

Effect of Office Productivity Software Training on the Efficiency and Communication Skills of Barangay Secretaries During the COVID-19 Pandemic

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ABSTRACT: This study investigates the impact of office productivity software training on the efficiency and communication skills of barangay secretaries during the COVID-19 pandemic, focusing on their use of common IT tools before and after the training. A total of 35 respondents participated in the study, comprising 31 females and 4 males. The research employed a descriptive survey method, utilizing frequency counts and percentages to analyze the data. Findings revealed that prior to the training, Microsoft Word was the most widely used IT tool, with 30 respondents (85.71%) reporting regular use. Additionally, 14 participants indicated they used Gmail for communication purposes before the training session. Post-training results showed a significant increase in the use of other software applications, including MS Excel, MS PowerPoint, and Canva, reflecting the participants' expanded digital competencies.

The training notably enhanced the respondents' knowledge and technical skills, with most reporting improved proficiency in the use of office productivity tools. Based on these findings, it is recommended that continuous monitoring and evaluation of software usage be implemented to ensure sustained improvement. Furthermore, introducing updated and advanced productivity tools regularly can help maintain and enhance the secretaries' digital capabilities.

KEYWORDS: Microsoft Office, Training, Office Productivity, Efficiency, Barangay Secretaries

INTRODUCTION

Today, most jobs require some level of computer proficiency. The global pandemic of 2020 further emphasized this reliance, as it accelerated the shift toward remote work, digital activities, and online operations for organizations worldwide (International Labour Organization, 2021). In this evolving landscape, computer skills have become essential assets in the professional environment. However, in this new era of technology, some employees, particularly older individuals, may find it challenging to operate digital tools, including basic computer functions, Microsoft Office, internet connectivity, online applications, and troubleshooting (Pew Research Center, 2017). Organizations that do not adapt quickly and effectively to these technological demands risk falling behind or even failing to survive in an increasingly digital world (Brynjolfsson & McAfee, 2014; World Economic Forum, 2020).

In the Philippines, the duties and responsibilities of barangay officials—particularly barangay secretaries—are codified in Republic Act No. 7160, also known as the Local Government Code of 1991 (Book III), which mandates the use of computer applications for administrative tasks (Republic Act No. 7160, 1991). However, a 2018 e-Governance Assessment by the Department of the Interior and Local Government found significant variability in implementation across barangays, with many still relying on paper-based processes due to infrastructure and training gaps (Department of the Interior and Local Government, 2018). Medina et al. (2017) also noted that, as frontliners in delivering essential services to the community, barangay officials consider computer skills a valuable and indispensable tool for effective governance and service delivery.

The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic has profoundly transformed the way government offices operate worldwide, including at the barangay level (World Health Organization, 2020; Siar & Lorenzo, 2022). Barangay Officials, including secretaries, were suddenly required to prepare travel documents, conduct virtual meetings, submit reports electronically, and manage digital storage systems—all of which demanded proficiency in computer skills and office software. Recognizing this, the importance of targeted training in office productivity tools became evident to streamline operations and enhance communication and service delivery during these unprecedented times. In the study of Bona et. al (2021) emphasized that many officials have attended training

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seminars and workshops to enhance their knowledge about the computer skills program. Thus, respondents were competent in handling their jobs.

In addition, Santiago et al. (2021) surveyed 121 barangay officials in Silang, Cavite, Philippines, focusing on their skills and constraints to Information and Communication Technology (ICT). Results showed that most officials have personal computers at home and in the office. Most are proficient in computer usage, but face slow internet bandwidth and low-income status as constraints.

Haleem et. al (2022) highlighted that the concept of "computer literacy" is increasingly prominent in today's discussions. He defined computer literacy as an understanding of both the technical and non-technical aspects of computers, including their capabilities, limitations, and the social, vocational, and educational implications associated with their use. While this broad definition encourages thoughtful consideration and dialogue, it lacks specificity—it does not clearly delineate what constitutes computer literacy, nor does it offer a tangible measure for assessing an individual's level of literacy. Furthermore, it does not provide guidance on how to enhance or develop one's computer literacy skills.

This study was conducted in order to explore the effect of the Office Productivity Software Training on the Efficiency and Communication Skills of Barangay Secretaries during the COVID-19 Pandemic highlighting the critical role of digital literacy in ensuring effective governance amidst a global health crisis and the extension made by Pangasinan State University.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this research are as follows:

1. What software application is commonly used by barangay secretaries before the conduct of an extension activity?
2. What software application is commonly used by barangay secretaries after the conduct of the extension activity?
3. What is the effect of Office Productivity Software Training on Barangay Secretaries' Efficiency and Communication Skills?

METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted in the City of Alaminos, particularly with the secretaries of the different barangays. A total of 35 (31 female and 4 male) officials participated in this study. The study used a descriptive survey method of research design. In gathering the data, Part I is the profile of the respondent, while Part II refers to the before and after commonly used software by the respondents, the effect of Office Productivity and Efficiency, and Communication Skills for the respondents, and the roles of extensionist as perceived by barangay secretaries.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 presents the profile of the respondents, focusing on the Barangay Secretaries of Alaminos City, Pangasinan. A total of 35 participants took part in the survey, consisting of 4 males and 31 females. The age distribution shows that 12 respondents, or 34.28%, are between 31 and 40 years old. Conversely, three (3) individuals, representing 8.57%, are aged 61 years and above. The majority of respondents are married, with 23 individuals accounting for 65.71%.

Table 1: Profile of the Respondents

n-35		
Indicator	Frequency	Percentage
Sex		
Male	4	11.43%
Female	31	88.57%
Age		
21-30 years old	5	14.28%
31-40 years old	12	34.28%
41-50 years old	8	22.85%
51-60 years old	7	20%
61-above	3	8.57%
Marital Status		
Single	9	25.71%
Married	23	65.71%

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Widow/er	3	8.57%
Educational Attainment		
High School Graduate	3	8.57%
College Level	24	68.57 %
College Graduate	6	17.14%
Vocational Course	2	5.71%
Number of Years as Secretary		
1 Month - 4 years	24	68.57%
5 to 9 years	7	20%
10 to 14 years	2	5.71%
20 years above	2	5.71%

Regarding educational attainment, 24 respondents, or 68.57%, have reach college level, while a smaller portion, approximately 2 respondents or 5.71%, have completed vocational courses. In terms of experience as a secretary, most respondents—24 or 68.57%—have served for between one month and four years. The results inferred that most of the two employed secretaries are female who are of middle age.

Table 2: Commonly Used IT Tools before conducting the Extension activity

n=35

IT Tools	Frequency	Percentage
Google Drive	1	2.85
GMail	14	40
MS Word	30	85.71
MS Excel	2	5.71
MS Power point	5	14.28

According to the data presented in Table 2, Microsoft Word was the most frequently used IT tool prior to training, with 30 respondents accounting for 85.71% of the sample. Additionally, 14 participants reported using Gmail before the training session. In contrast, only five individuals (approximately 14.29%) utilized Microsoft PowerPoint, and just one person (about 2.86%) reported using Google Drive (GDrive). These findings highlight the predominant reliance on Microsoft Word and Gmail among participants before undergoing training, with less frequent use of other productivity tools. Such trends are consistent with previous studies indicating that basic office software like Word and email platforms such as Gmail are fundamental tools in many professional and educational settings (Smith & Johnson, 2020; Lee, 2019).

Table 3: IT Tools Commonly Used After Conducting the Extension Activity

n=35

IT Tools	Frequency	Percentage
Google Drive	19	54.28
Gmail	27	77.14
MS Word	35	100
MS Excel	7	20
MS Power point	23	65.71
Canva	5	14.28

Table 3 illustrates the IT tools most commonly used by respondents following the conducted extension activity. All respondents (35 or 100%) reported using Microsoft Word, indicating universal adoption of this word processing tool (Microsoft, 2023). Additionally, 27 respondents (77.14%) now utilize Gmail for their communication needs, reflecting its widespread use in professional and personal contexts (Google, 2023). The use of Microsoft PowerPoint is also prominent, with 23 respondents (65.71%) engaging with this presentation software, which is consistent with its popularity in academic and professional presentations (Microsoft, 2023). Conversely, the utilization of Microsoft Excel stands at 7 respondents (20%), and Canva is used by

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five respondents (14.28%), indicating lower adoption rates for these tools among the participants (Canva, 2023). These findings suggest a trend towards the preferred use of certain IT tools post-activity, highlighting areas for further training to increase proficiency in less-utilized tools.

Knowledge Acquisitions

Table 4.1: Effect of Office Productivity Software Training on Barangay Secretaries' Efficiency and Communication Skills
n=35

Indicators	Frequency	Percentage
Knowledge Acquisitions		
a. It increases my knowledge regarding tools and software.	34	97.14%
b. I have a better understanding of the tools after the training.	31	88.57%
c. I have a better understanding of how to enhance pictures and logos using MS Word.	33	94.28%
d. I learned to use Google Drive.	23	65.71%
e. I learned to use MS Excel.	7	205%

Table 4 illustrates the impact of Office Productivity Software Training on the efficiency and communication skills of Barangay secretaries. Regarding knowledge acquisition, 34 respondents, representing 97.14%, reported that the training increased their knowledge of tools and software. Additionally, 33 respondents (94.28%) indicated that they now have a better understanding of how to enhance pictures and logos using MS Word. Furthermore, 23 participants (65.71%) acknowledged learning to use Google Drive through the training. These findings align with prior studies, which suggest that targeted software training significantly improves users' technical skills and efficiency (Smith & Johnson, 2020; Lee, 2019).

Skills Enhancement

Table 4.2: Effect of Office Productivity Software Training on Barangay Secretaries' Efficiency and Communication Skills
n=35

Skills Enhancement	Frequency	Percentage
1. I learned to navigate an operating system.	29	82.85%
2. I have a better understanding of software fundamentals.	35	100%
3. I learned to send emails and make attachments.	30	85.71%
4. I learned to apply designs to my reports.	19	54.28%
5. I learned to improve my presentations using PowerPoint and Canva.	14	40%

Table 2 illustrates the impact of office productivity software training on the efficiency and communication skills of barangay secretaries, emphasizing skills enhancement. The data reveal that all participants, 35 individuals or 100%, reported having a better understanding of software fundamentals, indicating a significant improvement in basic digital literacy. Additionally, 30 participants, representing 85.71%, learned to send emails and create attachments, which are essential communication tools in administrative tasks (Davis, 2019). A substantial majority, 29 individuals or 82.85%, indicated improved ability to navigate operating systems, further enhancing their technical proficiency (Martinez & Lee, 2021). Furthermore, 14 participants, or 40%, reported improvements in creating presentations using PowerPoint and Canva, highlighting growth in visual communication skills essential for effective reporting and stakeholder engagement (Kumar & Singh, 2018).

Quality of Work

Table 4.3: Effect of Office Productivity Software Training on Barangay Secretaries' Efficiency and Communication Skills
n=35

Quality of Work	Frequency	Percentage
1. I am now confident in submitting my work.	32	91.42%
2. I can now organize meetings using different platforms that were taught to us during the extension seminars.	30	85.71%

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3. I release certification a little bit faster now because I am now proficient in manipulating the computer.	35	100%
4. As a secretary, I now respond promptly to the emails in the barangay.	29	82.85%
5. Better feedback from the community is now heard because of our prompt services.	33	94.28%

Table 4.3 illustrates the impact of Office Productivity Software Training on the efficiency and communication skills of Barangay Secretaries, particularly concerning the quality of their work. Notably, the indicator "I now release certifications more quickly because I am proficient in computer manipulation" received a 100% response rate, with all 35 respondents affirming this improvement. Similarly, the statement "We now receive better feedback from the community due to our prompt services" was endorsed by 33 respondents, representing 94.28%. Additionally, 29 respondents (82.85%) agreed that "As a secretary, I now respond promptly to emails in the barangay." These findings demonstrate significant enhancements in productivity and communication effectiveness as a result of the training program, aligning with previous research that underscores the positive impact of software training on administrative efficiency and community engagement (Smith & Johnson, 2020; Lee, 2019).

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the profile of the Barangay Secretaries of Alaminos City, Pangasinan, reveals a predominantly female workforce, primarily aged between 31 and 40 years old, with most respondents being married, indicating a mature and potentially experienced group. This demographic insight is crucial, as it may influence their perspectives, decision-making, and approach to their roles within barangay governance.

Furthermore, the data highlights the prominent use of Microsoft Word and Gmail prior to the training, underscoring their importance in daily professional and educational tasks. Post-training, there was a notable increase in the utilization of various IT tools, demonstrating the training's effectiveness. The Office Productivity Software Training notably enhanced the participants' knowledge and technical skills, with most reporting improved proficiency. This boost in competence is expected to enhance their efficiency and communication capabilities, ultimately contributing to more effective barangay governance. These findings align with existing research emphasizing the significance of targeted software training in fostering professional growth and organizational performance.

RECOMMENDATION

Based on the data, it is recommended that:

1. The organization continues and expands targeted training programs focused on essential IT tools such as Microsoft Word, Gmail, and other Office productivity software. This approach will sustain and further enhance participants' proficiency, ultimately improving efficiency and communication within barangay governance. Additionally, integrating regular refresher courses and advanced modules can help maintain skill levels and adapt to evolving technological needs. Investing in ongoing professional development will foster continued growth, support organizational effectiveness, and align with best practices highlighted by existing research on the benefits of targeted software training.

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