent and address unethical behavior.

- (i) **Lack of Training and Supervision:** A lack of training and supervision can contribute to unethical behavior in secretarial professions. When secretaries are not adequately trained, they may not fully understand the ethical expectations of their role or the consequences of unethical behavior. Without proper supervision, secretaries may feel unsupported and uncertain about how to navigate complex situations, leading to potential ethical lapses.
- (ii) **Pressure to Meet Deadlines:** The pressure to meet deadlines can also contribute to unethical behavior in secretarial professions. When secretaries are under intense pressure to complete tasks quickly, they may feel compelled to cut corners or engage in unethical practices to meet expectations.
- (iii) **Personal Problems and Stress:** Personal problems and stress can significantly impact a secretary's behavior and decision-making. When secretaries are dealing with personal issues, they may be more prone to unethical behavior as a way to cope or alleviate stress.
- (vi) **Organizational Culture:** The culture of an organization plays a significant role in shaping the behavior of its employees, including secretaries. An organization that does not prioritize ethics or fails to enforce ethical standards can create an environment where unethical behavior is more likely to occur.

### **Consequences of Unethical Behavior**

Unethical behavior in secretarial professions can have significant consequences, affecting not only the individual secretary but also the organization as a whole. Understanding these consequences is crucial for promoting ethical behavior and maintaining a positive work environment.

- (i) **Damage to Reputation:** Unethical behavior can severely damage the reputation of both the secretary and the organization. When secretaries engage in unethical practices, it can lead to negative perceptions among colleagues, clients, and the public.
- (ii) **Loss of Trust:** Trust is a fundamental component of any professional relationship. Unethical behavior can erode trust between secretaries and their colleagues, superiors, and clients. Clients rely on secretaries to handle sensitive information and provide accurate support. Unethical behavior can lead to a loss of trust, causing clients to seek services elsewhere.
- (iii) **Disciplinary Action:** Unethical behavior can result in disciplinary action, ranging from verbal warnings to termination of employment. Organizations often have policies in place to address unethical conduct, and secretaries who violate these policies may face consequences.
- (iv) **Legal Consequences:** Unethical behavior can have legal consequences, including fines, penalties, and even imprisonment. In some cases, unethical behavior can have legal consequences, particularly if it involves illegal activities such as fraud, theft, or breach of confidentiality.

### **Prevention and Mitigation Strategies**

Preventing and mitigating unethical behavior in secretarial professions requires a multifaceted approach that involves various strategies. By implementing these strategies, organizations can promote a culture of integrity and professionalism, reducing the likelihood of unethical behavior.

- (i) **Training and Development:** Training and development programs are essential for preventing unethical behavior in secretarial professions. These programs should focus on building awareness of ethical standards, policies, and procedures.
- (ii) **Clear Policies and Procedures:** Clear policies and procedures are crucial for preventing unethical behavior in secretarial professions. Organizations should establish and communicate clear guidelines on what constitutes ethical behavior.
- (iii) **Supervision and Monitoring:** Supervision and monitoring are essential for preventing and detecting unethical behavior in secretarial professions. Organizations should establish systems for monitoring behavior and addressing concerns.
- (iv) **Encouraging a Positive Organizational Culture:** A positive organizational culture can play a significant role in preventing unethical behavior in secretarial professions. Organizations should strive to create a culture that values integrity, transparency, and accountability.
- (v) **Reporting Mechanisms:** A reporting mechanism is essential for preventing and addressing unethical behavior in secretarial professions. Organizations should establish a system for reporting concerns that is confidential, accessible, and responsive.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **METHODOLOGY**

This chapter deals with the procedures and methods used for obtaining the data required for analysis and completion of this research work.

#### **3.1 Instrument Used**

The researcher designed a questionnaire to be used for the collection of data from the case study. A questionnaire was used because it permits a much larger sampling giving room for arrangement of the relevant points. It reduces the risk of possible error as can exist in structured interview. The questionnaire method allowed the researcher present the questions orderly for the respondent's consideration. The items in the questionnaire are placed on four points rating scale of "SA-Strongly Agree 4, A-Agree 3, D-Disagree 2, and SD-Strongly Disagree 1" respectively.

#### **3.2 Population of the Study**

The population for this research work which sample will be selected from the students of Kwara State College of University, Ilorin and Kwara State Polytechnic, Ilorin. A total number of 40 secretaries was given copies of the questionnaire.

#### **3.3 Sample and Sampling Techniques**

To obtain appropriate data needed for this study, the researcher made sure that the population consisted of people who possess the required information needed to complete this work and those who would be willing to respond objectively.

As a result, the population chosen comprises students of Kwara State College of University, Ilorin and Kwara State Polytechnic, Ilorin. The number of student sampled was 40.

### **3.4 Distribution and Collection of Data**

Thirty copies of the questionnaire were produced and distributed, 25 copies were distributed at Kwara State College of University, Ilorin and 15 copies were distributed at Kwara State Polytechnic, Ilorin, making a total number of 40.

### **3.5 Reliability**

The researcher first tested the instrument in order to make sure the instrument elicited the desired responses from the respondents. The instrument used in this research work is reliable, as the question method will reveal information from the case study.

### **3.6 Validity**

In order to be sure that the instrument measures what it is supposed to, it was given to two lecturers in Office Technology and Management Department. These lecturers critically examined the items of the instrument with respect to their fitness for the purpose of this study and accepted its use for the study.

### **3.7 Method of Data Analysis**

The data collected through the questionnaire were analyzed manually, using tables and percentage. The analyses are presented in the next chapter.



## CHAPTER FOUR

### DATA ANALYSIS

#### 4.1 Introduction

The data collected through questionnaire by the researcher are presented and analyzed in this chapter. As stated in chapter three, twenty questionnaires were distributed and twenty were returned. The figures were converted to 100%. Analysis of data to answer the research questions were conducted and presented in tables as follows.

#### 4.2 Results

**Table 4.1: The secretary is a confidant of the organization.**

Options	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	20	50
Agree	12	30
Disagree	06	15
Strongly disagree	02	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source: Researcher's fieldwork, 2025**

Table 4.1 above showed that, 20 (50%) and 12 (30%) of the respondent strongly agreed and agreed that secretary is a confidant of the organization while 6 (15%) disagreed, 2 (5%) strongly disagreed respectively. This implied that truly secretary is a confidant of the organization.

This is due to the fact that, majority of the respondents (80%) agreed to the assertion.

**Table 4.2: Honesty is an important professional ethics of the secretarial profession**

<b>Options</b>	<b>No. of Respondents</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Strongly Agree	25	63
Agree	10	25
Disagree	04	10
Strongly disagree	01	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source: Researcher's fieldwork, 2025**

Table 4.2 above indicates that 25 (63%) of the respondents strongly agreed, 10 (25%) agreed that honesty is an important professional ethics of the secretarial profession, while 4 (10%) and 1 (2%) of the respondent disagreed and strongly disagreed with the notion.

This implied that majority respondents agreed that honesty is an important professional ethics of the secretarial profession.

**Table 4.3: Honesty is an organizational moral standard expected of the secretary.**

<b>Options</b>	<b>No. of Respondents</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Strongly Agree	30	75
Agree	10	25
Disagree	00	0.00
Strongly disagree	00	0.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source: Researcher's fieldwork, 2025**

Table 4.3 above showed that, 30 (75%) of the respondents strongly agreed, 10 (25%) agreed, while no response from disagreed and strongly disagreed respectively.

This implies that Honesty is an organizational moral standard expected of the secretary.

**Table 4.4: A secretary should be very polite at all times as politeness is one of the most cherished qualities of a secretary.**

<b>Options</b>	<b>No. of Respondents</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Strongly Agree	20	50
Agree	10	25
Disagree	06	15
Strongly disagree	04	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source: Researcher's fieldwork, 2025**

Table 4.4 showed that, 20 (50%) of the respondent strongly agreed and 10 (25%) equally agreed with the statement that a secretary should be very polite at all times as politeness is one of the most cherished qualities of a secretary, while 6 (15%) and 4 (10%) of the respondents disagreed and strongly disagreed respectively.

This implied that politeness is one of the most cherished qualities of a secretary for an efficient and effective office work.

**Table 4.5: The secretary should cultivate an atmosphere in which the boss will rely on him/her to carry out and complete assignments unsupervised.**

<b>Options</b>	<b>No. of Respondents</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Strongly Agree	18	45
Agree	14	35
Disagree	04	10
Strongly disagree	04	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source: Researcher's fieldwork, 2025**

Table 4.5 above showed that, 18 (45%) of the respondents strongly agreed, 14 (35%) respondents agreed, while 4 (10%) and 4 (10%) of the respondents disagreed and strongly disagreed respectively.

This implied that the secretary is expected to cultivate an atmosphere in which the boss will rely on him/her to carry out and complete assignments unsupervised.

**Table 4.6: The secretary should be organised at all times, plan his/her work and avoid time wastages in order to achieve maximum result within a short time.**

<b>Options</b>	<b>No. of Respondents</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Strongly Agree	22	55
Agree	12	30
Disagree	04	10
Strongly disagree	02	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source: Researcher's fieldwork, 2025**

Table 4.6 above showed that, 22 (55%) respondents strongly agreed, 12 (30%) agreed respectively while 4 (10%) and 2 (5%) of the respondents disagreed and strongly disagreed with the assertion.

This implied that the secretary is expected to be organised at all times, plan his/her work and avoid time wastages in order to achieve maximum result within a short time.

**Table 4.7: The secretary should exhibit a great deal of tact in the performance of duties, especially when handling members of the public and other colleagues in the organization.**

<b>Options</b>	<b>No. of Respondents</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Strongly Agree	18	45
Agree	10	25
Disagree	06	15
Strongly disagree	06	15
<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source: Researcher's fieldwork, 2025**

Table 4.7 above showed that, 18 (45%) of the respondents strongly agreed, 10 (25%) respondent agree, while 6 (15%) of the respondent disagreed and 6 (15%) strongly disagreed respectively with the assertion, Health sector like Kwara State College of University, and Educational Institutions like Kwara State Polytechnic, Ilorin required trained secretaries that will be able to exhibit a great deal of tact in the performance of duties, especially when handling members of the public and other colleagues in the organization.

This implied that secretary exhibit a great deal of tact in the performance of duties, especially when handling members of the public and other colleagues in the organization

**Table 4.8: The secretary must be loyal to the organization and his/her boss; show respect to other top officers of the organization and respect constituted authority.**

<b>Options</b>	<b>No. of Respondents</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Strongly Agree	24	60
Agree	12	30
Disagree	02	5
Strongly disagree	02	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source: Researcher's fieldwork, 2025**

Table 4.8 above showed that 24 (60%) of the respondents strongly agreed, 12 (30%) agreed that the secretary must be loyal to the organization and his/her boss; show respect to other top officers of the organization and respect constituted authority while 2 (5%) and 2 (5%) of the respondents disagreed and strongly disagreed with the assertion.

This implied that secretary loyal to the organization and his/her boss; show respect to other top officers of the organization and respect constituted authority.



**Table 4.9: The secretary should maintain good working relationship with other members of staff.**

<b>Options</b>	<b>No. of Respondents</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Strongly Agree	30	75
Agree	06	15
Disagree	02	5
Strongly disagree	02	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source: Researcher's fieldwork, 2025**

Table 4.9 above showed that 30 (75%) of the respondents strongly agreed, 6 (15%) agreed, while 2 (5%) disagreed and 2 (5%) strongly disagreed that secretary should maintain good working relationship with other members of staff.

It is safe to conclude that the secretary maintains good working relationship with other members of staff or smooth running of the organization.

**Table 4.10: The secretary must make punctuality his/her watch-word on all occasions.**

<b>Options</b>	<b>No. of Respondents</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Strongly Agree	20	50
Agree	20	50
Disagree	00	0.00
Strongly disagree	00	0.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source: Researcher's fieldwork, 2025**

Table 4.10 above showed that 20 (50%) of the respondents strongly agreed, 20 (50%) agreed that secretary must make punctuality his/her watch-word on all occupation and no respondent for disagreed and strongly disagreed respectively.

This implied that secretary make punctuality his/her watch-word on all occasions.

**Table 4.11: The secretary should not be tempted to accept gifts or favours from members of the public in case there is a hidden reason for such gifts or favours.**

<b>Options</b>	<b>No. of Respondents</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Strongly Agree	40	100
Agree	00	0.00
Disagree	00	0.00
Strongly disagree	00	0.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source: Researcher's fieldwork, 2025**

Table 4.11 above showed that 40 (100%) of the respondents strongly agreed that secretary should not be tempted to accept gifts or favours from members of the public in case there is a hidden reason for such gifts or favours, and there was no contrary opinion on the assertion.

This implied that the secretary is not tempted to accept gifts or favours from members of the public in case there is a hidden reason for such gifts or favours.

**Table 4.12: The Confidential Secretary should not be involved in partisan politics.**

<b>Options</b>	<b>No. of Respondents</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Strongly Agree	20	50
Agree	10	25
Disagree	06	15
Strongly disagree	04	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source: Researcher's fieldwork, 2025**

Table 4.12 above showed that 20 (50%) of the respondents strongly agreed, 10 (25%) agreed, while 6 (15%) and 4 (10%) of the respondents disagreed and strongly disagreed that confidential secretary should not be involved in partisan politics. This implied that confidential secretary is not involved in partisan politics.

**Table 4.13: Merit is one of the ethical requirements of the Secretary Profession.**

<b>Options</b>	<b>No. of Respondents</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Strongly agree	26	65
Agree	08	20
Disagree	04	10
Strongly disagree	02	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source: Researcher's fieldwork, 2025**

From the table above 26 (65%) of the respondents strongly agreed that merit is one of the ethical requirements of the secretary profession, 8 (20%) of them agreed while 4 (10%) of the respondents disagreed and 2 (5%) of them strongly disagreed.

The researcher also agreed that merit is one of the ethical requirements of the Secretary Profession.

**Table 4.14: Whatever the secretary does in the performance of his/her duties is on behalf of the organization and the immediate boss.**

<b>Options</b>	<b>No. of Respondents</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Strongly agree	20	50
Agree	10	25
Disagree	06	15
Strongly disagree	04	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source: Researcher's fieldwork, 2025**

Table 4.14 above showed that 20 (50%) of the respondents strongly agreed regardless of a particular job situation, that whatever the secretary does in the performance of his/her duties is on behalf of the organization and the immediate boss, 10 (25%) of them agreed while 6 (15%) and 4 (10%) of the respondents disagreed and strongly disagreed respectively.

It is safe to conclude that secretary performance of his/her duties are on behalf of the organization and the immediate boss.

**Table 4.15: The secretary should dress corporately and smart always.**

<b>Options</b>	<b>No. of Respondents</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Strongly agree	30	75
Agree	10	25
Disagree	00	0.00
Strongly disagree	00	0.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source: Researcher's fieldwork, 2025**

Table 4.15 above showed that 31 (75%) of the respondents strongly agreed that the secretary should dress corporately and smart always, 10 (25%) of them agreed while 5 respondents are indifferent in responses to the assertion.

It is safe to conclude that dressing corporate and smart always is one of the moral ethics of secretarial work.

**Table 4.16: Professional Secretary should know how to operate all office machines and equipment appropriately,**

<b>Options</b>	<b>No. of Respondents</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Strongly Agree	20	50
Agree	12	30
Disagree	04	10
Strongly disagree	04	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source: Researcher's fieldwork, 2025**

Table 4.16 above showed that 20 (50%) of the respondents strongly agreed that professional secretary should know how to operate all office machines and equipment appropriately, 12 (30%) agreed, while 4 (10%) and 4 (10%) of the respondents disagreed and strongly disagreed respectively.

This implied that Professional Secretary is know how to operate all office machines and equipment appropriately.



**Table 4.17: A Secretary must be specially trained and groomed to make him/her perform effectively**

<b>Options</b>	<b>No. of Respondents</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Strongly Agree	24	60
Agree	16	40
Disagree	00	0.00
Strongly disagree	00	0.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source: Researcher's fieldwork, 2025**

Table 4.17 above showed that 24 (60%) of the respondents strongly agreed that a secretary must be specially trained and groomed to make him/her perform effectively in an organization, 16 (40%) of them agreed while there are no responses for strongly disagreed and disagreed respectively.

It is safe to conclude that a secretary specially trained and groomed to make him/her perform effectively in an organization.

**Table 4.18: Regardless of a particular job situation, every secretary should be responsible for office duties that require business skills.**

<b>Options</b>	<b>No. of Respondents</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Strongly Agree	18	45
Agree	14	35
Disagree	04	10
Strongly disagree	04	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source: Researcher's fieldwork, 2025**

Table 4.18 above showed that 18 (45%) of the respondents strongly agreed that regardless of a particular job situation, every secretary should be responsible for office duties that require business skills., 14 (35%) agreed while 4 (10%) and 4 (10%) of the respondents disagreed and strongly disagreed respectively.

This implied that regardless of a particular job situation, every secretary should be responsible for office duties that require business skills. This will portray the organization to be a standard one.

**Table 4.19: Professional Secretarial Organizations should be encouraged in Nigeria to set standard for secretaries.**

<b>Options</b>	<b>No. of Respondents</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Strongly agree	26	65
Agree	08	20
Disagree	04	10
Strongly disagree	02	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source: Researcher's fieldwork, 2025**

From the table above 26 (65%) of the respondents strongly agreed that professional secretarial organizations should be encouraged in Nigeria to set standard for secretaries, 8 (20%) of them agreed while 4 (10%) of the respondents disagreed and 2 (5%) of them strongly disagreed.

The researcher also agreed that professional Secretarial Organizations should be encouraged in Nigeria to set standard for secretaries.

**Table 4.20: The secretary's body, office and surrounding environment should always be clean. Importantly, the secretary should avoid body odour.**

<b>Options</b>	<b>No. of Respondents</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Strongly agree	20	50
Agree	10	25
Disagree	06	15
Strongly disagree	04	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source: Researcher's fieldwork, 2025**

Table 4.20 above showed that 20 (50%) of the respondents strongly agreed that the secretary's body, office and surrounding environment should always be clean and free of dirt, 10 (25%) of them agreed while 6 (15%) and 4 (10%) of the respondents disagreed and strongly disagreed respectively.

It is safe to conclude that the secretary's body, office and surrounding environment should always be clean. Importantly, the secretary should avoid body odour.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **5.1 Summary**

There is now a growing awareness on the part of the secretary regarding the need to acquire relevant professional ethics and morals expected of them in the conduct of their job for better performance. This is because an organization cannot function effectively without the need for a well professionally trained secretary.

From the responses to the research questions, it was clear that the secretary's profession is viewed by the public as a position of honour and trust and thus requires the highest ideal of professional services, because it is believed that the secretary, directly or indirectly influences the organization goal. It therefore means that the secretary should exert every effort to raise professional standards and promote a conducive climate to those around him/her.

Finally, the responses of the respondents showed that certain issues may act as a clog in the wheel of professional ethics and morality of the secretary but tracking these issues diplomatically and tactfully also goes a long way in helping the secretary to overcome the problems, hence, the significance of ethics today is in its power to shape the attitudes and moral behaviours of secretaries and to constrain individuals from exhibiting certain unethical characters.

In a nutshell, ethics being moral code of conduct, provides basic social needs by defining the characters that we should expect and accept from one another, that is to say that the level of ethical conduct allows people to live and work together in harmony as these enhance productivity in the workplace.

## **5.2 Conclusion**

Based on the findings, the following conclusions were drawn:

1. Professional ethics and morality support the organizational growth and paying proper attention to ethics and morals in the workplace by the secretary keeps in him/her on the alert and also enlighten him/her thereby constrain him/her from some unethical attitude/behaviours that easily bring disgrace to secretarial profession.
2. Since part of the secretary's job is to protect the image of the organization, it is wise that she makes it as a point of contact to see that she helps in achieving the goal of the organization by keeping to the rules and regulations of the secretarial profession. She should realize that morality; common sense can be a starting point for ethical reasoning.
3. Secretaryship is not an obstacle but rather a ladder towards which the achievement of the organizational goals is made and therefore, needs the assistance of co-workers in order to reach and actualize the goals.
4. The secretary should be dedicated and committed to work in order to enhance the growth of the organization.
5. Professional ethics and morals are good attributes of a secretary and prospective secretaries should imbibe in them for a better performance in the future.

### **5.3 Recommendations**

Based on the findings of the study and the conclusions drawn, the following points were recommended:

1. Secretaries are expected to pay proper attention to the professional ethics and morality at their workplace so as to be on the alert not to jeopardize the secretarial profession.
2. Secretaries are expected to add moral sense to ethical issues.
3. The staff and members of the workplace should not see the secretary as obstacle but rather as a ladder towards which the organizations achieve their goals. They should therefore, accord him/her due assistance in order to reach and actualize set goals.
4. Employers should not take advantage over the secretaries' dedication and commitment to work thereby subjecting him/her to jobs that are out of his/her field.
5. All prospective secretaries should bear in mind that professional ethics and morality are good attributes of secretaries and should imbibe in them.

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## **APPENDIX I**

**KWARA STATE POLYTECHNIC, ILORIN.  
INSTITUTE OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY  
DEPARTMENT OF OFFICE TECHNOLOGY AND MANAGEMENT**

**Dear Sir/Ma,**

### **RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE**

I am a student in the Department of Office Technology and Management, Kwara State Polytechnic, Ilorin, Pursuing Higher National Diploma Programme of the Department. I shall be most grateful if you could kindly complete this questionnaire designed for data collection on a research project titled: **“THE IMPORTANCE OF PROFESSIONAL ETHICS TO SECRETARIAL PROFESSION”**.

You are requested to tick (✓) the correct answer in the appropriate places provided. All Information supplied will be kept confidential as the data is for academic purpose only.

Thanks for your cooperation.

***Yours faithfully,***

**ANIFOWOSE MARY FUNMI  
HND/23/OTM/FT/0015**

## **APPENDIX II**

**KWARA STATE POLYTECHNIC, ILORIN  
INSTITUTE OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY  
DEPARTMENT OF OFFICE TECHNOLOGY AND MANAGEMENT**

**Dear Sir/Madam**

### **RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE**

This questionnaire is designed to solicit information from you on **“The Importance of Professional Ethics to Secretarial Profession.”** kindly complete the questions below. Please you are assured that information supplied will be treated with utmost confidentiality.

**Yours Faithfully**

**ANIFOWOSE MARY FUNMI  
HND/23/OTM/FT/0015**

## QUESTIONNAIRE

- 1      The secretary is a confidant of the organization.  
(a) Strongly Agree (    )                      (b) Agree (    )  
(c) Disagree (    )                      (d) Strongly Disagree (    )
- 2      Honesty is another important professional ethics of the secretarial profession.  
(a) Strongly Agree (    )                      (b) Agree (    )  
(c) Disagree (    )                      (d) Strongly Disagree (    )
- 3      Honesty is an organizational moral standard expected of the secretary.  
(a) Strongly Agree (    )                      (b) Agree (    )  
(c) Disagree (    )                      (d) Strongly Disagree (    )
- 4      A secretary should be very polite at all times as politeness is one of the most  
cherished qualities of a secretary.  
(a) Strongly Agree (    )                      (b) Agree (    )  
(c) Disagree (    )                      (d) Strongly Disagree (    )
- 5      The secretary should cultivate an atmosphere in which the boss will rely on  
him/her to carry out and complete assignments unsupervised.  
(a) Strongly Agree (    )                      (b) Agree (    )  
(c) Disagree (    )                      (d) Strongly Disagree (    )
- 6      The secretary should be organized at all times. Plan his/her work and avoid  
time wastages in order to achieve maximum result within a short time.  
(a) Strongly Agree (    )                      (b) Agree (    )  
(c) Disagree (    )                      (d) Strongly Disagree (    )

- 7 The secretary should exhibit a great deal of tact in the performance of duties, especially when handling members of the public and other colleagues in the organization.
- (a) Strongly Agree (    )                      (b) Agree (    )
- (c) Disagree (    )                      (d) Strongly Disagree (    )
- 8 The secretary must be loyal to the organization and his/her boss; show respect to other top officers of the organization and respect constituted authority.
- (a) Strongly Agree (    )                      (b) Agree (    )
- (c) Disagree (    )                      (d) Strongly Disagree (    )
- 9 The secretary should maintain good working relationship with other members of staff.
- (a) Strongly Agree (    )                      (b) Agree (    )
- (c) Disagree (    )                      (d) Strongly Disagree (    )
- 10 The secretary must make punctuality his/her watch-word on all occasions.
- (a) Strongly Agree (    )                      (b) Agree (    )
- (c) Disagree (    )                      (d) Strongly Disagree (    )
- 11 The secretary should not be tempted to accept gifts or favours from members of the public in case there is a hidden reason for such gifts or favours.
- (a) Strongly Agree (    )                      (b) Agree (    )
- (c) Disagree (    )                      (d) Strongly Disagree (    )

- 12 The Confidential Secretary should not be involved in partisan politics.
- (a) Strongly Agree ( ) (b) Agree ( )
- (c) Disagree ( ) (d) Strongly Disagree ( )
- 13 Merit is one of the ethical requirements of the Secretary Profession.
- (a) Strongly Agree ( ) (b) Agree ( )
- (c) Disagree ( ) (d) Strongly Disagree ( )
- 14 Whatever the secretary does in the performance of his/her duties is on behalf of the organization and the immediate boss.
- (a) Strongly Agree ( ) (b) Agree ( )
- (c) Disagree ( ) (d) Strongly Disagree ( )
- 15 The secretary should dress corporately and smart always.
- (a) Strongly Agree ( ) (b) Agree ( )
- (c) Disagree ( ) (d) Strongly Disagree ( )
- 16 Professional Secretary should know how to operate all office machines and equipment appropriately.
- (a) Strongly Agree ( ) (b) Agree ( )
- (c) Disagree ( ) (d) Strongly Disagree ( )
- 17 A Secretary must be specially trained and groomed to make him/her perform effectively.
- (a) Strongly Agree ( ) (b) Agree ( )
- (c) Disagree ( ) (d) Strongly Disagree ( )

18        Regardless of a particular job situation, every secretary should be responsible for office duties that require business skills.

(a) Strongly Agree (    )

(b) Agree (    )

(c) Disagree (    )

(d) Strongly Disagree (    )

19        Professional Secretarial Organizations should be encouraged in Nigeria to set standard for secretaries.

(a) Strongly Agree (    )

(b) Agree (    )

(c) Disagree (    )

(d) Strongly Disagree (    )

20        The secretary's body, office and surrounding environment should always be clean. Importantly, the secretary should avoid body odour.

(a) Strongly Agree (    )

(b) Agree (    )

(c) Disagree (    )

(d) Strongly Disagree (    )