The Executive Secretarial Market in Aracaju/SE

O Mercado de Secretariado Executivo em Aracajú/SE

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Abstract

Academic works on the job market for Executive Secretariat professionals are mostly in the south and southeast regions of Brazil. Based on this, the present work sought to understand the requirements intended by employers in Aracaju, at the time of hiring. The research was portrayed as an empirical investigation, with a quantitative-descriptive approach, using the Survey as a research method. The data collection instrument was a questionnaire, applied in loco to employers of companies registered with JUCESE, consisting of 226 companies. The results showed that the Aracaju market requires specific Hard Skills for Executive Secretariat professionals, such as mastery in finance, problem-solving, and Soft Skills such as logical, critical and analytical reasoning, control and direction, resilience, emotional intelligence and flexibility. This research brought information that contributes to possible changes in the content of the pedagogical project of the Secretariat of the Federal University of Sergipe.

Keywords: Executive Secretariat; Secretarial professional; Employers Perspective; Soft Skills; Hard Skills.

Resumo

Os trabalhos acadêmicos sobre o mercado de trabalho para profissionais de Secretariado Executivo concentram-se majoritariamente nas regiões sul e sudeste do Brasil. Com base nisso, o presente estudo buscou compreender os requisitos desejados pelos empregadores em Aracaju no momento da contratação. A pesquisa foi caracterizada como uma investigação empírica, com abordagem quantitativa-descritiva, utilizando o método Survey como estratégia de pesquisa. O instrumento de coleta de dados foi um questionário, aplicado in loco aos empregadores de empresas registradas na JUCESE, totalizando 226 empresas. Os resultados mostraram que o mercado de Aracaju exige habilidades técnicas específicas (Hard Skills) para profissionais de Secretariado Executivo, como domínio em finanças e resolução de problemas, além de habilidades interpessoais (Soft Skills), como raciocínio lógico, crítico e analítico, capacidade de controle e direção, resiliência, inteligência emocional e flexibilidade. Esta pesquisa trouxe informações que podem contribuir para possíveis mudanças no conteúdo do projeto pedagógico do curso de Secretariado da Universidade Federal de Sergipe.

Palavras-chave: Secretariado Executivo; Profissional de Secretariado; Perspectiva dos Empregadores; Soft Skills; Hard Skills.

1 INTRODUCTION

The very competitive landscape, stimulated by the movements inherent in globalization, has been modifying personal and work ties, causing new concepts for individuals today (Marçal; Barbosa, 2020). Due to the changes that have taken place, it can be seen that the market vision of people in the 21st century manifests itself in a very different way to that of individuals in the 20th century, who wanted influence and benefits from an executive's office in a renowned company (Marçal; Barbosa, 2020).

Because of these changes, many institutions continue to align themselves with various technologies, which are constantly being implemented as tools to relate to and face the challenges of today's job market (Thomas; Paul, 2019). This adaptability is fundamental for all individuals and companies, even more so after the COVID-19 pandemic (Amal Blumenschein; De Vasconcellos, 2021). According to the PNAD-COVID19 survey (Instituto Brasileiro De Geografia e Estatística (IBGE), 2020), the unemployment rate increased from 10.7% in May 2020 to 14.0% in September 2020, examining a total of 13.49 million

unemployed people in this period. The COVID-19 pandemic has been a global public health problem, and has visibly affected the labor market (Dos Santos *et al.*, 2021). In addition, this pandemic has led most countries to a very serious health and humanitarian crisis, leading individuals to adapt and learn new skills in various dimensions (Lima; Buss; Paes-Sousa, 2020).

The points mentioned reveal that historical evolution has been moving the Executive Secretariat to new strands, where such modern facts, such as the age of technology, health crises and globalization mentioned above, including the legalization of the profession, have enabled the secretariat to end the model of a mainly functionalist profile, to achieve a diversified profile, where knowledge is an essential component (Moreira *et al.* 2022). As a result, due to the generalist training they receive as undergraduates, this professional can be directed to manage different processes, in various types of companies and in different sectors, such as: commerce, industry, banking, hospitals, also in educational institutions as a manager, consultant, teacher (Vianaed, 2018), which therefore leads to a situation of employability.

Employability is the ability of individuals to go through transitions in the labor market in which they are inserted, which comes from skills, knowledge and resilience (Boto, 2011). This context can be interesting for graduates, as these skills and, above all, receptiveness to change (Brasil, 2005), are taught as a minimum training requirement. And it is from this angle that executive secretarial degrees have been modernizing their pedagogical projects, taking into account the increased representativeness and progress of secretarial work in the country (Cielo, Schmidt and Wenningkamp, 2014); this progress can be noted due to the historicity of the profession, that is, the secretary who previously performed technical-level functions currently has the potential to occupy more strategic positions (Moreira *et al.*, 2022).

To this end, it is essential to study regional markets from time to time and then try to update teaching projects (Silva; Camargo, 2020). Once the skills and qualifications learned by professionals during their graduation and their adaptability to market demands have been found, the level of probability of these professionals being hired by companies is revealed (Kloss et al., 2021).

A pandemic is known to greatly influence transactions, decisively interfering in the world's financial markets, significantly modifying results and causing various negative impacts in all areas of the economy (Fortuna, 2000). For this reason, the post-pandemic scenario further reinforces the need for research, to better understand what changes have taken place in the profile of secretarial professionals in formal jobs, and what new skills sought by employers should be considered by executive secretarial professionals (Da Silva *et al.*, 2021). Furthermore, we realize that there is a need for more studies that aim to include the new requirements of the job market for secretarial professionals (Silva; Camargo, 2020), given that in the intra-pandemic scenario of Covid-19, the results of a survey revealed that human competencies, commonly called soft skills, were the most demanded as current requirements for candidates, followed by greater knowledge of technology, but with many changes in the profile of candidates (Dos Santos *et al.*, 2021).

Given what has been presented, the idea arose that it is relevant to understand the relationship between the training of secretarial professionals and the current job market (Menezes; Teixeira, 2020), in view of the possible changes that occurred intra and post-pandemic, and since the job market has a significant impact on the recognition of this profession, as there is an interconnection between the two (Vianaed, 2018). As a result, the general aim of this study is to investigate the job market for executive secretaries from the perspective of employers in the city of Aracaju/SE, i.e. whether, at the moment, secretarial graduates have the characteristics required by companies in Aracaju.

2. THEORETICAL RATIONALE

Secretarial agents carry out complex activities, and can even act specifically in the decision-making process of company management (Feitosa; Sabino, 2013). This is due to their mastery of information, which consequently has a positive or negative impact on the final result of a company strategy (Santos, 2020). According to Vianaed (2018), executive secretaries can be more than advisors to executives, or work in other organizational functions; they are liberal professionals who, due to their training, are able to develop entrepreneurial and innovative functions in their careers.

Technological advances, together with the globalization of commitments, have led large companies to demand a more qualified and excellent professional profile from executive secretaries (Kloss *et al.*, 2021). In this sense, there is a strong tendency for the secretarial profession to get used to developing new work strategies over the next few years, migrating to sectors that will be in vogue and thus continually renewing its identity and becoming more flexible (Schaffer; Birello; Cantarotti, 2020). In fact, flexibility and resilience are part of the training of the executive secretary, and this professional needs to become invulnerable so that their functions in the organization they work for are carried out well, so it is in academic training that they must learn to exercise their willingness to fit into all possible scenarios that are imposed on them (Santos, 2020). Due to these changes, both in history and in economic models, it has become necessary for these professionals to expand their theoretical, technological and practical knowledge, and as a result, it has been vital to change their standards in order to keep up with these transformations (Moreira, *et al.*, 2022).

Because of the above, many secretarial graduates tend to seek updated qualifications and skills based on the needs of the current and future context of companies (Santos, 2020). Therefore, these future specialists or technicians may be inclined to seek qualifications in entrepreneurship, innovation, problem-solving and understanding new digital technologies, in order to improve their employability in the market (Dias, 2021); these qualifications are, for example: being entrepreneurs in virtual offices (Vianaed, 2018); in remote secretarial work, where they can act with

more autonomy and commitment, creating opportunities for new points of view to be explored and consolidated in the secretarial profession (Costa; Chizzoni; Vaz, 2019); specializing in finance, which according to Silva and Camargo (2020), is becoming essential in this profession, because it has been proven that many secretarial activities directly involve this domain; in legal advice, it presents itself as a business mediator, carrying out the intermediation of people and processes, thus establishing a network of cooperation (Kobernovicz; Rocha, 2021).

Skills related to secretarial techniques and administration, such as preparing meetings, managing agendas, managing and processing files and documents and using the Office package, are basic and expected of secretaries (Wamser, 2010). However, as already mentioned, many secretarial graduates now report that their work is beginning to require them to delve deeper into finance, especially cash flow analysis and accounting, enabling them to work in treasuries (Silva; Camargo, 2020).

From this perspective, this fact could raise new discussions about yet another area of activity for this professional, where mixing their administrative and information management skills allows them to enter the financial market, currently as an advisor, given that an understanding of finance, specialization in financial products and often having a degree are the minimum requirements to compete for a job with financial firms (Vianaed, 2022). Having said this, we have diagrammed table 1 below, which sets out some of the characteristics of the secretary's profile that we have shown in this work, where they have been found in academic literature and recent studies.

Table 01 - Characteristics of the Executive Secretary Profile.

Abilities and Capacities	Activities and forms of work
command of information; knowledge of finance; problem solving; mastery of new digital technologies; proficiency in Portuguese and foreign languages; secretarial techniques; resilience proactivity emotional intelligence flexibility; generalist vision; planning organization control and direction; using logical, critical and analytical thinking; attitude, creativity, determination and dedication.	company management decision; executive advisor; legal advice; entrepreneurs; preparing reports, files, correspondence, invoices, letters and financial statements; working in the Treasury; sectors that are in vogue; financial advisor; virtual offices. organizational producer organizational change manager.

3. METHODOLOGY

As explained above, the aim of this research is to analyze the possible changes that have occurred in the profile of the secretarial professional in Aracaju/SE. To achieve the aim of our project, we carried out an empirical study with a quantitative approach. We emphasize that the research is also descriptive, as there will be a list of data, as well as why these data were collected (Boente; Braga, 2004).

We chose Survey as the method for this study, as it proves to be the most appropriate in this situation, given that we intend to show the market context of executive secretaries in a given population. This is one of the fundamental characteristics of the survey method (Babbie, 2015).

For the purposes of our research, a questionnaire was structured to collect survey data, applied on site, which allows for a higher rate of return (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2012). The questionnaire was formulated with hypothetical questions, so that all employers could take part, as the research is temporal (Babbie, 2015). In order to increase the reliability (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2012) of the research instrument, a pre-test was carried out. The questionnaire was based on: Brasil (2005), Wamser (2010), Feitosa and Sabino (2013), Barros, Cajado and Alves (2015), (2018), Ouro (2019), Santos (2020), Silva and Camargo (2020), Schaffer, Birello and Cantarotti (2020, Correia (2021), Dias (2021), Dos Santos *et al.* (2021), Kloss *et al.* (2021), Kobernovicz and Rocha (2021), Viana (2022).

3.1 Population and Sample

The population we intend to analyze is located in Aracaju/SE and we would also point out that the survey will be of the intersectional type, coming from a selected sample, i.e. companies registered with (Junta Comercial do Estado de Sergipe (JUCESE); in this type of survey the data is collected at a specific time (Babbie, 2015).

Furthermore, the type of sample will be statistical and probabilistic. There were no criteria for choosing sectors. Therefore, the list of companies was diverse, and contained many companies that had started their commercial activities in less than a year, but we understand that this helps to make this study broader, in terms of the market context of Aracaju/SE, and not just focusing on a specific group of employers. The sample size will be defined in order to estimate prevalence. According to Machin et al (2018), assuming that the population used in this study is finite, with 226 companies, a significance level of 5%, a margin of error of

6% and a prevalence of 30%, we obtain a sample size of 67 participants using the formula:

$$n = \frac{NZ_{\frac{\alpha}{2}}^2 p(1-p)}{e^2(N-1) + Z_{\frac{\alpha}{2}}^2 p(1-p)}$$

Where n is the sample size, N is the population size, p is the expected proportion, e is the margin of error and is the square of the normal distribution score associated with the significance level α. This gives us:

$$n = \frac{226 \times (1,965)^2 \times 0,3 \times (1 - 0,3)}{(226 - 1) + (1,965)^2 \times 0,3 \times (1 - 0,3)} \approx 67$$

3.2 Operational definitions of variables and indicators

Soft skills are the non-cognitive skills that people need in order to have a good social relationship in the workplace (Lopes, 2021), while hard skills are the technical skills that are fundamental for carrying out the job, which loosely translates as difficult skills (Borges, 2022). The table below summarizes the variables used in this study.

Table 02 - Variable Used

	Variabel	Authors
Hard Skills	Information domain; Finance; Problem solving; New digital technologies; Portuguese and foreign languages; Secretarial techniques. Specialization	Brasil (2005), Feitosa and Sabino (2013), Barros, Cajado and Alves (2015), (2018), Silva and Camargo (2020), Correia (2021), Dias (2021), Dos Santos *et al.* (2021), Kloss *et al.* (2021), Kobernovicz and Rocha (2021), Viana (2022).
Soft Skills	Resilience, emotional intelligence and flexibility; Control and direction; Logical, critical and analytical thinking.	Brasil (2005), Wamser (2010), Schaffer, Birello and Cantarotti (2020), Santos (2020).

Source: Prepared by the author based on Brasil (2005), Wamser (2010), Feitosa and Sabino (2013), Barros, Cajado and Alves (2015), (2018), Santos (2020), Silva and Camargo (2020), Schaffer, Birello and Cantarotti (2020, Correia (2021), Dias (2021), Dos Santos *et al.* (2021), Kloss *et al.* (2021), Kobernovicz and Rocha (2021), Viana (2022).

3.3 Data collection and data analysis

The database was compiled from companies that are currently registered with JUCESE. According to State Decree No. 8,591 of July 28, 1987 (Sergipe, 1987), one of JUCESE's purposes is to register commerce and related activities (JUCESE, 2020). Data was collected between March and June 2023.

To analyze the data, we used the R CORE TEAM, 2021, version 4.1 and JAMOVI, 2022, version 2.3. Descriptive statistics such as frequency distribution, measures of central tendency (mean and median), measures of dispersion (standard deviation) and measures of position (interquartile range) were used.

The hypothesis that the continuous distributions adhere to the normal distribution will be tested using the Shapiro-Wilk test (Gonzalés-Estrada; Cosmes, 2019). If this hypothesis is confirmed, the hypothesis of equality of means will be tested using the t-test for independent samples (two samples) (Liu; Wang, 2021), ANOVA (three or more groups) (Liu; Wang, 2021) and, if not, the hypothesis of equality of position measures will be tested using the Mann-Whitney test (two independent groups) (Happ; Bathke; Brunner, 2019), Kruskal-Wallis test (three or more groups) (Ogura; Shiraishi, 2022). The significance level adopted was 5%.

4. RESULT

In this section, we will present the results obtained and the analysis of the data collected through the Survey, which was applied to the 67 employers of the companies reported in the JUCESE spreadsheet, in the city of Aracaju/SE.

In the first part of the results, we will present the results of the descriptive statistics relating to employability, the profession and the Executive Secretary degree, and in the second part we will talk about the variables.

4.1 Profession, Graduation and Employability

Some questions were formulated with the Likert scale response model used to evaluate the items that impact the measurement of responses (Ouro, 2019), with limits from 1 to 5, where the first item shows the highest degree of approval, the middle item denotes neutrality, and the last item indicates the highest degree of disagreement, all being symmetrical; there were also some questions with scales from 1 to 4 (Aguiar; Correia; Campos, 2011).

Faced with the context of the companies chosen in this work, we can analyze in the tables below that the companies selected from the list are inserted in a context where most of them are SMEs, from profitable sectors in the region

Table 03 - Frequency of Company Size

Company size	Counts	% of Total	% accumulated
Large	1	1.5 %	1.5 %
Micro	51	76.1 %	77.6 %
Medium	4	6.0 %	83.6 %
Small	11	16.4 %	100.0 %

Source: Research data, (2023)

Table 04 - Frequency of Period the Company is in Activity

Length of time the company has been in business	Counts	% of Total	% accumulated
1 to 5 years	22	32.8 %	32.8 %
10 to 15 years	5	7.5 %	40.3 %
5 to 10 years	5	7.5 %	47.8 %
more than 15 years	4	6.0 %	53.7 %
less than 1 year	31	46.3 %	100.0 %

Source: Research data, (2023)

As we can see, the majority of the companies where it was possible to collect data are very new companies and the period in which they have been open is a maximum of 5 years, i.e. 46.3% of the companies in the sample have been in business for less than 1 year and 32.8% have been in business for between 1 and 5 years. These numbers of new companies may be reverberating the continuation of a fact, where many people and organizations sought various alternatives, in the pre- and post-pandemic period, renewing work in various sectors and looking for ways to get back on their feet economically (Instituto Brasileiro De Geografia e Estatística (IBGE), 2022; Müller *et al*., 2021).

The following table shows the results regarding knowledge of the profession.

Table 05 - Results (Profession, Graduation and Employability)

	N	Omitted	Average	Mediana	Standard deviation	Minimum	Maximum
On a scale of 1 (minimum) to 4 (maximum), how knowledgeable are you about the Executive Secretarial degree?	67	0	2.22	2	1.204	1	4
On a scale of 1 (minimum) to 4 (maximum), how knowledgeable are you about the Executive Secretarial profession?	67	0	2.22	2	1.204	1	4
If you have Executive Secretarial professionals in your company, how many of them do you have?	12	55	1.17	1.00	0.389	1	2
If you have hired secretarial professionals in the last 5 years, how many?	10	57	1.20	1.00	0.422	1	2

Source: Research data, (2023)

Looking at the table above, we can see that the respondents did not omit themselves in the first two questions and the answers had exactly the same measures (mean, median and standard deviation), so this parity in the results of the first items in Table 06 shows that knowledge about the degree and the secretarial profession may be correlated (Bittencourt; Mendes, 2022; Marçal; Barbosa, 2020; Cielo; Schmidt; Wenningkamp, 2014). Consequently, we can see that the respondents demonstrate knowledge about both, but not very much, since the numbers were 37.3% of the contrary answers compared to 34.4% of the positive ones; the median for both was 2, in percentage representing 28.3% of the neutral answers, in the frequencies of the answers (appendix). This shows that the secretarial scenario in Aracaju is no different from that in São Paulo and partially in Santa Catarina (Dos Santos *et al.*, 2021; Da Silva *et al.*, 2021). Regarding the answers, the minimum and maximum value represents the number of professionals who were hired, who on the Likert scale had options from 1 to 4 (Aguiar; Correia; Campos, 2011).

Given this, the average number of companies registered with JUCESE at the time of collection was 1.17 secretarial professionals performing their duties. Similarly, on a scale of 1 to 4, the average number of hires of these professionals in the last five years was 1.20.

We compared the numbers and hiring averages from a survey that analyzed the secretarial market in Greater São Paulo, from March 16, 2020 to April 30, 2021 (Dos Santos *et al.*, 2021), with those obtained in our survey.

Table 05 also shows that during the survey period, 12 employers said that they had executive secretarial professionals in their company, which corresponds to 17.9% of the responses, compared to 81.8% against; 10 of these professionals had been hired in the last 5 years, equivalent to 15% of the total number of employees. So, these 10 represent 83.3% of the 17.9% and the 2 employees, 16.7%, who had already been hired for longer. This data suggests

that there has been an upward trend in hiring over the last five years among Aracaju companies.

For comparison's sake, let's take another look at the survey that was carried out to see if there were any recruitment processes for secretaries in the São Paulo metropolitan area between March 16, 2020 and April 30, 2021. The result of actual hiring was around 33.3%, indicating that the area was in demand. On the other hand, the majority of employers interviewed said that they had not hired secretarial professionals during the study period, representing 62.5% (Dos Santos *et al.*, 2021). On the other hand, our results show that 15% of the population investigated was hired and 81.8% was not hired.

With this, we obtained a scenario of Executive Secretaries in the southeastern region of Brazil, which through its results, corroborates the idea that this profession and degree are considerably known in Aracaju, due to the percentage of 34.4% of employers knowing both, and that there is also supply and demand in this profession (Dos Santos *et al.*, 2021).

Still in relation to this notion of secretarial work in Aracaju, as we can see from Table 05, the average knowledge of employers was 2.22 on the Likert scale, with a median of 2.00. Using the scale of 01 to 04 adopted, this result regarding employers' knowledge of the career of Executive Secretary and also of this degree, can be considered as regular, pointing to a small identification of the profession and degree, in the population studied (Vianaed, 2018).

However, the standard deviation shown was 1.204, far from 0, indicating a very significant volatility of opinion in the responses, and attesting to the fact that the responses were disparate. This may also be related to the characteristics of the companies, the size and age of the companies where the data was collected. In this way, this information reinforces what was said earlier, that the profession and degree are not totally unknown to Aracaju employers, but are presented in a regular way.

These figures show that Executive Secretariat appears to be developing in the region investigated (1.20 hires in the last 5 years). Its recognition was attested to by the fact that, even though there are employers who are unaware of the profession and the degree, the positive responses (34.4%) about the requirements expected by them, enhance the reputation (Vianaed, 2018) of Executive Secretaries.

4.2 Soft Skills and Hard Skills

In this subsection we will show the results achieved in relation to the variables. We'll show the means, medians, standard deviations, interquartile ranges and also how the data crosses the frequency distributions. We will also present the hypothesis tests (Ogura; Shiraishi, 2022; Liu; Wang, 2021; Happ; Bathke; Brunner, 2019), with a significance level of 5%.

In Table 06, we can see some statistical data, summarizing how the variables used in this study performed

Table 06 - Result Variables

	Média	Desvio-padrão	Mínimo	Máximo	Percentis		
					50th	25th	75th
Raciocínio_lógico_crítico_e_analítico	4.86	0.279	4.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00
Controle_e_direção	4.57	0.891	1.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00
Resiliência_Inteligência_emocional_e_Flexibilidade	4.25	0.947	2.33	5.00	5.00	3.67	5.00
Resoluções_de_problemas	4.50	0.668	2.00	5.00	5.00	4.00	5.00
Finanças	3.55	0.925	1.00	5.00	3.75	3.00	4.13
português_e_idioma_estrangeiro	4.09	1.028	1.50	5.00	4.25	3.25	5.00
novas_tecnologias_digitais	3.79	0.752	2.00	5.00	4.00	3.25	4.38
Técnicas_secretariais	3.83	0.675	2.14	5.00	3.86	3.43	4.43
Especialização	3.52	0.886	1.00	5.00	3.50	3.00	4.00
Informação	4.17	0.789	1.00	5.00	4.25	4.00	4.75

Source: Research data, (2023)

Based on the figure above, we can see that employers expect secretarial professionals in Aracaju to have a very multidisciplinary profile, i.e. they need to be professionals with many skills (Silva; Camargo, 2020). The variables Logical, critical and analytical reasoning, Control and direction, Resilience, Emotional intelligence and Flexibility, presented averages of 4.86, 4.57 and 4.25, respectively, so they can be considered high, as the maximum value is 5.00, and with very balanced percentiles, confirming that they are Soft Skills present in the secretarial profession in Aracaju, and that they need to be deepened with great attention, in graduation (Santos 2020; Schaffer; Birello; Cantarotti, 2020; Wamser, 2010).

In relation to Hard Skills, the Problem-Solving variable shows the highest average (4.50) and the third lowest standard deviation in relation to the others, revealing that this skill tends to be sought after with considerable regularity. What's more, this circumstance portrays a greater technical demand from Aracaju's employers for secretarial agents and enables them to seek qualifications in order to improve their employability in this market (Dias, 2021).

Portuguese and foreign language had a high average in relation to the four skills in the Hard Skills category. It performed with an average of 4.09 of the responses, demonstrating that employers want bilingual professionals, reinforcing the premise that professionals need to be able to use both Portuguese, writing letters, minutes or financial and other reports (Kobernovicz; Rocha, 2021; Silva; Camargo, 2020), and the foreign language (Müller *et al*., 2021).

We also presented three language options in this survey. The results show that the employers questioned prioritize professionals who can communicate in English (83.6%), which is the most popular foreign language. In second place was Spanish (64.2%). It can be seen that employers preferred to indicate

answers of type 5 rather than type 4 on the Likert scale for all the questions. This information shows that these subjects are essential to the profession (Müller *et al.*, 2021).

Another premise is shown in the next table: the knowledge management technique is required of secretarial professionals and they are therefore expected to master it (Wamser, 2010). It can be seen that 100% of the employers questioned expect the secretarial agent to know how to manage information and structure it, so it is necessary to know how to use platforms that speed up the mapping of the strategies that will be used (Kloss *et al.*, 2021; Oliveira; Gouveia; Peronico Barbotin, 2019; Paul; Benito, 2018; Paul; Sanchez-Morcílio, 2018).

We brought this question to the study based on the premise that secretaries need to be aligned with the new trends in the job market (Kloss *et al.*, 2021; Schaffer; Birello; Cantarotti, 2020; Santos, 2020; Vianaed, 2018). With this in mind, we see that around 33% of employers, at the time of data collection, would prioritize secretarial professionals who had the ability to use the programming language when hiring. However, the results show that having this hard skill is still not relevant. Therefore, the data from the positive responses suggests that it may be the case that many companies use information systems supported by ERP, Big Data, to facilitate the analysis of some data (Correia, 2021; Gartner, 2012) and need individuals who know how to use these systems.

As for Secretarial Techniques, we consider the average of 3.38 to be satisfactory, given that only one assumption different from traditional secretarial techniques was added (Cielo; Schmidt; Wenningkamp, 2014; Brasil, 2005), which was the professional's role in legal advice (Kobernovic; Rocha, 2021).

Regarding the results of the Information variable, the employers' responses resulted in an average score of 4.17 on a scale of 1 to 5. This score is considered high and in line with some authors used in this research (Müller *et al.*, 2021; Locks *et al.*, 2017). Thus, it is clear that the secretarial professional is also a manager of all types of information and an important manager within organizations, because in order to obtain impactful information for the company, it is necessary to be at high levels in the company (Moreira, *et al.*, 2022; Santos, 2020; Feitosa; Sabino, 2013).

The variables Finance, Specialization, New digital technologies and Secretarial techniques had the lowest averages, showing that entrepreneurs tend not to observe these skills as much as others

We then sought to understand whether there was a difference in perception between employees who had a secretariat and those who did not. To do this, we used the Mann-Whitney test, as the data was not normal. If this value is greater than 5%, which is the significance level (α) we adopted for the calculations, the null hypothesis (H0) will not be rejected. If p is equal to

or less than 5%, we reject the null hypothesis (H0) and accept the alternative hypothesis (H1) (Liu; Wang, 2021).

Table 07 - Mann-Whitney Test

		Statistics	p
Information	Mann-Whitney U	310	0.820
Specialization	Mann-Whitney U	191	0.027
Secretarial_techniques	Mann-Whitney U	318	0.920
new_digital_technologies	Mann-Whitney U	315	0.880
portuguese_and_foreign_language	Mann-Whitney U	234	0.115
Finance	Mann-Whitney U	309	0.808
Problem_solving	Mann-Whitney U	324	1.000
Resilience_Emotional_Intelligence_and_Flexibility	Mann-Whitney U	309	0.787
Control_and_direction	Mann-Whitney U	274	0.249
Logical_critical_and_analytical_reasoning	Mann-Whitney U	240	0.052

Source: Research data (2023)

As we can see, only the Specialization variable has a lower value than the significance level chosen of 0.05 (5%), which was 0.027 (2.7%), thus rejecting the null hypothesis (H0) (Gonzalés-Estrada; Cosmes, 2019; Happ; Bathke; Brunner, 2019). With this, we can infer from the median that entrepreneurs who do not have a secretariat under contract care more about the fact that the secretariat has a specialization than entrepreneurs who already have a secretariat.

4.3 Hypothesis of Equality

In the following analysis, the difference between employers with higher and lower levels of secretarial knowledge was tested using t-tests for independent samples and was rejected (Liu; Wang, 2021). For this reason, to analyze this data, this hypothesis was tested using the Kruskal-Wallis test (non-parametric ANOVA) (Ogura; Shiraishi, 2022). The significance level was

set at 5% and the criterion for rejecting H0 (similar to ANOVA) is if the p-value is greater than the critical value (X²) (Ogura; Shiraishi, 2022; Liu; Wang, 2021).

The hypothesis to be tested is whether employers with a higher level of knowledge about the secretarial degree and those with a lower level of knowledge do not differ in terms of the variables. The p-values represent all the measures of position, there are the critical values in the Chi-Square table (X²) with (4-1) degrees of freedom (gl) (Ogura; Shiraishi, 2022; Liu; Wang, 2021). The results are as follows:

Table 08 - Kruskal-Wallis Test (non-parametric ANOVA)

	χ^2	gl	p
Information	3.36	3	0.340
Specialization	6.99	3	0.072
Secretarial_Techniques	3.15	3	0.368
new_digital_technologies	2.93	3	0.402
portuguese_and_foreign_language	4.59	3	0.204
Finance	2.93	3	0.402
Problem_solving	3.78	3	0.286
Resilience_Emotional_Intelligence_and_Flexibility	4.36	3	0.225
Control_and_direction	7.67	3	0.053
Logical_critical_and_analytical_reasoning	7.64	3	0.054

Source: Research data (2023)

Table 08 shows the result of crossing the variables with the degree of knowledge about secretarial work. It can be seen that all the variables showed p-values close to the critical value (X²), except for the soft skills variables Control and direction and Logical, critical and analytical reasoning, which showed p-values below the critical value (X²), indicating that there is statistical evidence to reject or not reject the null hypothesis (H0) (Ogura; Shiraishi, 2022; Liu; Wang, 2021). With this, we can say that for the other variables, the null hypothesis is rejected, as they had p-values greater than the critical values (X²). Therefore, statistically speaking, employers with a higher degree of knowledge differ in their thinking from those with a lower degree. Thus, it can be seen that the employers with the highest degrees of knowledge about secretarial work performed more favorably in terms of the relevance of the two underlying variables. On the other hand, with the other group of employers, the relevance performance was lower with the variables Control and direction and Logical, critical and analytical reasoning (Ogura; Shiraishi, 2022).

With this information, we conclude this subsection by showing which skills and abilities were required by employers in Aracaju during the data

collection period. In this way, we also end the results and analysis section by showing which skills were required by the Aracaju market for the profession and which skills were required by the Aracaju/SE market for secretaries. In this way, all the variables used proved to be relevant to the career of Executive Secretary. The soft skills used were: Logical, critical and analytical reasoning, Control and direction, Resilience, Emotional intelligence and Flexibility; the hard skills variables that stood out in the context of the companies analyzed were: Problem solving, Portuguese and foreign languages, New digital technologies and Finance. This information validates many of the authors used in this study (Viana, 2022; Kobernovicz; Rocha, 2021; Kloss *et al.*, 2021; Dos Santos *et al.*, 2021; Correia, 2021; Dias, 2021; Silva; Camargo, 2020; Vianaed, 2018; Barros; Cajado; Alves, 2015; Feitosa; Sabino, 2013; Brasil, 2005).

5. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

This work arose because of the need to understand the Executive Secretary job market in Aracaju's commerce, and because we understand that there is a need to update the course schedule at the Federal University of Sergipe. For this reason, this scientific investigation was necessary. In addition, we noticed a shortage of market research in the academic literature, so we decided to contribute to the progress of the local and national Executive Secretarial profession and graduation with a quantitative survey.

As far as the research problem is concerned, this study was able to answer it. Taking into account the data acquired from the survey, it emerged that employers in Aracaju/SE are looking for a multifunctional profile when hiring executive secretaries.

From this perspective, the general objective of this study was to analyze the job market for executive secretaries in Aracaju/SE, from the point of view of employers. Consequently, it was understood that the general objective was achieved because the study presented a factual scenario of the market for secretaries in the region, with expressive figures.

The results show that there are few secretarial professionals employed in Aracaju and that few of them are familiar with the profession. It was also observed that the skills that stood out were: Logical, critical and analytical reasoning, Control and Direction, Resilience, Emotional intelligence and Flexibility, from the Soft Skills variables; the variables: Problem solving, Portuguese and foreign language, from the Hard Skills variables.

For this reason, we believe that this study was significant, as it sheds light on the executive secretarial scenario in Aracaju/SE, and provides data to contribute to future discussions.

It is therefore hoped that this work will contribute to the creation of new studies on the executive secretarial job market in the region and in the country. With regard to the region investigated in this work, it is recommended that there be a larger sample, not just limited to SMEs and small companies, but that large institutions in the region be investigated in the same way. It is also recommended that future research investigate whether knowledge of the degree and profession correlate, since there was a similarity in the responses of the employers interviewed in this study, reinforcing this premise. It would therefore answer this possible hypothesis, and probably better understand employers' motivation.

This research was limited by some inaccuracies in the information provided by JUCESE. One of the inaccuracies was that not all the companies listed were in operation. Three companies were no longer at their registered address, thus delaying the study and making it more complex. In addition, one company in the center of Aracaju/SE was undergoing renovations to its building, which made it a waste of an opportunity to go to another address. At the same time, we had the misfortune of trying to collect data from 40 institutions, and the employers were unavailable at the time of the survey.

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