MZUZU UNIVERSITY

FACULTY OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

DEPARTMENT OF INFORMATION SCIENCES

Records management practices at Kasungu Municipal Council

NARIS KAPANDA

(MLIS 06/20)

A thesis in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Master of Library and Information Science in the Department of Information Science,

Mzuzu University, Malawi

DECLARATION

I, **Naris Kapanda**, declare that the research reported in this thesis, except where otherwise indicated, is my original work, and that this thesis has not been submitted for any degree or examination at any other university. This thesis does not contain other persons' data, pictures, graphs, or other information unless specifically acknowledged as being sourced from other persons. Furthermore, this thesis does not contain other persons' writings, unless specifically acknowledged as being sourced from other researchers. Where other written sources have been quoted, then:

(a) their words have been re-written, but the general information attributed to them has been referenced;

(b) where their exact words have been used, their writing has been placed inside quotation marks and referenced.

Where I have reproduced a publication of which I am an author, co-author or editor, I have indicated in detail which part of the publication was actually written by myself alone and have fully referenced such publications. This thesis does not contain text, graphics or tables copied and pasted from the internet, unless specifically acknowledged, and the sources being detailed in the dissertation and in the reference sections.

N. Kapanda

………………………. (Student Signature) **Date: 03/09/2024**

Associate Professor Winner Chawinga	**PhD**		03/09/2024
Name of Supervisor	Highest Qualification	Signature	Date

ABSTRACT

The proliferation of Information and Communication Technologies has enabled public institutions to create an increased number of paper and electronic records which require proper management. This development has inspired studies in records management to unearth global trends in records management practices. The purpose of this study was to investigate records management practices at Kasungu Municipal Council in Malawi. Specifically, the study aimed at establishing the existing records management practices; examining the existence of policy framework governing records management; and investigating factors influencing records management practices.

The study was guided by the pragmatic paradigm which led to the use of mixed methods approach. The study was underpinned by the Records Continuum Model. The study used a sample size of 78, which was arrived at by using census. Purposive sampling was used in selecting departments to be involved in the study. The data was collected using structured questionnaires and interview guidese. Quantitative data was analysed using IBM Statistical Package for Social Sciences Software version 20 while qualitative data was analysed thematically. Quantitative data was presented using tables, graphs, percentages, and qualitative data was presented by using themes.

The study found various types of records that were created or received at Kasungu Municipal Council in both electronic and paper format. These records included minutes, emails, reports, and financial records. These records were captured using computers and transmitting emails. Most employees from Kasungu Municipal Council store paper records in their offices using files, shelves, cartons, and cabinets. For electronic records, the most used storage facilities were computers and flash drives. The study further established that the Council did not have records retention and disposition schedule, records management policy, plans, and guidelines. As for records management infrastructure, the study established the existence of computers, printers, Internet, electronic lockable wooden filing cabinets, wooden shelves, and folders.

The study concludes that records management practices at Kasungu Municipal Council do not meet the minimum standards. Therefore, the study recommends that Kasungu Municipal Council should consider developing a records management tools including policy, plans and guidelines which should further guide the establishment of a full unit specifically responsible for managing records from creation to disposition.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I give special thanks to my supervisor, Associate Professor Winner Chawinga for his scholarly inspiration and leadership in the fulfillment of this study. I also acknowledge all other lecturers who participated in this master's program. I would like to further acknowledge support from Kasungu Municipal Council staff for allowing me to take this study within their institution. I am also indebted to my classmates for their support throughout the program. Special mention must go to my loving family for their moral support and for making it possible for me to obtain time along the way and concentrate on my studies. Allow me also to thank the Mzuzu University administration for providing a conducive learning environment and a chance to pursue my masters with their institution. Above all God, the Almighty, had put all things in place for this study to be completed successfully.

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

CD: Compact Disks

DRM: Digital Records Management

ERM: Electronic Records Management

e-RIM: Electronic Records Information

Management

FDSDLIS: Florida Department of States Division of Library and Information Services

KMC: Kasungu Municipal Council

ICT: Information Communication Technology

Table of Contents

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

Public institutions intensely interact with various stakeholders. These interactions generate a lot of information which is the life-blood of any organisation (Vella, 2017). Ideally, such information is captured on records that organisations generate in both paper and electronic formats (Mutsagondo, 2021). Records keep track of what is done and why it is done. Records serve as proof of communications, decisions, and engagements in an institution (Rutta & Ndenje-Sichalwe, 2021). Good records management practices are important as they provide a platform for availing reliable and accurate information upon request, enabling open governance (Motlhasedi, 2022). The proliferation of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) has enabled public institutions to create an increased number of paper and electronic records. Public institutions are therefore required to organise, manage, use, and preserve these records according to the laws governing public information (Makwae, 2021).

An understanding of records management starts with appreciating what a record is. A record is "a document made or received in the course of activity as an instrument or by product of such activity and kept for further action or reference" (Duranti, 2014, p. 1). Records are documents created or received in paper or electronic format showing evidence of business transactions taking place in any organisation. The significance of records cannot be over emphasised. Just as individuals rely on maps to tell where they are and where they might go, people rely on records to know what organisations have done or decided (World Bank, 2020). Thus, organisations use records and other sources of evidence to execute current actions, confirm past actions, and plan future actions. Records management is "the systematic control of an organisation's records, throughout their life cycle, in order to meet operational business needs, statutory and fiscal requirements and community expectations" (National Archives of Scotland, 2013, p. 1). Records management involves controlling the processes of creation, receipt, maintenance, use and disposition of records in an organisation. Records management is necessary to ensure that information can be accessed easily when needed and destroyed when not needed (Ambira, 2016).

The International Organisation for Standardisation (ISO) 15489-1 (2016) indicates that approaches to the creation, capture and management of records based on the concepts and principles of ISO

15489-1 standards ensure that authoritative evidence of business is created, captured, managed and made accessible to those who need it. ISO 15489-1 (2016) further indicates that this enables improved transparency and accountability, effective policy formation, and informed decision-making, among others. Records management plays a significant role in enhancing prudent use of resources hence preventing mismanagement, fraud, corruption and embezzlement. Principles of good governance such as accountability, transparency and the rule of law can only be promoted in African countries when records are properly managed and made accessible to the public at the right time (Mosweu & Rakemane, 2020). Poor records management practices lead to poor public service delivery and uninformed decision-making by officials (Makgahlela, 2020).

Public institutions in Malawi create, keep, and use records on an everyday basis for administrative, legal, and audit functions among other purposes. These public records need to be professionally managed so that they are easily accessed by those in need of them as provided in Chapter IV of the Constitution of Republic of Malawi, Section 37, which stipulates that, "Subject to any Act of Parliament, every person shall have the right of access to all information held by the State or any of its organs at any level of Government in so far as such information is required for the exercise of his rights (Government of Malawi (GOM), 2017). This study, therefore, investigated records management practices at Kasungu Municipal Council. The extent of records management practices at this municipal council was not known. Subsequent section gives background information of the study

1.2 Background of the study

Municipal councils are fast growing urban areas in the Malawi Local government system (Government of Malawi, 2017). They facilitate (on delegated authority from central government) the provision of local services and development within their areas of jurisdiction. The Government of Malawi (2021), reports that there are two municipal councils in Malawi namely, Kasungu Municipal Council and Luchenza Municipal Council. According to Public Sector Reforms Management Unit (PSRMU), (2022) Kasungu became a municipality in 2010 under the Act of Parliament on local government. Kasungu municipality is approximately 130 kilometres north-west of the capital of Malawi, Lilongwe. It has a total population of 77,619 (National Statistics Office (NSO), 2018). Kasungu Municipal Council (KMC) is being headed by the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) who is the controlling officer of the council and is responsible for the day-to-day management of all operations and resources of the council. The CEO works hand in hand with directorates (Public Sector Reforms Management Unit (PSRMU), 2022). KMC currently has five directorates namely, human resources, public works, finance, planning and education and health (KMC Human Resources Department, 2022). KMC is responsible for raising and collecting local taxes and user fees and charges, but most of their revenue comes from national government grants. The council is also responsible for education, health, forestry, natural resources and community services.

1.3 Statement of the problem

Efficient records management is the foundation block for successful transparency and accountability initiatives without which organisations' efficiency would be compromised, leading to corruption and loss of confidence (Rotich et al., 2017). Public records management practices in developed countries such as the United States of America (USA), United Kingdom (UK), and Australia are at an advanced stage such that government agencies have policies, standards, guidelines, and skilled personnel relevant to the management of both paper and electronic records (Australian National Audit Office, 2013; Ginsberg, 2016).

Contrary to what is happening in the global north, public records management practices of public institutions in Africa are mostly in disarray as seen in developing countries of Tanzania, Nigeria, South Africa, and Malawi which have common problems including ineffective records management programmes; low levels of skills and knowledge among records personnel; absence of records management policies, plans and guidelines; and missing of important records (Lihoma, 2012; Phiri & Tough, 2018; Rutta & Ndenje-Sichalwe, 2021).

A local press report indicated that two officers at Kasungu Municipal Council in July, 2021 were suspended by the Ministry of Local Government, Unity and Culture over among other reasons failure to submit reports/records for business transactions (Nyasa times, 2021). Further, this author being a resident in the Central Region of Malawi has also witnessed several developmental projects such as construction of Roads in the municipality which is under Kasungu Municipal Council being halted due to among other things failure to account for project funds because of missing of project records.

The events above, therefore, motivated this researcher to pose the following question: How are records being managed in the Malawian public institutions? Literature, however, indicates that some studies on records management practices have been conducted in the Malawian public institutions. In Malawi many studies available have mainly focused on records management in the public sector (Msiska et al., 2017; Malanga & Chawinga, 2017). Meanwhile, empirical studies in records management practices in municipal councils in Malawi is at an infant stage such that few documented studies have been explored. Consequently, the findings from these studies did not yield sufficient evidence to understand the current state of records management practices in Malawi.

None of these studies examined how municipal councils in Malawi manage both paper and electronic records. This study, therefore, filled in that gap by investigating records management practices at Kasungu Municipal Council. There are no known studies on this topic conducted at this municipal council.

1.4 Aim of the study

The aim of the study was to investigate the records management practices at Kasungu Municipal Council.

1.5 Research objectives

The study sought to address the following three objectives:

1. To examine types of records created, received or captured at KMC
2. To analyse records preservation strategies at KMC
3. To investigate factors influencing records management practices at KMC

1.6 Research questions

To achieve the above specific objectives, the following research questions guided the study:

1. What are types of records created, captured or received at KMC?
2. What are the records preservation strategies at KMC?
3. What are the factors influencing records management practices at KMC?

1.7 Significance of the study

It is anticipated that this study may contribute to practice, theory and policy of records management at KMC. Practically, the study intends to provide empirical evidence on the importance of managing records in a continuum of care from creation to disposition as a means to the attainment of an effective and efficient management of records and to achieve transparency and accountability. Theoretically, the study seeks to fill an identified gap in literature from the perspective of records management practices in public sectors, especially in municipal councils. It is also envisaged that the study findings may aid KMC in formulating a records management policy for effective records management. This may further create awareness among top officials and stakeholders about the need to align records management policies to the overall management of the council. The policy insights may prompt the establishment and implementation of a robust records management programme at KMC.

1.8 Scope and Limitations

The study focused on records management practices at KMC by investigating a range of practices involved in the management of records from creation, use, maintenance to final disposition. The study excluded other municipal councils and focused only on KMC. One limitation is that the study is undertaken in one setting. Therefore, the findings would not be fully transferable to other institutions. Further to that, financial constraints limit the researcher to broaden the contextual scope to other institutions.

1.9 Chapter Summary

The foregoing chapter presented the scholarly concept of records management practices within the global, African, and Malawian contexts. It defined the statement of the problem; research objectives; and research questions in the context of the Kasungu Municipal Council. The chapter was premised on the significance of the study that it would generate literature on records management practices in view of municipal councils in Malawi, particularly Kasungu Municipal Council. It also aspired to inform policy direction on proper records management at Kasungu Municipal Council. For a realistic scope of the study, the chapter delimited the study to action officers who created, used, and managed records at Kasungu Municipal Council. Finally, the implications of the study are curtailed to one municipal council because of its limited scope. The chapter that follows covers the literature reviewed in the course of the study.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The previous chapter provided the background to the study, problem statement, and purpose and objectives of the study. This chapter presents an overview of literature on records management practices in public sectors such as local authorities. Literature review is "a description of literary works relevant to a particular area of study" (Ramdhani et al., 2014, as cited in Mutsagondo, 2021, p. 42). It is an integration of views, theories, hypotheses, methods and methodologies used by earlier scholars in their studies or research. Creswell and Creswell (2018) posit that a literature review helps to determine whether the topic is worth studying and it provides insight into ways in which the researcher can limit the scope to a needed area. Literature review helps a researcher to identify problems that need to be investigated.

The four main types of literature review are traditional or narrative, systematic, meta-analysis and meta-synthesis (Dudovskiy, 2019). The primary purpose of a narrative literature review is to analyse and summarise a body of literature, to highlight new research streams, make historical narratives of issues, identify inconsistencies and gaps in the body of available knowledge (Dudovskiy, 2019). The major weakness of narrative literature review is that it heaps literature upon literature without systematic synthesis and integration of data in an informed manner (Mutsagondo, 2021) hence it was not used in this study. Meta-analysis literature review is usually highly standardised and thus, mostly used in quantitative studies, and usually comprises of numbers, frequencies and statistical figures (O'Gorman & MacIntosh, 2015). This was also not used in this study since the study is not highly structured. However, meta-synthesis literature review is non-statistical, and suitable for pure qualitative studies (Dudovskiy, 2019). O'Gorman and MacIntosh (2015) opine that meta-synthesis literature review integrates, evaluates and interprets findings of many qualitative studies and the focus is to have inductively-rich literature. Since the current study used a mixed methods approach, it did not use meta-synthesis literature review which is suitable for a qualitative study. Nevertheless, systematic literature review is dissimilar to other types of literature reviews as it is comprehensive, transparent and it is in line with pre-set criteria such as set objectives and research questions (Ramdhani et al., 2014, as cited in Mutsagondo, 2021). This study therefore employed systematic literature review because it is more rigorous than the narrative literature review. It is not just a summary of sources consulted, but spells out the time-frame from which the literature was selected and is highly organized.

This chapter's focus is in line with the objectives of the study. The following themes were reviewed: records management practices; records management policy framework and factors influencing records management practices.

2.2 Types of records created, received, or captured.

Records management practices involve the processes of identifying, classifying, and storing records, controlling access to records, as well as ensuring that retaining and disposing of the records are properly being done. Effective records management practices ensure that records are available for use when needed (Jirata et al., 2018). The concepts of records creation and capture are discussed in the subsequent sections.

2.2.1 Records creation and capture

Magama, (2018) argues that records can be in any format. These can be in paper based format or electronic format. There are various records and information generated at Kasungu Municipal Council. These could be reports, memos, financial reports, conference proceedings, among others (Phiri, 2016). Scholars such as Aitchison (2010), Suber (2012) and Marsh (2015) have highlighted the types of grey literature that could be available at the institution and could be considered as records: preprints; working papers; research and technical reports; conference proceedings; departmental and research centre newsletters and bulletins; papers in support of grant applications; status reports to funding agencies; committee reports and memoranda; statistical reports; technical documentation; conference presentation and surveys. A number of studies and other related literature reviewed provide consistent results about the common types of records generated and managed in public institutions. For instance, a study by Kulcu (2009) examined quality documentation and records management in Turkish municipal council. It revealed both paper and electronic records. The following records were listed: directories, correspondences, emails, forms, reports, retention schedules, and database reports.

In Africa, several studies have explored records management practices. In East Africa, a quantitative study undertaken by Unegbu and Adenike (2013) unearthed challenges of records management practices in the Abuja Municipal Area Council in Nigeria. The study found that the commonly created records were letters, directives, mails, reports, policy in procedure manual, financial, legal, general maintenance manual, historical or archival periodicals. A study conducted by Bakare and Abioye (2016) examined records management practice in selected local government councils in Ogun state, Nigeria and revealed that the councils generated records in the categories of policies, minutes of meetings, reports, contracts and equipment documents.

Similar findings were reported in a study done by Rutta (2021) on the state of records management practices in public offices: a case study of Kinondoni Municipal Council in Tanzania. It reported that the records generated by the institution are personal records pertaining to employment, staff development, and disciplinary issues; administrative records, financial records such as research funds, grants, budgetary information, salary payments, statements of accounts, reports, and expenditure receipts; architectural records, such as building plans and maps; internal-external audit reports; committee records such as minutes; and records collaborations and memorandum of understandings. The study further reported specific records required to carry out business functions. For instance, records such as strategic plan, quality and manual procedures, and terms of services were listed. A case study conducted by Akuffo and Adams (2016), examined records management practices at the Kumasi Metropolitan Assembly (KMA) in Ghana. The findings reported records relating to functions performed in the offices. The following record types are listed: memoranda, invitations, general correspondences and personnel records. Other records include policy files, circulation registers, books, letters of attestation and letters of recommendation, annual reports, minutes of meetings, programme of activity, financial records such as payroll records, banking records, invoices, receipt books, payments vouchers, ledger cards and general ledgers. The reviewed literature shows that though some African countries are improving on records management practices in terms of records creation and capture in the local authorities, there are no known studies conducted on records creation and capture in Kasungu Municipal Council. Therefore, this study intends to fill this gap by examining the types of records created, captured, and received at Kasungu Municipal Council.

2.3 Records preservation strategies

The reason for preserving records is to protect them from injurious factors such as excess heat or lighting, fire breakouts and humidity, to prolong their life span. The record preservation strategies include preservation techniques (e.g., refreshing, migration, emulation); selection for preservation, staffing configurations; cost modelling; access to pre-served records and policy making (Hussin et al., 2018). Records are fragile due to the high pace of technological changes resulting in obsolescence (Gerrard et al., 2018). Effective records management practices ensure that records are confidentially maintained, redundant records are destroyed, and records contribute towards sustaining service delivery (Jirata et al., 2018). The concepts of records storage and maintenance; access and security; and retention and disposal are discussed in the subsequent sections.

2.3.1 Records storage and maintenance

Records storage and maintenance plays a key role in ensuring that records remain accessible and usable for as long as they are required for business transactions and/or for research, evidential and historical purposes. Records storage means the placement of records according to plan, on a shelf or in a file drawer or saving an e-record (Read & Ginn, 2016, p. 118). International Council on Archives (as cited in Katekwe & Mutsagondo, 2017) opines that records maintenance involves retaining records for a period of time or for posterity as well as putting in place measures to retain their authenticity, reliability, integrity and usability. A quantitative study by Ali et al. (2021) assessed records storage and maintenance in Queensland state local councils in Australia. The study used questionnaires and found that out of 47 local councils, 42 (54.5%) indicated that cloud storage was not adopted, seven (9%) indicated that adoption of cloud storage was in pilot phase, 23 (29.1%) indicated some cloud storage adoption, and five (6.5%) indicated full cloud storage adoption. The results show that there were no dedicated records storage facilities in most Queensland state local councils. However, these findings are in sharp contrast with those of a mixed methods study by Ali et al. (2020) which assessed information security risks in the cloud in Australian local government authorities. The results from interviews and questionnaires show that cloud computing was used for storing records and information in the Australian local government. This is evidenced by 369 (77%) participants who indicated that Cloud Service Providers (CSPs) and data centres provided greater records information security during data storage, and 360 (75%) participants pointed out that CSPs and data centres had effective back-up systems. These results are ascribed to Australia's advanced technological developments which enabled the local government to use cloud computing effectively and efficiently in managing e-records. Relatedly, a quantitative study by Xiao et al. (2021) investigated the impact of indoor climate conditions in 34 provincial, municipal, and district archives in Wuhan, China. It was found that 17 (50%) of the archives had protective devices for records from temperature and relative humidity; water protection, 15 (44.1%); fire protection, 15 (44.1%); dust protection, 15 (44.1%); ultraviolet protection, 13 (38.2%); radiation protection, 12 (35.3%); earth quake prevention, 9 (26.5%); and harmful gas prevention, 9 (26.5%). Under the above controlled conditions, records were markedly protected from impact of severe in door climatic conditions, on the other hand, some records' permanence was affected due to uncontrolled regime which they had been exposed to.

Similarly, there are studies about Africa on records storage and maintenance. For instance, a qualitative study by Luyombya and Ndagire (2020) examined storage of digital records at Nansana Municipal Council in Uganda. It was revealed through interviews that, while having central repositories for paper records, ten government departments that participated in the study did not have central repositories for the storage of digital records. Digital records were stored in the business units whose functions generated the records. This entails that digital records at Nansana Municipal are not managed from a central point. A mixed methods study by Marwa (2015) investigated the preservation of records at Temeke Municipal Council (TMC), in Tanzania by using interviews, questionnaires and observation. The study found that offices were congested with files with some spreading on the floor. It was observed that all records offices lacked air conditioning machines and dehumidifiers to regulate the levels of both temperatures and relative humidity. These results clearly indicate that records at TMC were preserved in conditions that were neither controlled nor managed as required probably due to lack of resources.

The studies reviewed show availability of literature on the topic under study. However, no known study on records storage and maintenance has been done at Kasungu Municipal Council and it is for this reason that this study investigates the storage and maintenance of records at Kasungu Municipal Council.

2.3.2 Records access and security

Records in local authorities must be protected to ensure that they remain accessible whenever they are required. As stipulated by ISO 15489-1 (2016), there should be a set of rules to identify rights of access and the regime of permissions and restrictions applicable to records. Records access involves the usage of controls to identify users and grant certain privileges to records, information, systems or resources (Franks, 2018). On the other hand, records security has been defined as "the quality or state of being secure or to be free from risk" (Whitman, 2015, p. 12). A study by Xiao et al. (2021) in China found that there were controls provided for records that are only accessible by authorised personnel as it was indicted that access control manners were accepted by 27 (79.4%)

of the 34 surveyed archives. Further, digital signature and identity authentication technology were used by 20 (58.5%) of the surveyed archives. It was also found that a total of 25 (72.8%) of the surveyed archives chose more than four backup methods. However, most archives backup data content only, ignoring the backup of applications and software and hardware systems. Additionally, methods used in accessing records included in-person access to records during business hours, where information seekers visit registry office during business hours and ask for records; in-person access to records by appointment, where information seekers book appointment from authorities before accessing records from the registry office; open access records requests; and online access. These results are ascribed to the fact that local authorities in China have provided a control mechanism which ensures a precautionary action so that records with sensitive information and confidential in nature are securely protected. Ali et al. (2021) also assessed records access and security in 47 Queensland state local councils in Australia. The study found that records in the local councils were being accessed through in-person access during business hours, in-person access to records by appointment, and online access to digitised records. The results are attributed to that most repositories still maintained physical facilities offering physical access to records.

In Africa, a study by Marwa (2015) also revealed that most records offices at TMC in Tanzania had grills on their entrances which were securely padlocked whenever the rooms were not in use. Some weaknesses, however, were observed as the study further found that windows to some records offices had no grills and some of the records were placed quite near these unsecured windows exposing them to vandalism and theft. Marwa (2015) further found that all records offices at the Council had no firefighting equipment such as fire extinguishers or sand buckets. The results show that the state of records security at TMC was not satisfactory and created loopholes that could compromise the security of records.

A study by Malanga and Kamanga (2019) that used quantitative methods to investigate access and security of e-records at Karonga District Council in Malawi found that, 25 (44.6%) of the respondents said access to e-records was average, and that 29 (51.8%), indicated that e-records security measures were average. Average access to e-records at Karonga District Council signifies that some e-records are not readily accessible which makes it difficult for the Council to meet the requirement of Malawi's Access to Information Act of 2017, Section 5 (1) which indicates that "a person shall have the right to access information in so far as such information is required for the exercise of his rights, which is in the custody, or under control of a public body" (Access to Information Act, 2017, p. 5). The studies above indicate different records access and security measures applied in various local authorities. It was therefore imperative to investigate the records access and security measures being used at Kasungu Municipal Council.

2.3.3 Retention and disposal of records

Municipal Councils have different records retention and disposition periods. Records retention means methods and practices organisations use to maintain important records for a required period of time for administrative, financial, legal, and historical purposes (Franks, 2018). Records disposition, on the other hand, is the final destination of records after they have reached the end of their retention period in active and/or inactive storage (Read & Ginn, 2016, p.170). A qualitative study by Frings-Hessami and Oliver (2022) investigated retention and disposal of records in government departments including municipalities in Switzerland. It was found that there was no official policy to eliminate both paper and electronic records and that records were not regularly transferred to the state archives. The results were attributed to the fact that top management was not interested in pushing for change because records management issue was not considered important.

Makgahlela (2021) used both quantitative and qualitative approaches to investigate the existence of records retention and disposal schedules in selected municipalities in Limpopo Province of South Africa. The study used questionnaires and interviews to collect data from 86 municipalities' employees. It was found that 86 (100%) respondents indicated the availability of retention and disposal schedules in municipalities studied. However, the study further found that 68 (79%) respondents revealed that their disposal programme was not informed by retention and disposal schedules that were in existence. The above study results indicate that there is still a gap that needs to be filled on records retention and disposition in the studied municipalities. Similarly, a mixed methods study by Malatji and Marutha (2023) at Limpopo provincial government of South Africa revealed through document analysis that records retention and disposition schedule was available. It was further revealed that the schedule had symbols with various meanings such as "AP" meaning "records can remain in the custody of the body indefinitely", "A" and "D" indicating "archive" and "destroy" respectively, and "A20" meaning "transfer to archives repository 20 years after the end of the year in which the records were created." This shows that Limpopo provincial government was organised in terms of records retention and disposition. In Malawi, such studies are not known, however, Access to information Act of 2017, Section 13 (3-4) indicates that every information holder shall maintain information for a period of seven years from the date which the information is generated by the institution or on which the information comes under its custody or control and at the expiration of seven years, the information holder shall transfer the information to National Archives (Access to Information Act, 2017). This study, therefore, intends to fill the gap by examining the retention and disposal of records at Kasungu Municipal Council.

From the literature reviewed on records storage and maintenance; access and security; and retention and disposal, it could be concluded that records management practices in Africa is poor. This researcher does, however, take note of the trends that have taken place in some countries, particularly in South Africa, with regards to the improvement in records management practices. More research is needed to provide schedule and practical interventions to improve records management not only in municipal councils in Malawi but also other public offices across the world. This study intends to address this gap by answering the second research question: What are the records preservation strategies at Kasungu Municipal Council?

2.4 Factors affecting records management practices.

Records management in municipal councils can be affected by several factors. This section reviewed literature on some factors contributing to effective records management. These factors include staff training, infrastructure available for records management, staff training, organisational policy, organisational culture and top management support.

2.4.1 Infrastructure available for records management

Availability of infrastructure is another factor that contributes to effective records management. Xiao et al. (2021) found that some non-ICT infrastructure such as boxes, shelves, and metallic filing cabinets were available in all 34 surveyed archives in local authorities in Wuhan, China. Further, 30 (88.2%) of the surveyed archives were equipped with records management and information sharing systems such as Electronic Records Management System. These findings were attributed to the fact that China recognises the role records play in good governance. A related mixed methods study by Gupta and Bukhari (2022) investigated the availability of records management infrastructure at Jammu Region Local Authorities in India. It was found that both ICT and non-ICT infrastructure such as shelves, filing cabinets, Internet, computers, photocopiers, and scanners were available. However, the results indicated that knowledge on the usage of the ICT-infrastructures was still limited.

In Southern Africa, a mixed methods study by Motlhasedi (2022) used questionnaires, interviews and document analysis to investigate availability and condition of ICT facilities at Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development Department (MLGRD) in Botswana. The study revealed that there was poor network connectivity and obsolete hardware and software at MLGRD. Relatedly, a study by Kashaija (2022) found that computers, internet connection, printers and scanners were available at Singida Municipal Council but were found in few offices. There was lack of computers, internet connection, printers, and scanners in the records office. A study by Calvin (2018) found that non-ICT infrastructure such as boxes, shelves, metallic filing cabinets, open cupboards, and tables were available at Mbale Local Government in Uganda. Relatedly, Makgahlela (2021) also found that filing cabinets, shelves, and boxes were available in the selected municipalities in Limpopo Province of South Africa. The results show that both ICT and non-ICT infrastructures though available, are inadequate and are poorly distributed in some local authorities reviewed above.

Though the studies reviewed above show availability of literature on records management infrastructure, no known study on the presence of records management infrastructure at Kasungu Municipal Council has been done, hence this study intends to fill that gap.

2.4.2 Staff training

Staff competency also pose as a challenge to efficient records management since organizational environments are ever changing, leading to the need for the staff to equip themselves with the relevant skills (Katuu, 2016). The relevant skills also affect the ability for the staff to plan, an important factor that affect effective records management. It is necessary to invest in staff education and training to encourage widespread adoption of good records management practices. Training and user education programs must be recognised as an integral, vital and ongoing component of an organisation records management framework (Lemieux et al., 2014; McAlearney et al., 2012). All staff, regardless of level, should be educated about the records management policies adopted by the organisation. Staff with responsibility for digital record-keeping in an organisation should be proactive in developing and delivering training to familiarise staff with the appropriate procedures for creating, managing and preserving records. According to McAlearney et al. (2012), key topics to be covered by the employee training plan include the importance of records, employee responsibilities, the practice of capturing records in the organization's RMS, record security issues, and capturing appropriate records metadata.

To ensure that the staff are aware of their obligations and that the organisation creates and maintains full and accurate records, active and sustained promotion of the importance of records management is essential. In addition, the records management training in the new employee’s onboarding plan is critical to the continued effectiveness of the organization’s records management education and communication strategies (Appiah et al., 2017).

A qualitative study by Shepherd et al. (2019) investigated employees’ skills in records management in public sector including local government in England. The study found that the interviewed participants ranked themselves as highly skilled in records management activities such as records organisation, appraisal, access, survey, retention, and disposition. The results are attributed to the fact that local authorities in England took different radical approaches to deliver open data function to the public. Similarly, a qualitative study by Gibbons and Douglas (2021) found that adverts for records management personnel in Australian public authorities including local authorities required employees to have qualifications such as certificate, diploma and degree in records and archives management or information sciences. 22 Further, employees were supposed to be skilled in records organisation, appraisal, survey, records registration, filing, retention, digitisation, preservation, and disposition. These findings were attributed to the investment the records management professional associations had made in developing competencies of staff to support accredited education and training in records and archives management.

A qualitative study by Netshakhuma (2019) used interviews and document analysis to investigate employees’ possession of records management skills at Mpumalanga Provincial Government Municipalities, South Africa. The results indicated that most of the archivists and records managers lacked skills in systematic observation and documentation, file formats and application, conducting records appraisals in the electronic environment, digital preservation, migration between operating systems and across hardware, disaster preparedness, metadata standards (technical, administrative, structural, descriptive) among others. The results entail archivists in Mpumalanga Provincial Government Municipalities lacked proper training in records and archives management. Similarly, a qualitative study by Sigauke (2022) examined skills of employees in digital records environment in the public sector in Manicaland Province of Zimbabwe and found that all 27 (100%) respondents interviewed indicated that they lacked the practical skills required in the creation, capture, metadata management, classification, storage, disposal, and preservation of digital records as well as basic ICT skills required in the management of digital records. These results are attributed to the fact that employees at Manicaland Province did not receive any training in records management. On qualifications of records management staff, a study by Thanye et al. (2015) at Gaborone City Council indicated that five technicians (55.5%) had diplomas in records and archives management, three (33%) were artisans holding certificates in records and archives management, and one (11%) had a degree in library and information studies. These results imply that some staff members managing records in the above studied departments did not have the competencies required for records management. These studies indicate the availability of literature on competences of records staff in records management practices, however, no known study has been conducted at Kasungu Municipal Council on this topic. It was therefore imperative to investigate staff skills of those managing records at Kasungu Municipal Council

2.4.3 Organisational policies

Policies and procedures for managing digital records are an important element of a digital records management framework (Svard, 2013). The policy defines the method for the organization to manage records and provides the high-level management authority necessary for the implementation of the framework. The procedure describes how the policy is implemented and provides clear instructions for its practical application. Where necessary, policies and procedures can be supplemented with guidelines to provide additional instructions and guidance (Katuu, 2015; Wamukoya, 2015). Policies, procedures and guidelines should be developed to suit the organisation’s size, complexity, corporate culture and structure. A small organisation, for instance, may have a single policy covering the management of all records. Larger agencies may have multiple policies covering specific areas of records management, such as electronic messages, preservation of digital records, web-based digital records and digital records security (Lemieux et al., 2014).

The organisation’s IT environment should also be considered – for example, how many systems currently exist that have potential for integration? What types of records are generated (e.g. data sets, spreadsheets, messages, images), whether staff work from the hard drive, shared folders or through an interface to multiple storage facilities? (Brooks, 2019; Mcleod & Hare, 2010). Considering these issues will help organisations choose a records management solution and develop and implement effective policies and procedures. According to Mosweu et al. (2017) and Kwatsha (2010), some of the issues that may be covered by policies, procedures, and guidelines may include establishing and managing an organization's electronic workspace; developing and implementing document and directory naming conventions; assigning responsibilities to specific personnel or departments; establishing a system to capture digital records in company records; establishing conditions for the use of electronic information systems; including private use by employees; implementing security and access control measures; coordinating file storage and disposal and aligning ICT management procedures with digital records management best practices.

The policies should clearly define retention procedures and measures for records as excessive retention of records will more likely cause difficulties in retrieving records and may result in space problems. Adherence to these policies should be continuously monitored and the policies should be reviewed on an annual basis (Brooks, 2019; Katuu et al., 2015).

2.4.4 Organisational culture

The culture of keeping records and storing information properly in an organization has become critical not only for historical purposes, but more important for current and future management and policy making (Katuu, 2015). Records are used as a tool to understand the organization and as a basis for guiding employees towards best practices and ways of doing things.

Organizational culture can manifest itself at different levels within an organization: at an enterprise level, at a business group level and even amongst different occupational groups (Nassar et al., 2017). Therefore, it is important to recognise that there are multiple subcultures operating within an organization. In addition to the group level, culture is also reflected at the individual level. This is so because employees working in the organization also have their own unique experiences, such as their education and professional training and previous experience using RMS (Kwatsha, 2010). As such, these individuals do not passively accept an organization’s policy and procedure in terms of using RMS. Individuals also actively interact with the RMS and this, in turn, influences the way they perceive the technology. They also influence their colleagues’ perception of the RMS (Katuu, 2016). Archivists and records professionals thus have to adopt a multi-pronged approach to work within the culture of the various groups operating at different levels of an organization. They also have to understand employees' experiences, assumptions and beliefs of a given RMS and technology at an individual level (Joseph et al., 2012).

2.4.5. Top management support for records management

According to literature, another factor that contributes to effective records management is top management support. Phiri and Tough (2018) specified the concept of management support into four sections: Firstly, provision of specific budget lines for records management activities, secondly, effective endorsement of records management projects, thirdly, approval of formal policies for records keeping, and fourthly, funding of specialist records keeping training. A study by Xiao et al. (2021) in provincial, municipal, and district archives in Wuhan, China noted some positive aspects of senior management support towards records management, projects being directly instigated and funded, as well as records management practices changes proposed by information mangers being facilitated. This was attributed to the fact that records management activities were deemed as front-line issues in China. A study by Gupta and Bukhari (2022) at Jammu Region Local Authorities in India found that there was lack of senior management support which hampered the endorsement of policies, the instigation of records management training, and the initiation of electronic records management strategies. Lack of management support was attributed to India's less attention towards records management activities. Some studies have indicated that top management in some institutions were not adequately financing records management programmes. Gupta and Bukhari (2022) found that local authority archives in India did not have adequate funding. Similarly, Mukred et al. (2016) found that financial support was lacking amongst the public institutions including local authorities in Yemen. The results further indicated that there was a lack of incentive payments and the financial resources to secure infrastructure and equipment, technical assistance, and maintenance. This shows why there was slow adoption of ICTs and low records management standards and practices in public institutions in Yemen. In Africa, a mixed methods study by Ongwenyi et al. (2018) that used both questionnaires and interviews on 22 Nairobi City County employees in Kenya found that top management support on the use of ICTs to support management of records at Nairobi City County was poor. These results show that departments in Kenyan counties do not accord records management the status it deserves. Bakare et al. (2016) also assessed funding for local government councils in Nigeria and found that the problem of inadequate finance was most pronounced in

Sagamu 24 (38.1%), followed by Remo North 10 (25%) and then Ikenne 15 (21.3%) respectively. This was attributed to the absence of a management plan for funding records management activities. Poor funding 25 was also observed in various studies (Edmond, 2015; Makwae, 2021; Makgahlela, 2021). Poor funding of records management activities in the studies above negatively affected records management practices.

Table 2.1: Mapping variables from literature against objectives

Research Objectives	**Variables being addressed**	**Source of variables**	**Sources of literature**
To identify types of records at KMC	Electronic records like email, Paper based records; papers, photographs, books, policies or procedures Firm based records	Literature reviewed	Aitchison (2010), Suber (2012), Marsh (2015), Phiri (2015), Unegbu and Adenike (2013)
To determine records preservation strategies at KMC	Preservation, Intellectual control, Access, Standards, data format, preservation activities, Storage facilities, destruction, disposition.	Literature reviewed	Kemoni (2007), Kalusopa and Ngulube (2012), Yunus and Ariffin (2013), Akuffo and Adams (2016), (Florida Department of State Division of Library and Information Services [FDSDLIS], 2010).

To ascertain factors influencing records management practices at KMC	Challenges, skills, ethical issues, legal issues, funding, lack of rewards and recognition, ICT infrastructure, recordkeeping	Literature reviewed	Kalusopa and Ngulube (2012), Wamukoya and Mutula (2005), Mampe and Kalusopa (2012), Ngulube and Tafor (2006), Muchaonyerwa and Khayundi, (2014)

2.5 Chapter summary

The review of relevant theoretical and empirical studies provided a broader understanding of the research topic. It presented an impression that there are common records across different public institutions in Africa and decision making is rarely based on these common records. The remarkable difference was how such records are properly managed to form part of long-term institutional memory, which gives public institutions a competitive advantage. It also reviewed global trends in records management practices. The general overview is that public institutions in the developed world successfully implemented records management processes. In Africa, few cases were noted where records management practices were implemented amid some challenges. The chapter also illuminated consistent factors that influence the implementation and sustainability of records management practices in public institutions. Perhaps, owing to the socio-economic and political similarities in public institutions, there had been a common profile of the factors impacting records management practices in the literature. The next chapter covers the theoretical framework of the study.

CHAPTER THREE
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 Introduction

A theoretical framework is the structure that can hold or support the theory of a research study (Cresswell, 2014). The theoretical framework introduces and describes the theory which explains why the research problem under study exists. The theoretical framework is the foundation from which all knowledge is constructed (metaphorically and literally) for a research study (Ahmed et al., 2014; Glik et al., 2006 & Iivari, 2005). It serves as the structure and support for the rationale for the study, the problem statement, the purpose, the significance, and the research questions. The theoretical framework provides a grounding base, or an anchor, for the literature review, and most importantly, the methods and analysis (Katuu, 2016; Vinet & Zhedanov, 2011). Without a theoretical framework, the structure and vision for a study is unclear, much like a house that cannot be constructed without a plan. By contrast, a research plan that contains a theoretical framework allows the dissertation to be strong and structured with an organised flow from one chapter to the next (Eaves, 2014; Hickson et al., 2016).

For purposes of this study, the Records Continuum Model was used to inform the research objectives. Primarily, two popular theoretical frameworks have dominated empirical studies in records management, namely: records life cycle and records continuum model (Seniwoliba, Mahama & Abilla, 2017).

3.2 The Records Lifecycle Model

Records Life Cycle Model (RLCM) was developed by Brooks and Leahy in 1930s in the USA (Chaterera, 2016). Using a birth-to death analogy, the RLCM describes the records as passing through a series of stages (Mutsagondo, 2021). Thus, the keeping and management of records is often organised around a life cycle that all records should follow (Seniwoliba et al., 2017). The RLCM sees records as passing through three clear stages: active, semi-active, and nonactive, where the active stage involves the generation, dissemination and use as well as storage and maintenance of a record (Mnjama & Lowry, 2017). Similarly, records in the municipal councils are born (creation phase), live (maintenance and use phase) and die (disposition phase). Most lifecycle models aim to show a progression of actions taken at different times in the life cycle of a record, typically, its creation, capture, storage, use and disposal. Other scholars such as Shepherd and Yeo (as cited in Phiri, 2016) indicate that some writers showed the life of records as a linear progression while others describe a loop or a circle. Figure 3.1 illustrates the RLCM adopted from Luyombya and Ndagire (2020). This RLCM is aimed at showing actions taken in the life of a record; typically, its creation, distribution, use, maintenance, and disposition. Creation, which is the first phase of a record life cycle, occurs when records are received or created. In the context of this study, the creation phase of records in the municipal council is when records are created or received in various council departments. This also involves the sorting and filing of records.

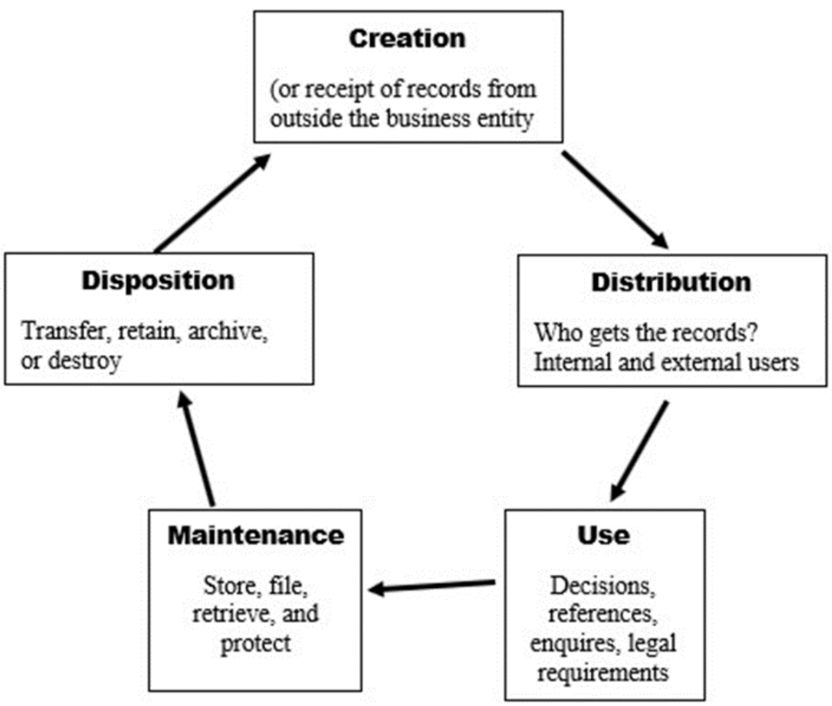

Figure3.1 Records Life cycle

The second phase in RLCM is that records will be distributed to the persons responsible for their use. In the second stage, the records are distributed and stay in an active period while they have maximum value and are used or referred to frequently by the creators and others responsible for decision making (Mcleod & Hare, 2010). During this time, the records are stored on-site in the active and current storage facilities of the creators, after being sorted as per the parameters and schedule of the record management system they belong to for easy access and retrieval. In other words, this stage is more concerned about managing the record. It includes both internal and external distribution (McKemmish & Piggott, 2013).

The third phase is use. This phase is concerned with how the records are distributed internally and its effect on all or a segment of the operations of the organisation (Mcleod & Hare, 2010). A municipal council will use the records in decision-making and meeting legal requirements by referring to them in answering queries.

Maintenance (fourth phase) of the records will be required while records are in use and afterwards (Makgahlela, 2021). Since recording is active, data integrity must be maintained at all costs. The first step is to ensure that the document storage method is reliable and organised in such a way that records can be easily accessed throughout as required (Ravenwood et al., 2015). Also, the storage method should be well protected as well. This can include protecting documents and servers, just to mention a few. When considering maintenance, another important aspect is the creation of usage logs for all parties that have access to all these records (McKemmish & Piggott, 2013). A municipal council will protect the records against both environmental and human interferences so that the information they carry is secure. Council will then store the records to preserve their integrity.

At the disposal phase, most records are retained and must be available for approximately seven years before they are destroyed. At the disposition stage, records may be reviewed and determined to have no further value (Mcleod & Hare, 2010). At this point the record is destroyed or may be relegated to semi-active status, which means it still has value but is not needed for day-to-day decision making and is stored in an off-site storage facility as it is not consulted regularly. Retention periods for off-site storage are defined by an organization's specific retention schedule. A retention schedule is a document that spells out what kind of information the company has and how long to keep it (Erdélyi et al., 1975; Higgins, 2008; McKemmish & Piggott, 2013). The municipal council will destroy some records in accordance with consistent and documented disposal procedures while those to be stored longer, such as policies and contracts, will be transferred to the archives by following archival procedures. A municipal council that applies RLCM can easily determine whether the procedures required to manage records are developed. However, RLCM's major shortcoming has been its inability to accommodate e-records (Makgahlela, 2020). RLCM was used in other similar studies, such as legal frameworks for personnel records management in support of accountability in devolved governments: A case of Garissa County Government (Makwae, 2021), and enhancing service.

3.2.2 Strengths of the Lifecycle Model

The lifecycle concept is important as it prevents vast quantities of inactive records clogging up expensive office space, making it virtually impossible to retrieve important administrative, financial and legal information. Such situations would undermine the accountability of the organisation and endanger proper organizational decision making. Without a management programme that controls records through the earlier phases of their lifecycle, those of archival value cannot be identified and safeguarded so that they can take their place in due course as part of organisational memory (Moseti, 2016).

The lifecycle concept is a popular model and it is used in many health and government related studies. Alegbeleye and Chilaka (2019) used this model in a study to establish challenges being faced by the Ministry of Health in Nigeria and suggested how records management practices can be enhanced by use of best practices at the ministry. Among the challenges being faced were the constant misplacements or missing of the records at the government ministry (Alegbeleye & Chilaka, 2019). Government's institutions require records for the necessary information in running programmes effectively. Records enable government institutions make sound decisions, administer programmes and provide continuity with past operations. Records ensure government and its officials are held accountable in the long run (Chaterera, 2016; Oyaro, 2013 & Plaček et al., 2020). Government related records may be mostly more likened to a living organism which suits the lifecycle concept in studying them as they are not continual in their nature (Svard, 2013).

3.2.3 Weaknesses of the Lifecycle Model

The concept of a life cycle has been at the core of most records management systems. The activities of records management systems are developed upon this concept, which has several phases that explain the stages or status of records, from creation through use and maintenance to ultimate disposal. However, it has been argued that the life cycle concept is more relevant to paper-based records management systems (Kemoni, 2009; Manikas, 2015). The concept is said to be inadequate when applied to electronic records, where records are unlikely to reach a definite inactive point but are instead migrated into new formats following developments in technology (Voutssas, 2012). Electronic records always need to be transacted, migrated and converted by hardware and software in order to be readable by their creators and users. The concept is therefore generally inappropriate for technology-generated records (Groenewald & Breytenbach, 2011; Molloy, 2015).

In evaluating the weaknesses of the Lifecycle model, Wood (2012) pointed out that with the rapid changes in technology, the records are more likely to be converted or transformed into other formats. The concept of a Records Continuum was subsequently encouraged in the records management field as it addresses the management of both paper-based and electronic records. While Kasungu Municipal Council generates both paper-based and electronic records, the majority of its records are in electronic formats. As such, the life cycle concept may not fully address the practical business need of KMC. The theory was therefore not adopted for this study because it does not provide clear guidelines in the hybrid records environment.

3.3 Records Continuum Model

To successfully operationalise the research phenomenon, the study was underpinned by the Record Continuum Model (RCM). The major reason for its adoption is that it adequately addresses both paper and electronic records management issues (Musembe, 2016). The model is presented in Figure 3.2 below.

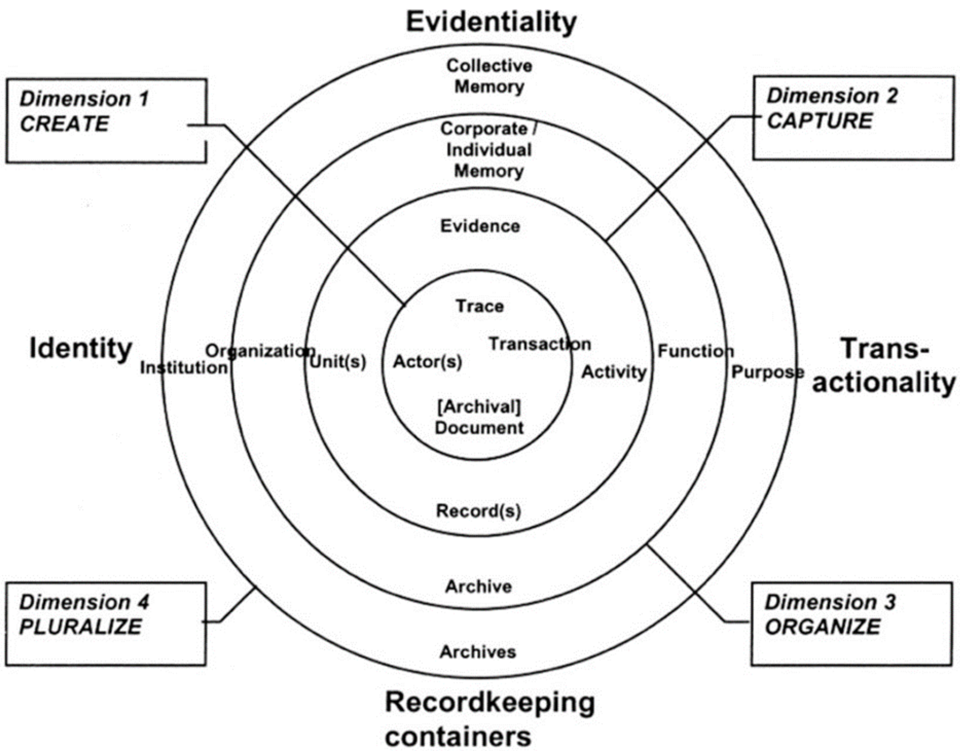

Figure 3.2 The Records Continuum Model

The model was developed in Australia by Frank Upward in the mid-1990's (Musembe, 2016). It is a consistent and coherent framework of records management processes or best practices from the time of records creation to disposition. It aims to be an all-encompassing framework that demonstrates the records keeping process in four dimensions: create, capture, organise, and pluralise; that is to make available as evidence of collective memory (Soyka, 2015).

It can be argued that the best practice behind the Records Continuum Model is the integrated approach used for managing records and archives. Records managers and archivists are brought together in an integrated recordkeeping framework, to guarantee the reliability, authenticity and completeness of the records. The framework provides common understandings, consistent standards, unified best practice criteria, interdisciplinary approaches, and collaborations in recordkeeping and archiving for the paper and digital worlds (Kulcu, 2009). In addition, Matangira et al. (2013) reckon that records need to be systematically and continuously managed in an integrated manner as underpinned by the Records Continuum Model in order to effectively support strategic business objectives of the institution. There are four dimensions of the Records Continuum Model namely, create, capture, organise and pluralise (Duffus, 2017).

3.3.1 Create

Creation is the first dimension of the Records Continuum Model. Creation involves the actors who do the acts such as decision making, communication, the documents which record the acts and the representation of that transaction embodied in the document (McKemmish & Piggott, 2013). The continuum model tries to identify those accountable acts and creates reliable evidence of such acts by capturing records of related and supporting transactions (Higgins, 2008). In practice, the create dimension relates to the event when a customer receipt is printed as a record of the commitment to fulfil, and when it is stamped and handed to a customer as a record of actual payment. At this point, the document, not a record, is created. As for the KMC, the create dimension accommodates activities such as cash receipts and printouts every time a customer shows up to settle an outstanding payment for city rates.

3.3.2 Capture

Capturing is the second dimension, and it encompasses the personal and corporate RMS designed to capture documents to support their function to act as evidence of the social and business activities of the units responsible for the activities (Henderson & Waller, 2016; Of et al., 2013). The capture dimension encompasses the establishment of a record from the document which was created in the first dimension. In other words, the capture dimension relates to the event when the receipt is kept (as a record of the payment), perhaps put aside to be included in the organisational collection of memorabilia and not directly discarded after the expiry of the transaction period the payment was required. Organization refers to the event of saving the receipt as a part of an organisational archive together with other documents (Yeo, 2011).

3.3.3 Organise

The third dimension is organise, which encompasses the organisation of record management processes and investing the record with explicit elements needed to ensure that the records are available over time (Yunus & Ariffin, 2010). It focusses on the manner in which an individual or corporate body develops and defines its record management regime and, in so doing, forms the archive as the memory of its business or social functions. In this dimension, the records are arranged so they can be archived (Joseph et al., 2012).

3.3.4 Pluralise

Pluralise is the fourth dimension which is concerned with the way the records and archives are brought into an encompassing framework to provide a collective social, historical and cultural memory for institutional, social purposes and roles of individual and corporate bodies (Dikopoulou & Mihiotis, 2012; Lemieux et al., 2014). The pluralise dimension relates to the phase when the archive is opened for other uses, and for instance, when other departments or people are granted access to consult the archive for some specific activity, such as accountants trying to do some reconciliations (Öberg & Borglund, 2006).

The Records Continuum Model does, however, go one step further to address the continuum of individual processes (Svard, 2013). Therefore, it is suggested that the Records Continuum Model and a somewhat more generic continuum thinking can function as a basis for a better understanding of the complexities of organisational information management. In contrast to the original Records Continuum Model, an organisational information management aware of continuum model needs to address the plurality of the nature of documents (records) and their use (that is, beyond evidentiality). Whereas records continuum focuses on a specific genre of documents, organisational information management is essentially not only concerned with documents as evidential, transactional and contextual, but also informational and topical artefacts (Yunus & Ariffin, 2010). In the Records Continuum Model, the four axes represent the broadening context of the evidentiality and transactionality of records, recordkeeping containers and identity of the authorities of their origin. A broader continuum model for organisational information would need to implement additional axes for capturing any additional contexts of relevance specific to the organisational information (Alegbeleye & Chilaka, 2019; Mcleod & Hare, 2010). In the context of customer information management, a cash receipt is not merely a piece of evidence of the payment for an outstanding bill, but it can also be a reminder that the customer once lived in the premises under the address on the receipt; it might state additional details of the premises and help the customer to cherish other memories associated with the once occupied premises. The Records Continuum Model has informed a number of studies in the records and archival domain.

Svard (2013) in his study in Swedish municipalities used the Records Continuum Model to explore broader perspectives of preservation of digital information, the set of processes, strategies and tools used to store and access digital data for long periods of time during which technologies, formats, hardware, software and technical communities are very likely to change. The study was aimed at establishing whether the Records Continuum Model could be used to mitigate the long-term preservation challenges and facilitate the information open governance structure in some Swedish government institutions (Svard, 2013). The municipalities under the study were found to be facing challenges of lack of long-term information management policies, enterprise structure, disparate information systems, collaboration and system integration. In Sweden, the open governance is aimed at according the public and the media access to government information and in the process enforce the culture that public information is managed in a manner that promotes efficiency and transparency, a requirement that is shared with public institutions like the KMC in Malawi (E-transactions Act -Malawi, 2016; Vinet & Zhedanov, 2011).

Phiri (2016) also used the continuous record model to critically explore the value assigned to the record management plans in the organizational strategy where governance, auditing and risk are important issues, particularly in universities in Sub-Saharan Africa. The studies showed that any organization can gain significant benefits from the implementation of good records management practices, such as facilitating the completion of organizational tasks and improving organizational efficiency. The KMC generates many records in its activities that support the provision of potable water in its service areas hence these findings could be beneficial to it as well (Koltay, 2016; Phiri, 2016).

Munetsi and Khayundi (2005) too used the continuum concept to investigate the feasibility of digital records management in the Office of the Prime Minister (OTP) in the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa. The study revealed that OTP had taken significant steps to establish records management practices, but still faced many challenges when using EDRMS. The lack of skills and abilities of the staff greatly affected the use of the new system. It also noted resistance in adopting the new records management system, and it recommended the provision of training related to records management to employees (Munetsi & Khayundi, 2005). Some suggestions were also made to improve the security of records and promote the preservation of digital records in institutions. KMC being an institution in a country less developed than South Africa, in the same Sub-Saharan Africa may likely face similar challenges that were noted in such a government established office in the Republic of South Africa (Borglund & Engvall, 2014; Frank, 2020).

Soyka (2013) used the Records Continuum Model in a study on the behaviour of the administrative team for an online forum for active US military officers, how they were influencing and representing the community using the records created and accumulated on the forum. The main aim of the study was to understand how the records continuum highlights, reveals, or obscures the qualities associated with understanding the communal co-creation of records (Phiri, 2016; Vinet & Zhedanov, 2011). A key finding was that the implicit and inherent value in creating community records was either hidden, not measured, or not clearly seen through the use of the continuous approach. This signified that the Records Continuum Model creation process does not affect the future understanding of the situated context of the created records. This is important for an organisation like KMC as it guarantees that the records being created currently will remain informative at any point in the future (McKemmish & Piggott, 2013; Ravenwood et al., 2015; Vinet & Zhedanov, 2011).

Appiah et al. (2017) conducted a study to examine the relationship between corporate governance and records management in private and public hospitals in Ghana. The research was based on the triangulation of the Record Continuum and Stakeholders' theories. The main finding of the study was that the hospitals produced different types of records during their business activities, but the existing record management standards, practices, and systems were insufficient, weakening the contribution of records in supporting the governance function in the hospitals. It also revealed the strong relationships between corporate governance and records management (Appiah et al., 2017; Ravenwood et al., 2015). These results strongly suggest that for institutions like the KMC, good records management practices have a direct positive influence on their corporate governance.

3.3.5. Strengths and weaknesses of the Records Continuum Model

The strength of this model is that it perceives each stage in the records management processes as multidimensional (Seniwoliba et al., 2017). It further suggests that the management of records is not time based or sequential. It also views the actions on the records management as seamless and simultaneous (Azameti & Adjei, 2013; Seniwoliba et al., 2017). In other words, the model is an extension of the Life Cycle Model (Williams, 2006). Finally, the Record Continuum can be operationalised in both paper-based and e-records environment (Moloi & Mutula, 2007). As a weakness, the literature only specifies that the model proves efficient only when there is a high level of collaboration between records managers and records archivists. Otherwise, records may get lost in the subsystems due to lack of records management and archival knowledge on the part of corporate information systems designers (Seniwoliba et al., 2017).

Amongst the two concepts, the continuum concept is the best practice for managing both electronic and paper records when the aim is to improve responsiveness, increase efficiency, and satisfy users' requirements. The Records Continuum Model's ideal integration can be viewed as the best framework for managing records in a broader context of archival science to connect the past to the present and the present to the future (Mcleod & Hare, 2010).

Being a public institution, KMC is required to have its records accessible by the general public (should there be such a need) for as long as the organisation exists. In addition, the institution is expected to make sound and informed decisions based on the trends of information in the records that it generates in its routine operations in order to project magnitude of future demands in its service areas. With these requirements, the record continuum approach is more ideal to address the public's need to access information at any given time and the building of a strategic organizational memory for long term decision making, hence the researcher's use of the Records Continuum Model (Yeo, 2011).

3.3.6 Linking the records continuum elements to the records management practices

- Create: this is where documents are drawn and received in the post. The first dimension of the Records Continuum Model (2016) is the creation of records, and it is from this dimension that the types and forms of records are understood (Musembe, 2016). It demands that evidence of the business transaction, and that the originality of the records should be easily traced. For better records management practices.
- Capture: In the "capture" (capture and classification) dimension, an organisation enters records into its record keeping system where they are kept as evidence of some transaction that took place during their creation (Joanne, et. al., 2017). Records are supposed to be captured as part of evidence of the activity that contributed to their creation. Capturing of records requires personal and corporate recordkeeping systems, which capture documents in a context that support their capacity to act as evidence of the business activities of the units responsible for the activities (Musembe, 2016).
- Organise: records are organised and managed as evidence of their functions. Organisation of records and archives as portrayed in the third dimension of the Records Continuum

Model (2016) entails proper storage facilities or equipment. There is need for better storage facilities in order to enable platforms to organise records created.

- Pluralise: where documents, as records schedules for permanent preservation constituting evidence of their creator's or accumulator's activity, are consulted by internal and external users

The constructs/variables of the Records continuum model are matched with the research questions of the study in order to conceptualise such variables and provide a basis for understanding the dynamics of the theme of the study as illustrated in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1: Mapping research questions with variables of the theoretical model

Research questions	**Variables being addressed**	**Sources of variables**
What are the records created, captured, or received at Kasungu Municipal Council?	Create, evidentiality, activity, transactionality	Records Continuum
	Archive	Literature reviewed
What are records preservation strategies at KMC?	Create, capture, organisation, pluralization, storage, retention, preservation, security, disposition.	Records Continuum,
	Responsibilities	Literature reviewed.
What are the factors influencing records management practices at KMC?	Recordkeeping containers, benefits, management commitment, ICT infrastructure, policy and legislations, resources,	Records Continuum

	challenges, identity, actors, knowledge, skills, competencies	
	Top management support, staff training	Literature reviewed.

3.4 Chapter summary

The chapter has presented and comparatively discussed two common theoretical frameworks in records management. They act as benchmarks to uncover gaps in records management practices in academic institutions of higher learning. The chapter also justified the adoption of the Records Continuum Model owing to its suitability in the hybrid records environment. For clarity, the research questions that addressed the topic of study were matched with the variables of Records Continuum Model. The next chapter covers the research methodology.

CHAPTER 4
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

Research methodology is the specific procedures or techniques used to identify, select, process, and analyse information about a topic (Langkos, 2014). It offers the theoretical underpinning for understanding which method, set of methods, or best practices can be applied to a specific case to calculate a specific result. It encompasses concepts such as paradigms, theoretical models, phases, and quantitative or qualitative techniques (Igwenagu, 2016). The methodology as a field or section of research warrants the researcher to explain different steps generally taken to study a research problem. Hence, the scientific approach which is adopted for conducting research is called methodology (Mishra & Alok, 2017). This section allows the reader to critically evaluate a study's overall validity and reliability (Langkos, 2014). In brief, this study outlined the philosophical perspectives, research design, research method, target population, sampling techniques, data collection methods, and ethical considerations.

4.2 Research paradigms

The research paradigm is also known as research philosophy. It refers to a system of beliefs and assumptions about the development of knowledge (Rehman & Alharthi, 2016). The assumptions inevitably shape a researcher's understanding of the research questions, the methods used and interpretation of the findings (Saunders, 2009). A well-thought-out and consistent set of assumptions will constitute a credible research philosophy, which will underpin methodological choice, research strategy and data collection techniques and analysis procedures (Saunders, 2009). There are a number of common theoretical paradigms that dominate the research discourse in the social sciences, namely: positivism, post-positivism, interpretivism, and pragmatism (Creswell, 2014).

4.2.1 Positivism

It takes the view that there is a single reality that can be measured and known, and it uses quantitative method to measure the reality (Rehman & Alharthi, 2016). It claims that the social world can be understood objectively. In this research philosophy, the researcher is an objective analyst (Zukauskas et al., 2018). Positivism entails working with an observable social reality to produce law-like generalisations. It promises unambiguous and accurate knowledge. The focus is on the strictly scientific empiricist method designed to yield pure data and facts uninfluenced by human interpretation or bias (Saunders, 2009). The study did not adopt positivism as a research paradigm because it does not adequately underpin the mixed method design.

4.2.2 Interpretivism

It views knowledge as socially constructed multiple realities and there is no single truth to it (Creswell, 2014; Rehman & Alharthi, 2016). Interpretivism uses qualitative method to understand multiple realities. Interpretivism emphasises that humans are different from physical phenomena because they create meanings. This philosophical worldview is underpinned by the argument that human beings and their social worlds cannot be studied in the same way as physical phenomena and that therefore social sciences research needs to be different from natural sciences research, rather than trying to emulate positivism. This embodies the purpose of creating new, richer understandings and interpretations of social worlds and contexts (Saunders, 2009). The study did not adopt interpretivism as a research paradigm because it does not address the research problem from a dual methodological perspective of quantitative and qualitative methods.

4.2.3 Pragmatism

It takes the view that accommodates both positivism and interpretivism/social constructivism (Kaushik & Walsh, 2019). A major underpinning of pragmatist epistemology is that knowledge is always based on experience. Perceptions of the world are largely influenced by our daily social experiences (Creswell, 2014). Pragmatism asks the researcher to engage two different approaches to inquiry than assigning positivism and constructivism in two different ontological and epistemological perspectives (Creswell, 2013). Pragmatist research philosophy deals with the facts. It claims that the choice of research philosophy is mostly determined by the research problem. In this research philosophy, the practical results are considered important. Pragmatism offers researchers freedom of choice. They ought to choose the methods, techniques, and procedures that best meet their needs and scientific research aims. In other words, there is no absolute unity under the lens of pragmatism as a philosophical worldview (Zukauskas et al., 2018).

Following theoretical and empirical studies reviewed by Doyle et al. (2009) in research methodology, their shared views on pragmatism posit that purists' view of the dichotomy between positivist and non-positivist philosophies are prevalent. However, mixed methods allow researchers to overcome this false dichotomy. The philosophical underpinning of pragmatism allows and guides mixed methods, which help researchers use a variety of approaches in answering research questions that cannot be addressed using a singular method. The study adopted pragmatism as a philosophical lens that underpinned the research design. This research paradigm enables the researcher to understand concepts of records management practices from a pluralistic point of view in the perspectives of quantitative and qualitative approaches.

4.3 Research site

The study was conducted at Kasungu Municipal Council in Kasungu, Malawi.

4.4 Research design

Research designs are types of inquiry within quantitative, qualitative, and Mixed Methods Research (MMR) approaches that provide specific direction for procedures in research (Cohen et al., 2018). Quantitative research designs provide a numeric description of trends, attitudes, or opinions of a population, examples being survey and experimental designs (Creswell, 2014). Quantitative designs were not adopted because the study used MMR designs. Qualitative research designs focus on the contexts and meaning of human lives and experiences for the purpose of inductive or theory-development driven research, and examples include narrative, phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography, and case study (Cohen et al., 2018). These qualitative designs were not employed as this study used MMR designs.

MMR designs are ones in which the investigator collects and analyses data, integrates the findings and draws inferences using both quantitative and qualitative approaches in a single study (Creswell, 2014). MMR uses designs such as explanatory sequential where quantitative data are usually collected first, followed by qualitative data to explain the quantitative data; exploratory sequential where qualitative data are usually collected first typically with a small sample, with quantitative data from a larger sample used to generalise the findings; embedded where each research question requires both quantitative and qualitative data, and qualitative data may be added to quantitative data; and convergent parallel design where both quantitative and qualitative data are collected independently and in parallel with each other, and then they converge, yielding triangulation of data and offering complementary data on the topic in question (Cohen et al., 2018). Convergent parallel design was used in this study by converging quantitative and qualitative data collected from Kasungu Municipal Council staffs to provide comprehensive results and integrate the information in the interpretation of the final results.

4.5 Research methods

Research methods are tools and techniques for doing research (Cohen et al., 2018). Decisions about the choice of the research approach are influenced by the research problem and the issue being studied (Creswell, 2014). Three types of research methods are quantitative, qualitative, and MMR (Creswell, 2014). These are explained in the subsequent paragraphs.

4.5.1 Quantitative research methods

Quantitative research method is concerned with quantifying things. It asks questions such as 'how long', 'how many' or 'the degree to which' (Creswell, 2014). In other words, quantitative research method focuses on measurement of magnitude or aggregate including numbers, percentages, numerical counts, statistical tests and mathematical models (Rajasekar et al., 2013). Rajasekar et al. (2013) further maintain that quantitative research is descriptive, numerical and often presents data in tables and graphs. This method helps researchers to generalise research data to large amounts of populations (Leedy & Ormrod, 2016). This quantitative method was not adopted in this MMR because the researcher wanted more complexity and depth of the research.

4.5.2 Qualitative research methods

Qualitative research method refers to exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem (Creswell, 2014). It collects non-standardised data, analyses subjective meaning and incorporates multiple realities (Neuman, 2014). Participants in qualitative research broaden and deepen the researcher's understanding of the social world, particularly showing why people behave in certain manners and how they are affected by events around them (Creswell, 2014). Qualitative research maintains the stance that knowledge is socially constructed by people. Likewise, Johnson and Christensen (2014) postulate that qualitative researchers often hold the belief that human behaviour is fluid, and constantly changing over time and place, with little interest in applying the findings beyond the specific people who are studied. Qualitative research method was also not adopted in this MMR.

4.5.3 Mixed methods research

MMR is an approach to inquiry involving collecting both quantitative and qualitative data, integrating the two forms of data, and using distinct designs that may involve philosophical assumptions and theoretical frameworks (Cohen et al., 2018). MMR approach was used in this study because one method has limitations and biases, making it important to augment quantitative data with qualitative data, and vice versa, to close gaps and provide better and more comprehensive answers to the research problem at hand (Creswell, 2014). Mutsagondo (2021) opines that use of the MMR should not be seen as a sign of detesting quantitative or qualitative research approaches, but a practical and complementary way of helping interrogate a research problem from a more informed position. The disadvantage of MMR is that it is expensive to implement and time consuming (Hibberts & Johnson, 2012). Despite its downside, the current study used MMR to investigate records management practices at Kasungu Municipal Council because the research questions guiding this study necessitated the use of MMR in which both quantitative and qualitative data is collected. However, quantitative data was dominant in this study. MMR was also employed by similar studies on records management practices in local authorities by Malatji and Marutha (2023) and Gupta and Bukhari (2022).

4.6 Target population

Target population is "the total quantity of things, organisations or people that a study focuses on" (Etikan et al., 2016, p. 1). The study targeted members of staff at Kasungu Municipal Council. The members of staff constitute departments such as administration, information technology, human resources, public works, finance, planning, and education and health. Public Sector Reforms Management Unit (2022) indicates that administratively, each municipal council is headed by a Chief Executive Officer, with the help of Director of Planning, Director of Administration, Director of Finance, Director of Education and Health and Director of Public Works.

It was further indicated that the middle level management of a municipal council has officers that are from different departments (PSRMU, 2022). The lower-level management is made of those holding clerical positions in various departments of the municipal council (PSRMU, 2022). KMC has 78 staff members in total. The staff members were targeted because they are involved in the process of records creation/receipt to final disposition. Hence, they are in an informed position to provide data on records management practices at KMC. The strata of the study population by departments are presented in Table 4.1 below.

Table 4.1: Target population of staff at KMC

Department	Employee Management level			
	Top	Middle	Clerical	Total
Administration	1	3	1	7
Information technology		2		2
Human resources	1	5	1	7
Public works	1	19	3	23
Finance	1	6		7
Planning	1	11	6	18
Education and health	1	11	2	14

Source: Human resources department KMC 2022

4.7 Sampling techniques

Sampling is whereby a small set of cases is selected from a large population from where a researcher generalises about the population (Neuman, 2014). Creswell (2014) describes two main sampling techniques as follows: Random sampling which relies on unplanned selection, or the process by which each element has equal chance of selection, examples being, simple, systematic, stratified, and cluster. Non-random sampling is a planned selection where participants are known prior to selection. Examples of non-random sampling include quota, purposive, and snowball. Random and non-random sampling techniques can be used in either quantitative or qualitative studies (Neuman, 2014). It is common for MMR to use more than one kind of sampling (random, non-random) and to use samples of different sizes, scope and types (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009 as cited in Cohen et. al., 2018). Parallel, sequential, and multilevel are sampling techniques used in mixed methods research (Cohen et. al., 2018). This study used parallel mixed methods sampling in which two samples, both random and non-random, are selected, running side by side simultaneously, but separate from each other, that is, data from one sample do not influence the collection of data from the other and vice versa (Cohen et. al., 2018). The study used purposive sampling to select key informants who were in a better position to inform the research questions. The researcher purposively selects key informants who are KMC administrative staff such as Chief

Executive Officer and directors of departments to illuminate policy and technical issues regarding records management practice. All members of staff were included in the study. In a purposive sampling technique, participants deemed as "information-rich" are deliberately chosen due to their knowledge, skills and experiences in a phenomenon under study (Etikan et al., 2016).

Top, middle and clerical staff were selected using census. According to Teddlie and Tashakkori (as cited in Cohen et. al., 2018), in census the researcher included every member of the population.

4.8 Sample Size

This is the number of participants from whom a researcher obtains the required information in a study (Cohen et. al., 2018). A sample size can be determined using a census, imitating a sample size of similar studies, using published tables, and applying formulas (Israel, 2012).
Since the target population was less than 200, the study used census (Israel, 2012). This means all members of staff were engaged in the study. See table below for sample size.

Table 4.2: Sample Size

Department	**Category of population**	
	Director of department	Number of members
Administration	1	6
Information technology	-	2
Human Resources	1	6
Public works	1	22
Finance	1	6
Planning	1	17
Education and Health	1	13
Sub-totals	**6**	**72**
Total sample	**78**	

4.8 Data collection instruments

These are tools that function mainly to enable a researcher gather reliable data which will later be analysed (Kumar, 2011). The popular data collection instruments used in social science research are questionnaires, interview guide, observation, and documentary sources (Kumar, 2011).

4.8.1 Survey Questionnaire

It is a document containing questions designed to solicit information for analysis and is mostly expected to be filled in and completed by the respondent (Babbie, 2004). Questionnaires are widely used instruments for collecting survey information, providing structured, numerical data to be administered with or without the presence of the researcher (Blaxter et al., 2006). This data instrument is preferred because of its merits – it is economical and saves time. It is suitable in a big sample, and it also gives room for the respondent to reflect on the question and revisit it for further reflection. However, it is demerited on the premises that the questionnaire demands limited responses; there is a lack of personal contact and there is a likelihood of wrong feedback (Pandey & Pandey, 2015). The study used a survey questionnaire to address the research questions that prompted the undertaking of this study.

Section A of the questionnaire covered the preliminary questions that solicited demographic information, namely: gender, age group, academic qualification, and job position. Section B covered the first study objective: existing records management at KMC. It targeted staff members such as finance officers, and IT officers. Section C covered the second study objective: policy framework governing records management practices. It targeted all research participants including senior management staff. Section D covered the third study objective: factors influencing records management practices at the Kasungu Municipal Council. It targeted all research participants including senior management staff. The survey questionnaire design was premised on the variables of the Records Continuum Model. The study questionnaire was designed to look into or address variables such as creation, capture, organisation and pluralisation of records at KMC. Studies by Makgahlela (2021) and Chaterera (2016) also used questionnaires to collect data on similar topic

4.8.2 Interview Guide

The interview guide is a list of research questions, themes, or areas of study relevant to the research participants (Jacob & Furgerson, 2012). The interview is an inquiry in which the researcher interacts with a participant face to face or through a medium such as a phone call or video call to collect information for research purposes. In this process, a rapport is established between the interviewer and the interviewee (Pandey & Pandey, 2015). Not only is a physical distance between them overcome but also the social and cultural barrier is removed, and a free mutual flow of ideas takes place. Both create their respective impression upon each other. The merit of the interview is that it offers more clarification of the questions asked. However, it can be affected by the interviewer’s prejudices (Pandey & Pandey, 2015).

The study used semi-structured questions where participants responded to open-ended questions. This provided the researcher an opportunity to thoroughly understand attitudes, opinions, and beliefs of members of staff at KMC. Similar studies by Mutsagondo (2021) and Makgahlela (2020) also used interview guides.

Table 4.3: Mapping research questions with data sources and techniques of data analysis

Research Questions	Sources of data	Data collection methods	Data analysis Technique
What are the existing records management practices at Kasungu Municipal Council?	Members of staff: officers	Questionnaire	SPSS
What policy framework is governing records management at Kasungu Municipal Council?	Head of departments, officers	Questionnaire and interview guide	SPSS and thematic analysis
What are the factors influencing records management practices at KMC?	Heads of departments, officers	Questionnaire and interview guide	SPSS and thematic analysis

4.9 Data collection procedures

From the sample size of 78 staff, the researcher collected quantitative data through survey questionnaire from 72 staff of which 69 responded, qualitative data was collected from top 6 management staff members who were deemed as key informants out of which 5 were available for the interviews. Each interview took about 15 minutes. Handwritten notes were made by researcher while interviewing the participants and interviews were audio recorded after a permission to audio record the interviews was sought from interviewees. The questionnaires were self-administered to ensure that the target respondents are reached.

4.10 Validity and reliability of the instruments

Validity and reliability are concepts used to evaluate the quality of research. They indicate how well a method, technique, or test measures research variables (Middleton, 2020). Key elements of validity in research are trustworthiness, authenticity and credibility (Creswell, 2014). This study employed a mixed method approach which integrates case study and survey designs. These two methodological designs used interviews and survey questionnaires to offset weaknesses in each other and build on their strengths (Doyle, Brady & Byrne, 2009). It achieves that by counterchecking the truthfulness of one group of participants' responses to the questions raised. Reliability entails consistency of results over a given period of time (Golafshani, 2003). To achieve this, pretesting of instruments was conducted.

Pretesting is an exercise that involves the use of a population similar to the target population under study in order to test data collection instruments (Ary, et al., 2014). This helps to assess the appropriateness of the instruments and make changes where necessary. Therefore, the researcher pre-tested the questionnaires at Ministry of Information, targeting staff in the records department. Both questionnaires and interviews were administered to Ministry of Information staff that handle records.

4.11 Data analysis technique

Data analysis refers to systematic organisation, integration, and examination of data while searching for patterns and relationships among the specific details (Neuman, 2011). Since the study employed a mixed-method approach, it means both quantitative and qualitative data were collected. Quantitative data was analysed descriptively using International Business Machines [IBM] SPSS version 20. For smart presentation and customisation of charts and tables, Microsoft

Excel was used. The quantitative data analysis was limited to descriptive statistics only. To quantify the respondents' ideas, meanings and practices, it presented the data in frequencies and percentages. On the other hand, qualitative data was analysed thematically based on the objectives of the study. Finally, document analysis was done based on the content of the available documentary sources such as records.

4.12 Ethical considerations

Ethical issues such as safety, anonymity, confidentiality, privacy, voluntary and informed consent need to be taken seriously in social research (Akaranga & Makau, 2016). It is the responsibility of the researcher to design a study which must not infringe on the rights of participants or respondents (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003). This entails the researcher keeping a tight lid on the identities of the participants. To fulfil such obligation, the researcher attached numerical tags to the interview guides to conceal and protect participants' identities. For the questionnaires, data particulars leading to the identification of the respondent were omitted on the data instruments. Further to this, the purpose of the study was clearly spelt out so that participants/respondents were well informed before consenting to partake in the study. These are the topical issues scholars in ethical research strongly advise (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003; Akaranga & Makau, 2016). In this regard, the researcher attached cover letters to questionnaires briefing the academic purpose of the study. On ethical clearance, the researcher successfully sought clearance from Mzuzu University Research and Ethics Committee (MZUNIREC), and management of KMC.

4.13 Chapter summary

This chapter detailed research methodology employed in the study. It explains the tools used to collect the data as being the interview guide and observation guide. The chapter also highlights the study setting, study population, and the sampling techniques used to collect the data. In short, the chapter provides the overall process of data management. The next chapter (Chapter Five) provides a detailed presentation and analysis of the study findings.

CHAPTER FIVE

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents and analyses the results of the study. Since the study employed convergent parallel research design, qualitative data were collected almost at the same time as when quantitative data were being collected. The data was collected using structured questionnaires and face to face interviews. The data collected through questionnaires was analysed using IBM SPSS Version 20 to generate frequencies, percentages, inferential statistics, tables and charts. Data collected through interviews were thematically analysed and presented in a descriptive form. Data analysis and presentation of findings are important because they enable researcher to make sense of the information supplied by the research participants in the study (Creswell, 2014). Presentation of the findings is guided by the research objectives (see below) and the theoretical framework of the study, the Records Continuum Model (RCM). The study addressed the following research objectives:

- To examine types of records at Kasungu Municipal Council
- To analyse records preservation strategies at Kasungu Municipal Council
- To investigate factors influencing records management practices at Kasungu Municipal Council.

The findings presented and analysed in this chapter are preceded by response rates and demographic details of respondents. The chapter is organised according to the research themes identified in chapter one. For each of the objectives, data from the study questionnaires was presented first, then followed by data collected through use of an interview guide. However, take note that in this study, percentages are rounded-up to the nearest whole numbers to minimise fractions in the results.

5.2 Response rate

From the 72 self-administered questionnaires that were distributed to staff members 69 (96%) responded. As alluded to in the methodological chapter, the questionnaire consisted of four sections (A, B, C, D), and the questions in these sections gathered data on demographic information; existing records management practices; policy framework governing records and factors influencing record management practices. The interview guide consisted of three sections

(A, B,C) and the questions in these sections gathered data on existing records management practices; policy framework governing records and factors influencing records management. The study also conducted interviews. The study targeted six KMC senior management staff who were considered key informants. However, interviews, were successfully conducted with five KMC senior management staff.

5.3 Demographic Information

The first section of the questionnaire provided demographic information of the respondents. The basic information which respondents were asked included their gender, age, department and qualification.

5.3.1 Respondents by gender

Respondents were asked to indicate their gender. Results are as presented in the Figure 5.1

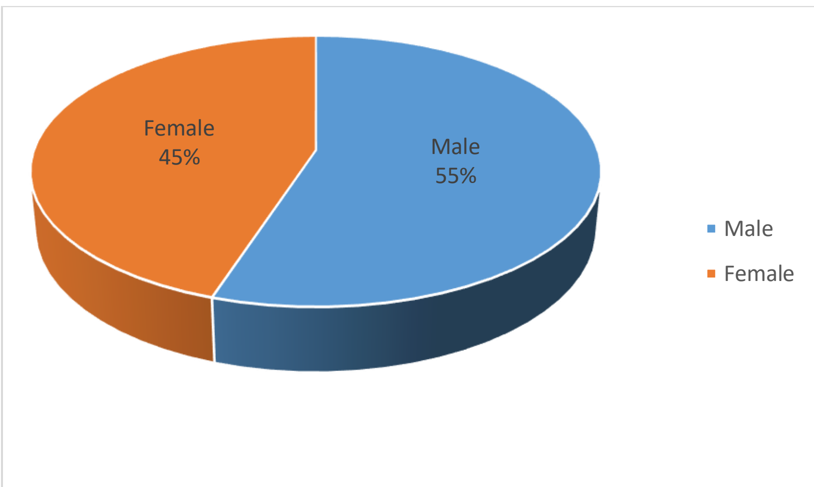

Figure 5.1 Gender of respondents

Data presented in Figure 5.1 indicates that out of 69 members of staff, the majority of the respondents were male – 38 (55%), while 31 (45%) were females. These results imply that the study was dominated by the male gender because KMC has employed more male staff members than female staff members.

5.3.2 Age of respondents

Respondents were asked to indicate their age range. Results are as displayed in Table 5.1.

Table 5. 1: Age of respondents (n=69)

Years	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
20 – 30	15	22
31 – 40	31	45
41 – 50	16	23
51 – 60	7	10
Total	**69**	**100**

Results represented in Table 5.1 show that a majority of 31 (45%) respondents were in the age group of 31 to 40 years, followed by 16 (23%) respondents in the age group of 41 to 50 years, 15 (22%) respondents were in the group of 20 to 30 years and seven (10%) were in the age range of 51 to 60 years, as the least represented age group. The findings imply that most staff were in the age range of 31-40 years.

5.3.3 Department of respondents

Respondents were asked to indicate details of their department. The results are presented in Table 5.2.

Table 5. 2: Department of respondents (n=69)

Department	Frequency	Percentage
Administration	5	7
Human Resource	6	9
Information Technology	2	3
Public works	21	30
Planning	16	23
Finance	6	9
Education and Health	13	19
Total	69	100

Analysis of data in Table 5.2 shows that a total of 69 staff members were enrolled in the study from seven departments: Administration, Human Resource, Information Technology, Public works, Planning, Finance, and Education and Health. The majority of the members who were 21 (30%) came from public works, while 16 (21%) came from Planning, followed by 13 (19%), Human resource and Finance had the same number of respondents 6 (9%), 5 (7%) came from Administration, and 2 (3%) from Information technology.

5.3.4 Academic qualification of respondents

Respondents were asked to indicate the level of study. Findings are displayed in Table 5.3.

Table 5. 3: Academic qualification of respondents (n=69)

Academic qualification	Frequency	Percentage
Certificate	12	17
Diploma	21	30
Bachelors	30	44
Masters	6	9
PhD	0	0
Total	**69**	**100**

Data presented in Table 5.3 indicate a majority of 30 (44%) respondents had a bachelor's degree followed by 21(30%) respondents with a diploma, 12 (17%) respondents with a certificate, six (9%) respondents with a master's degree, and there was no respondent with a PhD.

5.4 Existing records management practices at Kasungu Municipal Council

Objective one of this study intended to examine the existing records management practices at Kasungu Municipal Council in terms of records created or received, records storage and maintenance, records access and security, and records retention and disposal. This objective was addressed through the first research question: What are the existing records management practices at Kasungu Municipal Council?

5.4.1 Records creation

The researcher aimed to find out the process of records creation at Kasungu Municipal Council. This was achieved through question five from the survey questionnaire, which sought to solicit multiple responses from the respondents on various records created in the Municipal council on a daily basis. The results for quantitative data are presented in Figure 5.2.

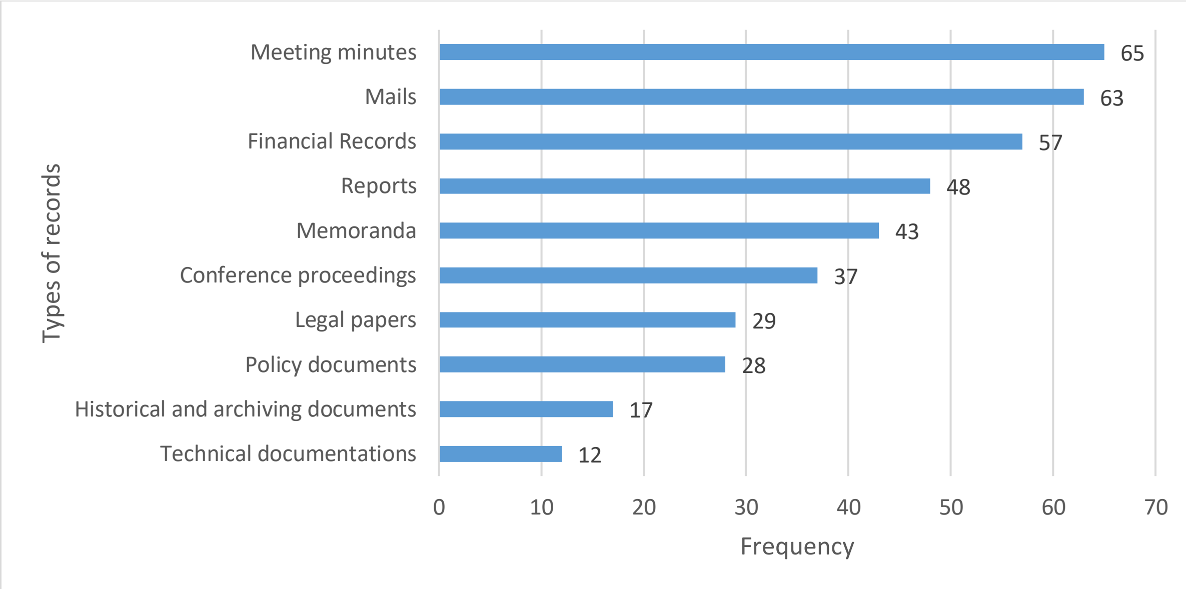

Figure 5.2 Records received or created at Kasungu Municipal Council (n=69)

Results presented in Figure 5.2 show that 66 (96%) respondents mentioned meeting minutes, 62 (90%) said mails, 57 (83%) said financial records, 48 (70%) said reports, 43 (62%) said memoranda, 37 (54%) indicated conference proceedings and 29 (42%) said legal papers. Other records were policy documents with a score of 28 (41%), historical and archiving documents with a score of 17 (25%) and technical documents with a score of 12 (17%).

These quantitative results suggest that meeting minutes, mails, financial records, and reports are the dominant types of records created or received at Kasungu Municipal Council.

Question number five of the interview guide solicited similar data on the types of records created or received at Kasungu Municipal Council. The following are the responses from the respondents:

- *Most records in the institution are reports, mails, list of employees, financial documents, meeting minutes and many more. (*Participant 2).
- *Our records, as you can see range from salaries, cheques, contracts, budgets, loans, donations to purchases.* (Participant 3).
- *We as Kasungu Municipal Council have various internal and external records such as mails, meeting minutes, recruitments, applications, employee grades, and reports. (*Participant 4).

Results from qualitative data suggest that the most common types of records created and received at Kasungu Municipal Council are mails, meeting minutes and financial records. The responses provided by members of staff were similar with the ones that senior management staff provided.

5.4.1.1 Ways of creation

The researcher asked respondents to indicate how records are created. The results are presented in Figure 5.3 below.

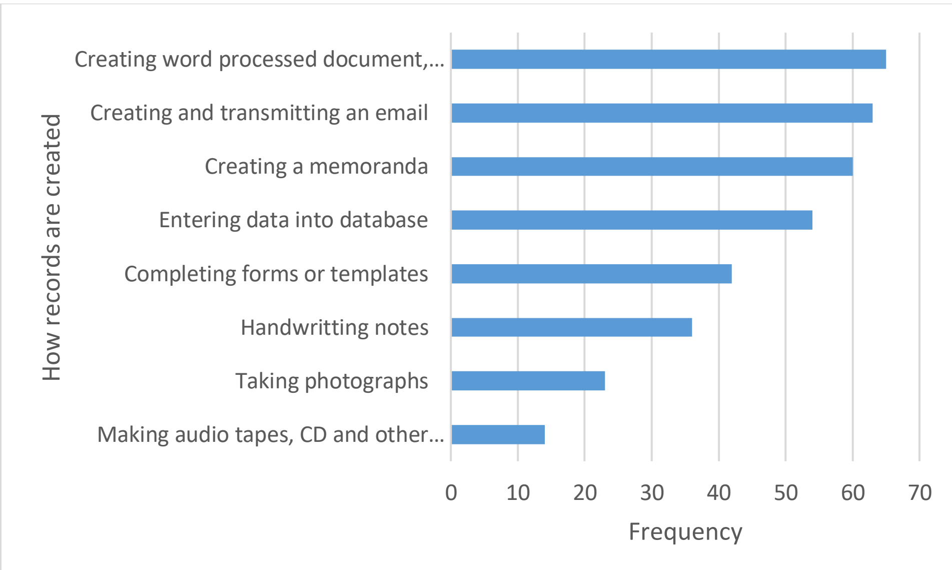

Figure 5.3 Ways of records creation at Kasungu Municipal Council (n=69)

The responses indicate that most records were created through creating word-processed documents and spreadsheets 65 (95%); creating and transmitting emails 63 (91%); creating memoranda 60 (87%); entering data into databases 54 (78%); creating forms or templates 42 (61%). Fewer records were acknowledged to have been created through handwriting 36 (52%). The least responses indicated that records were created through taking photographs 23 (33%), and making audiotapes, CDs, and other recordings 14 (20%). An analysis of the results shows that creating word processed documents and spreadsheets, creating and transmitting emails, creating memoranda, entering data into databases, and creating forms or templates are the dominant ways of record creation at Kasungu Municipal Council.

The findings from qualitative data collaborated with the quantitative data. All respondents indicated that they created records through working with Microsoft Word, Excel, Publisher, and other data packages where they input office information. The responses from respondents are as follows:

- *I normally use Microsoft packages, namely, Word, Excel, and PowerPoint to record office work.* (Participant 1).
- *Usually, the Word is the most common tool for creating or generating records that the Institution uses for its day-to-day decisions.* (Participant 3).
- *Memos, reports, meetings, and mails are generated on Words and HTML platforms embedded in Internet applications such as Firefox*. (Participant 5).

From the analysis in both the questionnaire and interviews, results clearly indicate that creating word processing and spreadsheets is common when creating records at KMC.

5.4.2 Records capture

The last part of question five of the interview guide focused on soliciting data on how records are captured. The results revealed that records are captured by saving in word documents and other related Microsoft packages. Some of the responses from the respondents are as follows:

- *External documents are scanned or printed and kept in our information systems*. (Participant 2).
- *Most records are captured at the moment they are being created and saved as a word document or in any other formats*. (Participant 2).
- *We have so much information coming from external sources. However, we do not have even an email management policy to guide who should access what. Everyone is doing what seems best to them*. (Participant 4).

5.4.3. Formats of records

This item of the survey questionnaire intended to find out the formats of the records created at Kasungu Municipal Council. The results are presented in Figure 5.4 below.

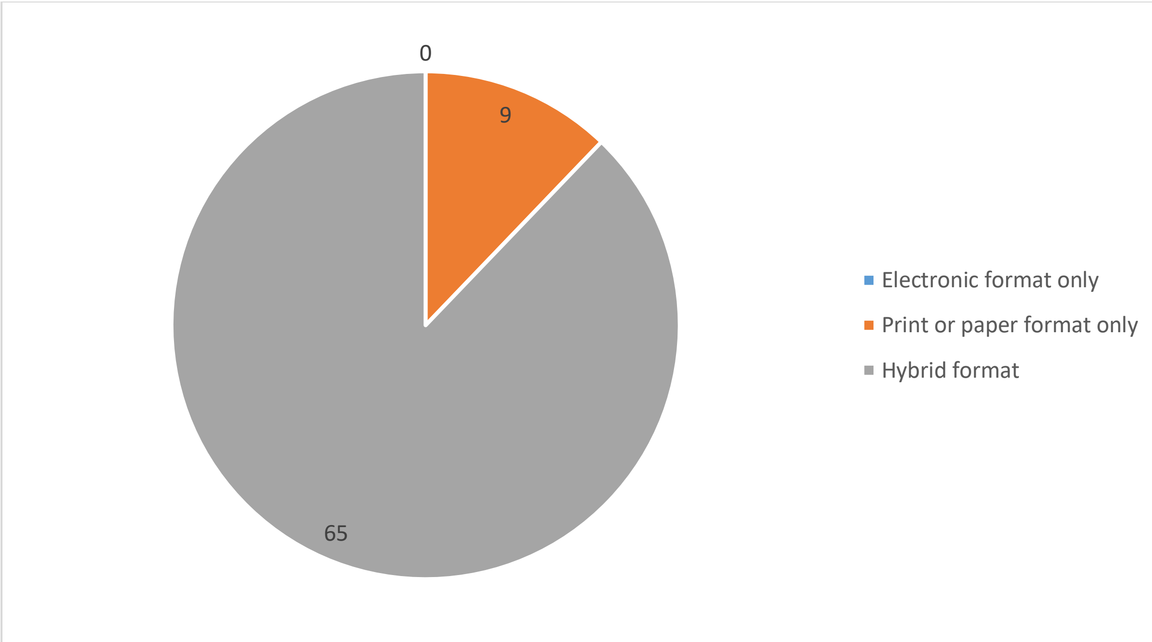

Figure 5.4 Formats of records creation at Kasungu Municipal Council (n=69)

The results presented in Figure 5.4 show that 65 (94%) indicated hybrid format, 9 (13%) indicated paper format only, and there were 0 (0%) responses on electronic format only. The results suggest that the institution creates or receives records in hybrid format.

Results from qualitative data also showed that most records were paper based. The responses from the respondents are as follows:

- *Usually, our records are in paper format as you can see all those files on the shelves. Few records are kept on my computer*. (Participant 2).
- *We still depend on paper records. However, my work files are here on my laptop. I can even work from home.* (Participant 3).

Results obtained from both the questionnaires and interviews complement each other by clearly showing that the institution creates records in both paper and electronic format.

5.4.4 Records storage and maintenance

5.4.1.1 Electronic records storage

This item of the survey questionnaire sought to solicit multiple responses from the respondents on various equipment used to keep electronic records. The results are presented in Table 5.4 below.

Table 5. 4: Electronic storage records equipment (n=69)

Electronic storage equipment	Frequency	Percentage
Computer/ Laptop	67	97
Flash Disks	56	81
External Hard Drive	33	48
Electronic Recording Delivery System	15	28
Compact Discs	11	16
Cloud storage	4	6
Secure Digital Cards	2	3

Results presented in Table 5.4 show that 67 (97%) respondents mentioned Computer/laptop, 56 (81%) said Flash disks, 33 (48%) said External hard drive, 15 (28%) said Electronic recording delivery system, 11 (16%) said Compact discs, 4 (6%) indicated Cloud storage and 2 (3%) said Secure digital cards. These quantitative results suggest that computers/laptops and flash disks are dominant equipment used for storing electronic records at Kasungu Municipal Council.

The findings from the interviews suggested that most electronic records were stored on computers. Some of the responses from the respondents as follows:

- *The data is stored in classified manner in specific files or folders using specific dates on computers.* (Participant 2).
- *Electronic data is kept in specific folders created on laptops and computers.* (Participant 3).
- *In the course of our work, we create files mostly in Microsoft Excel which we store in the computers.* (Participant 4).
- *Electronic records are kept in specific folders on the computer.* (Participant 5)

The findings obtained from the interviews on this matter agree with those obtained from the questionnaire, which showed that most electronic data were stored on computers.

5.4.4.2 Paper based records storage

Respondents were asked to indicate the equipment used for storing paper-based records at Kasungu Municipal Council. The results are presented in Table 5.5 below:

Table 5. 5: Paper based storage records equipment (n=69)

Paper based storage equipment	Frequency	Percentage
Shelves	66	96
Cabinets	52	75
Cartons	46	67
Hard files	24	35
Folders	17	25
Hard containers	5	7

Results presented in Table 5.5 show that 66 (96%) respondents mentioned shelves, 52 (75%) said cabinets, 46 (67%) said cartons, 24 (35%) said hard files, 17 (25%) said folders and 5 (7%) indicated hard containers. These quantitative results suggest that shelves, cabinets and cartons are the dominant equipment used for storing paper-based records at Kasungu Municipal Council.

The findings from the interviews suggested most records were kept on the shelves and cabinets. Some responses from the respondents are as follows:

- *Paper based data is stored in files arranged by supplier name and kept on shelves.* (Participant 1).
- *The paper-based records are filed and put on the shelf in the office.* (Participant 2).
- *Paper based records are stored in the lever arch files and filed according to dates.* (Participant 4).
- *Invoices are photocopied, attached to delivery notes and filed. The files are recorded according to names of the supplier and kept in cabinets.* (Participant 3).
- *Paper based data is stored in files which are indexed by date or month after completion of the processes and kept in cabinets.* (Participant 5).

Both quantitative and qualitative findings reveal that shelves and cabinets are dominant equipment used for storing paper records at Kasungu Municipal Council.

5.4.4.3 Awareness about the availability of information centre or records registry

This item required respondents to indicate if they were aware of the availability of a records registry for organizing and storing records. The results are presented in figure 5.5.

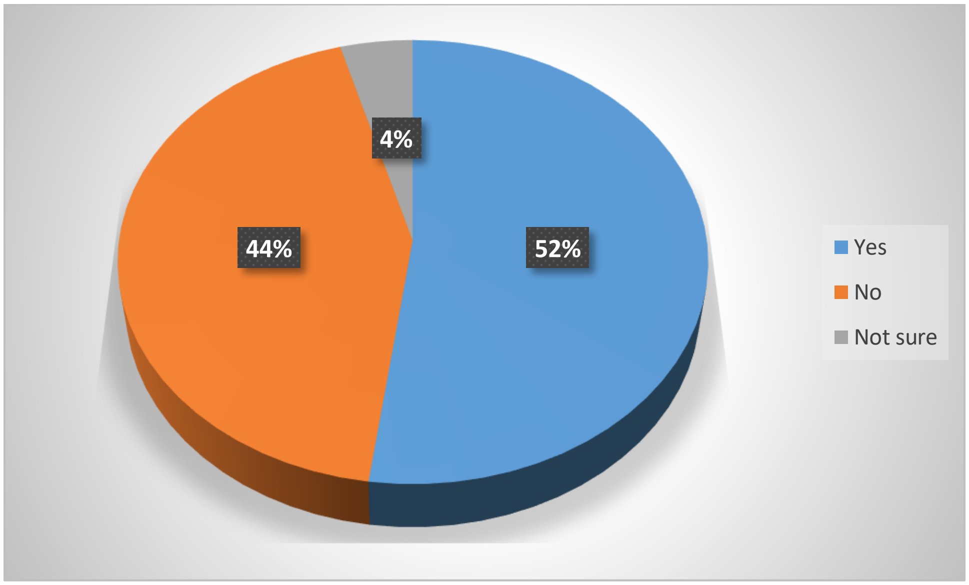

Figure 5.5 Awareness about the availability of records registry (n=69)

Results in figure 5.5 show that 36 (52%) respondents indicated were aware, 30(43%) said were not aware, and three (4%) said were not sure. The findings indicate that many respondents were aware about the availability of records information centre or records registry.

Qualitative results revealed that there was no records centre. Instead, there was only the registry office where most records were being kept. Some of responses are as follows:

- *There is no records centre. I have never heard of it on any of our institution.* (Participant 1).
- *We do not take matters of records seriously as we should have been doing. I don't think we have any records centre as it is with the District council offices rather we have registry office*. (Participant 5).

The responses from the questionnaire are different from what participants expressed in the interviews.

5.4.4.4 Time it takes for a record to be retrieved or accessed

The researcher further inquired on access and retrieval average time through this questionnaire item. The results are presented in Table 5.7 below.

Table 5.6: Average duration for accessing or retrieving records (n=69)

Average time for retrieving records. (minutes)	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
11 - 20	7	10
21 - 30	8	12
0 - 5	10	14
More than 30	11	16
6 - 10	33	48
Total	**69**	**100**

The results show that seven (10%) respondents retrieved records on an average of 11-20 minutes, eight (12%) respondents retrieved records on an average of 21-30 minutes, 10 (14%) respondents retrieved records within five minutes, 11 (16%) respondents retrieved records on an average of more than 30 minutes and 33 (48%) respondents retrieved records on an average of 6-10 minutes. The results suggest that more respondents retrieved records on an average of 6-10 minutes.

5.4.5 Records classification system

This item of the questionnaire intended to understand the classification systems used at Kasungu Municipal Council. The following options guided the respondents: general to specific; alphabetical; numbering; subject specific; and none. The results presented in Table 5.5

Table 5. 7: Records classification system (n=69)

Classification system	Frequency	Percentage
None of the above	7	10
Alphabetic	11	22
Numbering	16	23
General to specific	29	42
Subject specific	58	84

The results show that most respondents 58 (84%) indicated subject-specific, 29 (42%) said general to specific; 16 (23%) said numbering; 11 (22%) respondents indicated alphabetic; seven (10%) respondents indicated none. The results show that the most predominant record classification system is subject-specific.

5.4.6 Records access and security

This item of the interview guide sought to establish the security of the storage facilities from internal and external interferences. The following verbatim responses from respondents show that security of records is a challenge at Kasungu Municipal Council:

- *That is a huge issue. We do not have a disaster recovery plan. If fire catches these records, we are gone.* (Participant 2).
- *We only have a central hard drive where we back up our information resources. However, the hard drive is within the office of the Chief Executive Officer. It may also get damaged when the building catches fire*. (Participant 3).
- *For electronic records we use passwords. The only challenge is that these passwords are so personalised that when an individual leaves the institution and also most of the laptops being used are personal and not institutional laptops, other staff have problems accessing the systems and records. For example, I log into my laptop or institutional computer using personal email address and password. When I leave who should access my email address? Most times those records are no longer accessible. We need to look into that.* (Participant 4).
- *Usually, we lock our paper records into drawers, cabinets but records on shelves are not safe. We are still behind on enforcing security measures in our information systems*. (Participant 5)

The data indicate that passwords were used to secure records on electronic storage facilities and locks were used to protect paper records in containers and cabinets.

5.4.7 Records retention and disposal

Section C (Question 9) of interview guides sought to find out on the availability of records retention and disposition schedules, and whether there were records retention periods. The verbatim responses are presented below:

- *We use the institution cycle framework to decide the periods we should keep our employee records. Usually, the records stay for a period of at least ten years. We do not have other guidelines for other records. The institution does not have a records retention policy.* (Participant 1).
- *It is difficult to tell. But financial policy mandates us to keep records for the period of 10 to 15 years. After that, we can dispose them.* (Participant 2).
- *We send outdated records to the storage room but up to now they have not been disposed of or cleared. But there is no clear guideline for the disposal of records.* (Participant 4).
- *Disposal is done at our discretion. We just delete out of use electronic documents to create space in our laptops. We also send unimportant papers to the bin for burning.* (Participant 5).

5.5 Policy framework governing records management at Kasungu Municipal Council

Objective two of this study sought to establish whether there were records management policy, plans and guidelines at the Council. The objective was addressed through Research Question Number 2: What policy framework is governing records management at Kasungu Municipal Council? The researcher asked respondents if there were records management policy at Kasungu Municipal Council.

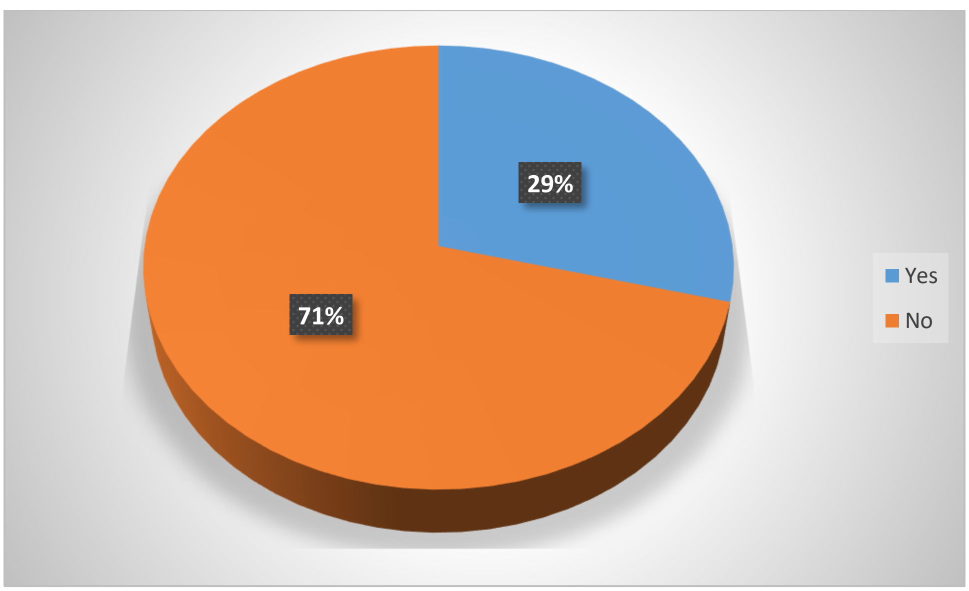

Figure 5.6 Availability of policy regulating records management (n-69)

The results showed that 20 (29%) respondents agreed that there was records management policy while 49 (71%) respondents did not agree. The analysis shows that there were no records policy. The results from this question are presented in Figure 5.6.

Qualitative data was also collected from Top management in Section C of the interview guides. Top management staff were asked to indicate records management policy framework and guidelines for managing records available at the Council. Verbatim responses are presented below:

- *At the moment we don't have formal guidelines. The demand of our job dictates the capturing of the data. For example, you will always have an auditor who will want that information, so we all know that we need to have it for auditors but would specifically say there are no official guidelines.* (Participant 3).

The researcher therefore concludes that there were indeed no records management policy, plans, and guidelines at Kasungu Municipal Council.

5.6 Factors influencing records management

This objective intended to find out factors affecting records management practices at Kasungu Municipal Council. Both, encouraging factors and discouraging factors were investigated.

5.6.1 Factors that encourage records management

The researcher asked the respondents to indicate the factors that encouraged good records management practices at Kasungu Municipal Council. The results are presented in table 5.8 below.

Table 5. 8: Factors that encourage records management (n=69)

Encouraging factors	Frequency	Percentage
Compliance with statutory requirements	23	33
Litigation purposes	31	45
Accountability	57	83
Enhancing information access	60	87
Transparency of business transactions	67	97

Results presented in Table 5.7 show that respondents indicated the following key benefits: 67 (97%) transparency of business transactions, 60 (87%) enhancing information access, 57(83%)

respondents indicated accountability of business undertakings, Other 31 (45%) respondents indicated compliance of statutory requirements, and fewer 23 (31%) respondents indicated for litigation purposes. The results indicated that many respondents were able to identify many encouraging factors of records management.

5.6.2 Factors that discourage records management

This item of the questionnaire intended to find out factors that discouraged records management at Kasungu Municipal Council. The results are presented in Table 5.9 below.

Table 5. 9: Factors that discourage records management (n=69)

Discouraging factors	Frequency	Percentage
Finances and other resources	27	39
Policy and legislative guidelines	28	41
ICT infrastructure	38	55
Technical and human expertise	54	78
Management commitment	64	93

The findings show that 64 (93%) respondents indicated that lack of management commitment; 54 (78%) indicated lack of technical and human expertise, 38 (55%) indicated lack of ICT infrastructure; 28 (41%) said lack of policy and legislative guidelines; and 27 (39%) indicated lack of finances. From these results, lack of management commitment was the main factor that discouraged records management at Kasungu Municipal Council.

The researcher also conducted interviews with top management staff of Kasungu Municipal Council to provide data on the factors militating against records management. Results showed that the unavailability of a records management policy and other related guidelines was a major concern. Some of the responses were as follows:

- *We entrust the management of records with secretaries who are unqualified for the job. There is no training for records management, or it is done haphazardly. A times management support is the genesis of everything. No commitment on their part.* (Participant 2).

- *There are several issues that act as challenges for now: lack of records legislative guidelines, lack of policy documents as well as lack of goodwill from Management.* (Participant 3).
- *Lack of resources to roll out the problem and sometimes we think we may do without this important aspect of information organization.* (Participant 5).
- *There is no unified records management policy here. Everything is done on a departmental basis. There is no such policy that is supposed to govern Kasungu Municipal Council as a unit organization. In one of the meetings, we suggested we should have a records management unit or a registry unit but up to date nothing has happened.* (Respondent 4).
- *Honestly, there is no records management policy here. And even no business continuity plan. Maybe others who were there before me can know better. It is a worrisome situation.* (Participant 1).
- *We only use a financial policy that guides us in how we manage our records, but we do not have a records management policy*. (Participant 2).

5.7 Chapter summary

This Chapter has presented the findings of the study on records management practices conducted at Kasungu Municipal Council. The next Chapter discusses the study findings, presenting the key findings and recommendations.

CHAPTER SIX:
DISCUSSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

6.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the findings reported in chapter five. The discussion of findings is considered the essence of research since it demonstrates that the researchers understand the study by linking research objectives to existing literature and theoretical frameworks (Lunenburg & Irby, 2008). The chapter seeks to answer objectives which were formulated in chapter one with the aim of explaining how the broader research problem was answered. In this case, this discussion is informed by the empirical findings obtained by this study, which are interpreted using the Records Continuum Model and the reviewed related literature.

The discussion is organised according to the three objectives which were formulated in chapter one as follows:

- To examine types of records created, received, or captured at KMC
- To analyse records preservation strategies at KMC
- To investigate factors influencing records management practices at KMC

6.2 Types of records created, received, or captured at Kasungu Municipal Council

This objective of the study intended to establish the types of records created, received, or captured at Kasungu Municipal Council. The most produced or transacted records at Kasungu Municipal Council were minutes of meetings, mails, financial records, and reports. The records created or received at Kasungu Municipal Council are within the broad function of conveying knowledge, conferring credentials, fostering socialization, conducting research, sustaining the institution, and providing public services as described by Chinyemba and Ngulube (2005).

The prevalence of records in form of minutes of meetings, mail, financial records, and reports implies that Kasungu Municipal Council is committed to transparency and accountability in its operations. This means that Kasungu Municipal Council actively documents its actions, discussions as well as financial transactions. This transparency fosters the accountability, as staff members and the public can review these records to ascertain and verify if the decisions align with the best of interests of the institution. Unlike other official documents like minutes, emails are essential for communication within Kasungu Municipal Council. Members of staff often use email to share information, discuss issues, and coordinate tasks. The prevalence of emails demonstrates efficient communication channels within the council which is essential for effective governance. Kasungu Municipal Council has a strong focus on maintaining financial records. This means that the council diligently tracks its budget, expenditures, and financial transactions. This helps to prevent financial mismanagement, reduces the risk of fraud, and ensures that funds are used prudently.

Kasungu Municipal Council generate various reports. These reports provide valuable insights into the council's activities and the impact of policies and programs. They are used to inform decision making. The prevalence of reports mean that the council is actively gathering data and conducting analyses to support its policies and initiatives. This data-driven approach helps members of staff make well informed choices that benefit the community.

The Records Continuum Model demands that evidence of the business transaction, and that the originality of the records should be easily traced. In this regard, the findings of the present study seem to show that Kasungu Municipal Council provides a complete and reliable account of its activities through creation of records. The findings of the current study are similar to those of a mixed-method study by Agoe (2019) in Uganda at Soroti Municipal Council, which found that the records that were generated included emails, reports, financial reports and meetings.

The findings of the current study also relate to findings of studies conducted in the Southern African context. For instance, a case study by Tshotlo (2010), at Gaborone City Council found that the records generated by the council were meetings, financial records such as research funds, grants, budgetary information, salary payments, statements of accounts, reports, and expenditure receipts. The similarities of the cited studies and the current study are based on the fact that most public institutions share similar functions and goals.

The study established that the Kasungu Municipal Council generates records in hybrid formats, that is, both electronic and paper records. The paper-based records are largely quotations for goods, delivery notes for the supplied goods, goods receipts and invoices. Most of the information from these are captured into the KMC system using pre-defined forms. While such forms may assist employees to capture all relevant data, they also have potential to cause challenges on compliance. Unlike the electronic systems which may be set to automatically reject incomplete records, paper-based forms may be filed in an incomplete state, compromising credibility of resultant records being created (Kasumba, 2013).

Kasungu Municipal Council also creates substantial amounts of electronic records. These electronic records are usually created in excel files and word documents which are used in reporting procedures. These records are created using desktop computers or personal computers assigned to employees.

The paper-based records noted in this study represent traditional formats within the Records Continuum Model. These records are typically captured into the KMC system using pre-defined forms. However, the model highlights a potential challenge; paper-based forms might be filed in an incomplete state which compromises the credibility of the resulting records. This aligns with the Records Continuum Model 's emphasis on the evolving nature of records and the challenges posed by traditional, paper-based systems. The electronic records are part of the Records Continuum Model’s digital formats. The model emphasises the importance of managing these electronic records effectively, considering issues such as data integrity, authenticity, and accessibility, which are crucial aspects of digital records management within the continuum.

The findings of the present study correspond with the findings of a case study by Luyombya and Ndagire (2020) in Uganda which established that records were generated in hybrid formats but most of the records were kept in paper formats. Like at KMC, Ndagire (2020) also found that the major reason for the prevalence of paper records was due to lack of an Enterprise Resource Planning System to harmonise and consolidate electronic resources. The findings of the current study also relate with those of a study by Kashaija (2022) in Tanzania which found that records were created with the aid of computer packages and exposed limited use of ICTs in the creation of electronic records.

These findings are consistent with a study by Yunus and Ariffin (2010) who established that generally, most of the electronic records generated by the departments in government organs of the Malaysian government are not considered records or evidence of transactions, but only data and information to facilitate the information needs and decision-making of the organization. The records created are managed and maintained as part of the organization's information management system. The results may be similar because the environments under study in both cases do not have adequate policies on records management.

6.2.1 Ways of creating records

Pertaining to records creation, the current study found that most records were created through word-processed documents and spreadsheets, and through creating and transmitting emails, creating memoranda, and entering data into databases. Mostly, the creation of records is fast tracked and proliferated with the use of computers or laptops.

Word processed documents and spreadsheets were the most preferred way of creating records because they are easy to use. Word processing software and spreadsheets are user friendly allowing respondents with basic computer skills to create and edit documents easily. This accessibility promotes widespread adoption among Kasungu Municipal Council staff members.

Creating and transmitting emails became predominant in ways of creating records because of its speed and efficiency. Emails allow Kasungu Municipal Council staff members to have instantaneous communication, enabling them to have swift exchange of information. This speed is crucial in decision making processes and facilitates the timely creation of records. Email communication is also convenient. This means that even remote or mobile staff members can contribute to discussions and decisions. These results are not surprising because the ever-increasing role of ICTs has potentially leapfrogged the rate of records production in public institutions world-over (Abdulrahman, 2015; Kalusopa, 2016).

Analysis of the findings in the context of the Records Continuum Model highlight the dynamic nature of records creation at Kasungu Municipal Council. Digital formats and real-time communication methods are integral components of the continuum, emphasizing the need for organizations to manage records effectively in a diverse, user-friendly, and technologically driven environment. The Model's principles of evolving formats, user interactions, and adaptability to technology are evident in the preference for word processed documents, spreadsheets, and email communication within the context of the municipal council's record-keeping practices.

The findings of the current study are also in agreement with those of a survey by Ayanda, Oloniruha and Ogungbade (2020) in Southwest Nigeria which found that records were created using computer packages such as Word, Excel, and emails. The study also established that there were no automated systems for creating records in most of these research institutes in Nigeria. The findings of the current study are also similar to those by Rutta, and Sichalwe (2021) in Tanzania which established that the Council embraced and used computers as a critical tool for creating records. From these findings, it can be inferred that there is growing consensus that ICT tools especially computers are the major tool for creating records at public institutions.

Creating records through memoranda is a practical and widely accepted method due to its clarity, formality, traceability, and adherence to documentation standards. Kasungu Municipal Council mostly uses memoranda as another form of internal communication. They are an efficient way to circulate information among staff members, ensuring that everyone is up to date regarding policies, procedures, or decisions. The implication is that Kasungu Municipal Council maintains a written record of internal communications which is essential for accountability. Similarly, studies conducted by Kwadzo (2015) and Baro et al. (2011) n Ghana and Nigeria respectively, reported that memoranda serve as a formal means of internal communication within institutions, including municipal councils. In Tanzania, it was noted that memoranda records were more effective considering factors such as clarity, completeness, and relevance of information (Angello & Wema, 2010). The findings of the studies are similar because in every institution, there is a need of communication among staff members and memoranda being the effective way it is mostly being adopted.

6.2.2 Records capture

As regards to records capture, the present study established that records are captured by saving in word documents and other related Microsoft packages for generating information. These findings reveal that Kasungu Municipal Council has basic technologies for capturing data, which may complicate the organisation of records because their primary purpose is not records capturing.

The second dimension of the Records Continuum Model is the records capture which considers capturing of records as a remarkable stage of records management process (Matlala

& Maphoto, 2020). Capturing of records as enshrined in the second dimension of the Records Continuum Model requires personal and corporate recordkeeping systems, which capture documents in a context that supports their capacity to act as evidence of the business activities of the units responsible for the activities (Musembe, 2016).

It is exceedingly difficult to trace and manage records that are not captured into the institution recordkeeping system. From the findings of the current study, Kasungu Municipal Council uses Microsoft packages to capture records as opposed to electronic records management systems as recommended by Anastassia Dikopoulou & Mihiotis (2010) and Yunus & Ariffin (2010). The implication of the informal capturing of records in administration and other departments at Kasungu Municipal Council is that there would be no evidence and continuity of business activities.

However, unlike at Kasungu Municipal Council, a study conducted in Uganda by Luyombya, Ndagire (2020), reported that the creation of records did not follow any procedure for capturing records, hence some files or records were eventually lost.

6.3 Records preservation strategies

This section focuses on records keeping strategies, namely, records storage, records security, records classification system, records retention, and records disposal.

6.3.1 Records storage and maintenance

Findings indicate that the institution store paper records in shelves, cabinets, cartons and electronic records are stored in computers or laptops and flash disks. The electronic records are regularly protected by the computer passwords but the paper-based records in cabinets are prone to disasters like floods and fire.

These findings reveal that paper records stored on shelves are typically organised and categorised to facilitate easy retrieval. Kasungu Municipal Council ensures that records are stored logically and can be quickly located when needed. Properly managed shelving systems contribute to the effective records management practices. Paper records at Kasungu Municipal Council are typically stored in filing cabinets as part of a systematic approach to organization and data management. Despite the digital revolution, KMC continues to rely on paper documents for various reasons, such as legal requirements, historical preservation, or the nature of the information being handled. Storing paper records on shelves is a common practice in various organizations, including Kasungu Municipal Council. The prevalence of storing paper records on shelves can be attributed to several factors including cost effectiveness, easy accessibility and adaptability. According to the Records Continuum Model, storing records on shelves in close proximity to relevant departments or employees ensures that records are readily accessible during day-to-day operations. This means such strategy facilitates the integration of records management into the ongoing activities of the Kasungu Municipal Council. The present findings contradict the construct of the Records Continuum Models's organise dimension which recommends that there has to be a dedicated place for storing records such as a records/registry office for storing all institutional records. The current study assumes that some records at Kasungu Municipal Council can be lost or get damaged because the cabinets are in some people's offices.

The findings are similar to the results of a study by Mampe, Galaletsang and Kalusopa (2012) at the Ministry of Health in Botswana where lockable steel cabinets were used to store records. Both Malawi and Botswana are developing countries in Sub-Saharan Africa and to some extent, they share similar economic challenges which may be contributing to the similarities of handing records. However, the present findings contradict the findings by Calvin (2018) which ascertained that at Mbale Local Government in Uganda, records were stored in a centralised storage system for all departments under the custodian of a district records manager using boxes, shelves, metallic filing cabinets, and open cupboards. From these study findings, it can be concluded that paper records are still relevant and prevalent in public institutions in developing countries.

The findings show that for electronic records, most staff members kept their personal and institutional records on their desktop computers or laptops using various digital storage systems and software applications designed for efficient record-keeping and data management. Electronic records at KMC are typically stored in laptops or computers through folder structures and email servers. Electronic records are often organised into well-defined folder structures on local drives. At Kasungu Municipal Council folders are categorised by department, project, date, or document type. This hierarchical organization helps council employees quickly locate the records they need. Kasungu Municipal Council employees often use email for communication and documentation. Email servers store emails and attachments, serving as a record of official correspondence. These emails can be archived, indexed, and searched for reference purposes.

The findings of the current study are in contrast with those of Ali et al. (2020), which found that cloud computing was being used as dedicated storage facility for records in the Australian local government. Similarly, the present findings contradict the findings by Calvin (2018) which ascertained that at Mbale Local Government in Uganda, records were being stored using a centralised storage system for all departments under the custodian of a district records manager.

Furthermore, the findings of the current study established that Kasungu Municipal Council did not have a records storage unit. At Kasungu Municipal Council, the absence of a records storage unit or centre compounded challenges of storing council records as evidenced using isolated records storage facilities. Records storage is an integral part of the third dimension of the Records Continuum Model (Kulcu, 2009). Organisation of records and archives as portrayed in the third dimension of the Records Continuum Model entails proper storage facilities or equipment at Kasungu Municipal Council. It specifies elements of archives and collective memory (Kulcu, 2009). Lack of a records storage unit and archival holding at Kasungu Municipal Council depicts uncoordinated or poorly managed storage facilities. The availability of wooden shelves, cabinet boxes, and computers provide an enabling platform to organise the records created or received at Kasungu Municipal Council. The study finding contrasts with the finding of a mixed method study by Masseh (2015) in Kenya, which investigated on how to manage the court records. The study found that the Kenyan courts had a records storage unit which worked closely with other court units.

6.3.2 Records access and security

The findings established that passwords were used to secure records on personal storage facilities such as laptops and desktop computers, and locks were used to protect paper records in containers and cabinets. The study found that there was no disaster recovery plan; no backup systems for records; poor storage facilities; and use of individualised passwords. Pertaining to the security of records as a records management practice, ensuring maintenance of records from loss, damage, theft, and unscrupulous tampering, the records systems and storage facilities must be secured (Kulcu, 2009).

Lack of records security controls in organisations exposes organisations to losing private and confidential records of individuals and the organisation. All records need to be always secured to ensure their authenticity and reliability. If records are not properly secured, they may be tampered with thereby losing their originality or they may be stolen.

Kasungu Municipal Council can develop a balanced and effective approach to securing their records, ensuring both electronic and physical assets are protected against unauthorised access and breaches using both locks and passwords. Passwords are more appropriate because they can help track who accessed the records, enhancing accountability and implementing protection which is generally cost-effective as it does not require additional physical resources. On the other hand, locks provide a physical barrier, preventing unauthorised individuals from accessing paper records.

The current study exposed the vulnerability in records systems at Kasungu Municipal Council regardless of the fact that some key elements of security features were pointed out in the findings of the current study such as the use of locks to secure paper records, and use of passwords to restrict unauthorised access to electronic records. The absence of inadequacy of strong security measures of records at Kasungu Municipal Council threatens the availability and accessibility of records overtime.

The Records Continuum Model indicates that records should serve as evidence of business transactions and as a collective memory of the institutions (Matlala & Maphoto, 2020). This implies that records should be well safeguarded and protected from any form of harmful and unauthorised interference. The evidence of any business transactions purported by the records continuum may be only guaranteed when records are not physically or virtually tampered with. The findings of the current study agree with those of Egwunyenga (2017) who examined the associated problems and management options of record-keeping in public institutions in the South Geo-Political Zone of Nigeria which noted poor security of records as one of the outstanding challenges that require urgent rectification. The poor security of records includes aspects of unavailability of a disaster recovery plan, lack of records backup systems, and lack of proper storage facilities as reflected in the findings of the present study.

6.3.3 Records classification system

As regards to the classification of records as a records management practice, the current study ascertained that the records are classified according to subject-specific, general to specific, numbering, and alphabetical classification.

The study established that alphabetical and subject filling systems were the two major filing systems being used. Unified records classification system could be a recipe for organization of council records which were in large volumes at Kasungu Municipal Council. This could lead to the easy accessibility and retrieval of records, eventually. The use of records classification systems helps to prevent the loss of records ensures easy and quick access to records (Aziz, 2013). Primarily, classification of records is key to proper records organization as indicated by the third stage of the Records Continuum Model Records. Organization is mainly accomplished by systematic classification of the records. Based on that impression, the implication is that Kasungu Municipal Council has disorganised records following a lack of a unified classification system.

The findings of the current study reveal that Kasungu Municipal Council staff members did not have issues in accessing and retrieving the records as the majority of them would take 6 to10 minutes, on average, searching for a particular record. The findings of the current study tally with the findings of a mixed method research by Chaterera (2016) in Zimbabwe, which revealed that retrieval of employee records was fast due to good records organization. It concluded that the organization of records was on good standard. In light of these study findings, it is evident that there is a consequential link between records classification and retrieval of records which should act as an eye opener to records managers.

6.2.5 Records retention and disposal

This section sought information on the availability of records retention and disposition schedule, and whether there are records retention periods at Kasungu Municipal Council. The current study found that Kasungu Municipal Council did not have a records retention and disposition schedule and there were no definite retention periods for both paper and electronic records. It was however, noted that the Council follows Data Management Policy which requires it to keep financial records for ten to fifteen years and then dispose them. The findings of the study show that the management of records at Kasungu Municipal Council is still in its infancy stage. Lack of retention and disposition schedule may result into the council either failing to destroy records which are no longer needed to support the day-to-day business operations, or it may be forced to take disposal decisions on an ad hoc basis without observing any aspect of disposal criteria. Keeping unnecessary records eats up valuable space/memory, may incur unnecessary costs, and cause difficulties in retrieving records. Ad hoc disposal of records on the other hand, may result in the council destroying ephemeral records together with those that have enduring value. This may result in the council being unable to defend itself if liability claims are made against its services or the actions of its members of staff.

The findings of the present study concur with those of Frings-Hessami and Oliver (2022) which found that municipalities in Switzerland did not have records disposition schedule. However, the present findings are contrary to those of a quantitative study by Franks (2015) in Canada which revealed that cloud computing services allowed records and backups to be deleted according to a retention and disposition schedule. Further, the current study findings are in sharp contrast with those of mixed methods studies by Makgahlela (2021) and Malatji and Marutha (2023) conducted in selected municipalities in Limpopo Province of South Africa which found that retention and disposal schedules were available in the municipalities studied. Finally, the present findings show that Kasungu Municipal Council is not even guided by Access to Information Act of 2017 which orders every information holder to maintain information for a period of seven years and there after transferring it to National Archives (Access to Information Act, 2017).

The absence of records retention and disposal schedule at Kasungu Municipal Council is against the principle of RCM's organise dimension which encourages the formulation of

6.4 Factors affecting records management practices

The study examined both the factors that encourage records management practices and those that negatively affect records management practices at KMC.

6.4.1 Factors that encourage records management

The study identified some notable encouraging factors of proper records management practices which include transparency and accountability of business transactions, followed by enhanced information access, compliance of statutory requirements and for litigation purposes.

Transparency and accountability of business transactions entails all decisions and undertakings at Kasungu Municipal Council should be procedurally documented so that they can be easily seen by stakeholders. For instance, the recruitment process at Kasungu Municipal Council should be properly documented for future references. Accountability of business undertakings requires records to act as evidence to justify any institutional undertaking. For instance, financial records should account for any purchase transactions. Compliance with statutory requirements is when Kasungu Municipal Council meets the requirements of external institutions such as the Malawi Revenue Authority (MRA) and this should be supported by valid records. Records must also act as evidence in court proceedings in case the institution is sued by students, staff, or any other entity.

The results of the current study also in contrast to those of a qualitative study on "Things to consider when managing an institutional repository" by Higgins and Goldman (2012). The American study found certain advantages to managing electronic documents through San Jose State University's institutional repository in Washington. The advantages include improved "findability" and accessibility of e-records, the capacity to quickly distribute data across borders, and the ability to provide long-term preservation and persistent access to records. As this theme of the current study was based on a structured questionnaire, methodological discrepancies may be to blame for the discrepancy between these study findings on the advantages of records management.

6.4.2 Factors that negatively affect records management practices

The study's objective sought to ascertain factors that negatively affect records management practices at Kasungu Municipal Council and the key factors according to the study include management commitment, technical and human expertise, ICT infrastructure, legislative guidelines, and finances. Further, the study established the nonexistence of records management policy and lack of qualified records staff.

6.4.2.1 Lack of management commitment or support

Support of top management is vital in realizing better records management practices. In this case, lack of such support can have negative implications on the management of records at KMC. For instance, there will be little financial resources allocated to the management of records. It is perhaps the reason that the study found that there were no guidelines and policies to guide records management at the institution. Furthermore, lack of management support could be the contributing factor to the lack of ICT infrastructure. Management plays a vital role in the approval of recruitment and training of records staff.

The findings of the current study are similar to those of a qualitative study done by Phiri and Tough (2017) in Sub-Saharan African countries which established that management support was a huge setback to records management initiatives in some universities. The current study, therefore, provides fresh evidence which strongly suggests that the management teams in African public institutions do not view records management as a significant tool in efficient operations and business transactions for institutions of higher learning. According to the Records Continuum Model, support of management is key in ensuring that records management processes are well managed in an institution. This implies that KMC will keep having a disfranchise records management system if management continues to ignore this important component or function of the institution. On the contrary, the findings of the current study are dissimilar with those of a qualitative study conducted by Bailey (2011) in Britain which measured the impact of records management in the British education sector. The study established demonstrable commitment and investment in records management in UK higher education institutions. Investment in records management as reported by this European study presupposes economic gains from proper recordkeeping. This, therefore, requires management commitment to fund recordkeeping activities.

6.4.2.2 Lack of ICT infrastructure

The study established the existence of ICT infrastructure in form of computers and computer networks at Kasungu Municipal Council. Generally, ICT infrastructure could be software such as record management systems, hardware such as computers, or computer networks. ICT infrastructure also facilitates efficient communication and collaboration. Lack of it hampers the ability to share records electronically. The infrastructure available at Kasungu Municipal Council is not adequate to conform to the Records Continuum Model's record keeping containers axis requirement. The Council needs a unified record management system that would regulate what should be captured and what should not.

The findings of the current study relate to those of a qualitative study by Masenya (2020) in South Africa. The study established that libraries used modern technologies such as block chain, cloud computing, and the Internet of Things to manage records. It further reported that such technologies can only be utilised on established ICT infrastructures. A qualitative study by Mutula and Mostert (2010) established that the Government of South Africa had put in place ICT infrastructures to enhance service delivery in the digital information sector.

6.4.2.3 Lack of legislative guidelines

Record management policies affect records management systems since they provide the guidelines on how record management functions should be carried out. The study shows that there are no written policies guiding records management at the KMC. According to Gratha (2015) and Wamukoya (2015), lack of records management policies act as the cause of challenges facing records management in many institutions. This has greatly affected the efficiency and effectiveness of many organisations in their service delivery. According to Gratha (2015), most organisations experience major problems in the management of records which include untidiness in the record storage areas, misplacement of files, and lack of file control tools. The study also indicates other problems such as lack of retention and disposal schedules and lack of proper supervision of staff. Wamukoya (2015) indicates that there are various risks associated with the poor management of records. Lack of proper records management in organizations like KMC would lead to loss of assets, litigation risks, time wastage in retrieval of records and non-compliance risks.

The study found that there was no records management policy at Kasungu Municipal Council. The absence of a records management policy at Kasungu Municipal Council underscores the importance of implementing structured and comprehensive policies. Having records policy and guidelines could help to mitigate risks, improve efficiency, enhance compliance, and uphold the council's reputation and public trust. Without a records management policy, there might be a lack of standardised procedures for creating, organizing, and storing records. This can lead to disorganization, making it challenging for employees to find and retrieve important information when needed. Without a policy, employees might resort to individual methods of managing records, leading to inefficiencies, duplication of efforts, and wasted resources. According to Makgahlela (2020), proper policies streamline processes and ensure that employees follow consistent and standardised procedures.

Embracing the Records Continuum Model’s prescribed factors in an institution might mitigate the challenges of long-term preservation and hence the re-use of information and enhancement of the organisational memory. Among other benefits of the Records Continuum Model are enabling integrated policy making and policy implementation (Jaakonmäki et al., 2018; Phiri, 2016). The results from the study show that the KMC is missing out on crucial benefits models like the Records Continuum have on organisational records management practices.

The current study shares similar findings with a case study by Asamoah and Akussah (2016) in Ghana, which exposed policy gaps in records management by establishing that municipal councils in Ghana lacked a clear records management policy. This has a negative bearing on the development and implementation of a records management programme and policy. Other studies across Africa also found a lack of records management policies as a challenge militating against proper records management practices in public institutions. For instance, a study by Ngoepe (2014) which investigated the role of records management as a tool to identify risks in the public sector in South Africa reported that a lack of records policy frustrates the management of records at the institution.

A formal record management programme with clear policies, infrastructure, staffing, guidelines, and clear qualifications for records personnel is recommended for the institution to realise the potential of records management (Khumaro & Chigaliro, 2017; Mosweu, 2019).

6.4.2.4 Lack of funds

The study established lack of funds to run records management initiatives at Kasungu Municipal Council. Just as in any other business undertakings, funds are viewed as a substantive resource for effective records management. Furthermore, this is perhaps the reason why KMC has limited technology, insufficient storage solutions, as well as ineffective data security. To mitigate these challenges, KMC can explore grant opportunities, partnerships with external organizations and priories funds for records management practices.

According to the Records Continuum Model, lack of funds presents a significant challenge to the effective management of records within an organization. While the Records Continuum Model primarily focuses on the continuum of records management activities, the availability of financial resources plays a crucial role in determining the success and sustainability of records management practices. In such a case KMC failed to comply to the model standards

The findings of the current study correlate with those of a qualitative study by Walters and Skinner (2010) in the USA which examined the emerging field of digital preservation and its economics in different organizations. The study established that finances or funds provide access to a body and network of expertise and technology that is required to carry out preservation of records effectively and efficiently. A case study by Musembe (2016) in Ghana shares a similar viewpoint from the findings of the current study. It focused on strategies for improving records management in enhancing the quality of services in government institutions. The study reported that soliciting and allocating of adequate funds is key to effectively carrying out records management practices in the institution.

6.4.2.5 Lack of technical and human expertise

The study established a lack of qualified staff in records management at Kasungu Municipal Council. Recordkeeping expertise is an enabling human factor to competently understand, handle and develop records management practices. Most participants also indicated that there are no training sessions on records management for staff. According to Halim et al. (2018), managing records in the electronic environment is not only a major challenge but also increasingly a strategic issue for organisations in both the public and private sectors. It is suggested that a key factor in meeting both the challenge and addressing the strategic management is the provision of training for employees. Training on records management can be in two phases: the customised training for staff tailored to their work place and the general training covering best practices applicable to any institution (Akuffo & Adams, 2016; Chaterera, 2016). The study shows that KMC does not arrange trainings for staff to update their skills on the management of records. Furthermore, there are no internal trainings to help the employees to customise the general skills on records management to their specific work environments. The lack of the internal trainings may create a gap in the implementation of the generally acceptable records management practices, locally.

The findings of the current study relate to a case study by Mutula (2012) in Zambia. The study found that the evolution of new technologies and complex electronic resources is a big challenge and requires the staff to upgrade their skills. Similarly, the study by Alegbeleye and Chilaka (2019) also revealed that lack of necessary training in records management negatively affected the implementation of the systems Proper implementation of records management systems directly impacts the sound and efficient management of records. Just like what the Records Continuum Model projects, well managed records are more likely to be used efficiently and timely each time there is need.

Generally, the findings of the current study on factors influencing records management are also replicated in other studies. For instance, a qualitative study by Dano and Ibrahim (2021) established that insufficient funding, inadequate training and retraining of staff, lack of storages devices, and lack of a comprehensive records management policy, guidelines and procedures are some of the notable factors affecting records management. In view of the foregoing discussion, the success of records management at Kasungu Municipal Council is not exclusive to these factors. Therefore, the implementation of records management practices should be inclusively viewed through the lens of these factors.

On the whole, any activity outlined in the dimensions of the Records Continuum Model requires an enabling environment or factors such as ICT infrastructure, records management policy, management support, trained staff, and adequate resources for its successful execution. For instance, the creation, capturing and organisation of records as explained in the dimensions of Records Continuum Model require the use of ICT tools such as computers. ICT tools are part of the ICT infrastructure which has been already discussed as one of the factors influencing records management practices. However, due to a number of factors inhibiting records management at Kasungu Municipal Council, its implementation is a challenge. Therefore, records management practices at Kasungu Municipal Council might not be as holistic as the Records Continuum Model demands.

6.5 Conclusion

The major variables of the Records Continuum Model explicitly delimit records management practices in the four dimensions of records creation, records capture, records organisation, and records pluralization. One of the fundamental elements of records organisation is records classification which fosters systematic recordkeeping, access, and retrieval. Records classification is relatively more hectic and cumbersome in manual systems which characterised Kasungu Municipal Council predominant paper recordkeeping.

With the advent and growth of computerised systems, records creation and e-records capture have become easily manageable and innovative. High-tech gadgets and records management systems have spurred records pluralization as the sharing of records is significantly affordable. Departments at Kasungu Municipal Council should inculcate organisational culture of sharing records for common usage. This is greatly facilitated by interconnected computer networks. To this end, the sustainability of records management practices is guaranteed by security measures put in place. Physical records are protected by locking them in cabinets while e-records demand strong passwords, encryptions, and firewalls. Unfortunately, Kasungu Municipal Council presented itself vulnerable to the loss and tampering of e-records.

Based on the findings of this study, there were inefficiencies in records management practices at KMC. Kasungu Municipal Council has a decentralised and fragmented records management system which is characterised by a disjointed departmental records management. The organisation and retention of these records is haphazard and unprocedural and is based on personal judgements. The lack of records retention and disposal policy is one of the retrogressive developments seriously hampering the realisation of records management practices. Even though Kasungu Municipal Council has not paid the required attention to records management practices, notable records management practices were records creation, capture, classification, and security. These infinite records management practices need thorough enhancement and reinforcement within the perspectives and aspirations of records management to underscore the ultimate principles of accountability, transparency, and compliance of business transactions. In the long term, efficient and effective records management practices seek to underpin the institutional collective memory to gain a lasting competitive advantage.

6.6 Recommendations of the study

Based on the findings of the study, the study recommends the following:

- The study found that there is no management programme to guide efficient implementation of records management at Kasungu Municipal Council. The study recommends that the Kasungu Municipal Council management should develop a records management programme that could guide its records management practices including staffing, infrastructure and budgets.
- The study found that there was no records management policy at Kasungu Municipal Council. Management should formulate a records management policy that will guide its records management practices.
- The study found that there are no clear guidelines on the disposal of records. Kasungu Municipal Council Management should consider establishing a fully-fledged central records unit that would coordinate all records management activities from records creation to disposal.
- The study found that there was lack of ICT infrastructure at Kasungu Municipal Council. Management should establish a robust ICT infrastructure that can support electronic records management systems.
- The study found that there was lack of expertise at Kasungu Municipal Council. Management should consider recruiting record expert who can design recordkeeping systems, organise and manage records.

6.7 Suggestions for further research

Further studies should be conducted with a focus on education, training and recruitment, processes of records management experts in Municipal councils in Malawi.

References

Abdullah, A. L., Yusof, Z., M. & Mokhtar, U. A. (2019). Factors influencing the implementation of electronic records and information management: A case study in military service in Malaysia. *Records Management Journal, 30*(1), 81-99. https://doi.org/10.1108/RMJ-10-2 2018-0043

Abdulrahman, B. A. (2015). Management of records for effective administration of five universities in the North Central Nigeria. *International Journal of Library and information Science. 7 (3)*, 47-54. https://doi.org/10.5897/IJLIS2014.0529

Aitchison, K. (2010). Grey literature, academic engagement and preservation by understanding, *Archaeologies, 6(2) 289-300.* https://doi.10.1007/s11759-010-9145-5

Akaranga, S., & Makau, B. (2016). Ethical considerations and their applications to research: A case of the University of Nairobi. *Journal of Educational Policy and Entrepreneurial Research*, *3*(12), 1-9. https://profiles.uonbi.ac.ke/kuria_paul/files/429-825-2-pb.pdf

Akuffo, M. N., & Adams, M. (2016). Records management practices in Ecumenical Tertiary Institutions: The Trinity Theological Seminary in focus. *Archives and Manuscripts, 44*(2), 61-72. http://doi:10.1080/01576895.2016.1191035

Alegbeleye, O. G., & Chilaka, C. U. (2019). Evaluation of records management practices at the Ministry of Health, Abia State, Nigeria. *Library Philosophy and Practice (e-journal).* 2306. https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/libphilprac/2306

Alkhofan, W., Yusuf, Z., Mohamed,H., & Mukred, M. (2019). The significant factors for the implementation of digital records management initiatives in Yemen: A conceptual framework. *International Journal of Technical Innovation in Modern Engineering & Science.* https://www.researchgate.net/publication/332230202

Almalki, S. (2016). Integrating quantitative and qualitative data in mixed methods research: Challenges and benefits. *Journal of Education and Learning*. *5*(3). http://doi.org/10.5539/jel.v5n3p288

Ameyaw, S,. & Frempong-Kore, A. (2021). Records management practices in Ghanaian Tertiary Institutions: A case study of Ghana Technology University College. *Uds*

International Journal of Development*. https://doi.org/10.47740/503.UDSIJD6i

Appiah, K. O., Amos, K. N. M., Bashiru, J., Drammeh, P. H., & Tuffour, S. (2017). Corporate governance and records management in private and public hospitals in Ghana. *Records Management Journal*, *27*(1), 42–56. https://doi.org/10.1108/RMJ-07-2015- 0027

Ary, D., Jacobs, L., Sorenson, C., & Walker, D. (2014). *Introduction to Research in Education*. (9th ed.). Wadsworth Cengage Learning.

Asogwa, E. B. (2012). The challenge of managing electronic records in developing countries: Implications for records managers in Sub Saharan Africa. *Records Management Journal*, *22*(3), 198 –211. http://doi.org/10.1108/09565691211283156

Asogwa, E. B. (2013). The readiness of universities in managing electronic records: A study of three Federal Universities in Nigeria. *The Electronic Library*, *31*(6), 792-807. https://doi.org/10.1108/EL-04-2012-0037

Atulomah, B. C. (2011). Perceived records management practice and decision making among university administrators in Nigeria. *Library Philosophy and Practice (e-journal).* 541. https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/libphilprac/541

Ayanda, O. T., Oloniruha, E. A. & Ogungbade, A. A. (2020). Record management practices in research institutes in South-West, Nigeria. *Frontiers in Education Technology*, *3*(3), 37-46. https://doi:10.22158/fet.v3n3p37

Ayatollahi H., Bath P. A., & Goodacre S. (2009). Paper-based versus computer-based records in the emergency department: Staff preferences, expectations, and concerns. *Health Informatics Journal*. https://doi.org/10.1177/1460458209337433

Azameti, M. S. K., & Adjei, E. (2013). Challenges in academic records management in tertiary institutions in Ghana. *International Journal of Scientific Research in Education*, *6*(3), 287-296. http://www.ijsre.com

Aziz, M. F. (2013). The need for records management & records retention schedule in an organization. *Kekal Abadi, 31*. 5-10.

Bailey, A., & Ngwenyama, O. (2010). Bridging the generation gap in ICT use: Interrogating identity, technology and interactions in community telecenters. *Information*

Technology for Development, *16*(1), 62–82. https://doi.org/10.1080/02681100903566156

Bailey, S. (2011). Measuring the impact of records management: Data and discussion from the UK Higher Education Sector. *Records Management Journal, 21*(1), 46- 68. https://doi.org/10.1108/09565691111125107

Ball, I. (2012). New development: Transparency in the public sector. *Public Money and Management*, *32*(1), 35–40. https://doi.org/10.1080/09540962.2012.643054

Bakare, A. A., Abioye, A. A., & Issa, A. O. (2016). An assessment of records management practice in selected local government councils in Ogun state, Nigeria. *Journal of Information Science Theory & Practice, 4*(1), 49-64.

Barde, A. M., Shaibu, A. B., & Daudu, M. H. (2019). Organisation and retrieval of students' academic records in Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria—Nigeria. *Samaru Journal of Information Studies*, *19*(1), 1-13. https://www.ajol.info/index.php/sjis/article/view/195451/184605

Bhardwaj, P. (2019). Types of sampling in research. *Journal of Practice and Cardiovascular Sciences*, *5*(3), 157-163. https://www.j-pcs.org/article.asp?issn=2395-5414

Blaxter, L, Hughes, C., & Tight, M. (2006). *How to Research.* McGraw Hill.

Beijer, P., & Kooper, M. (2010). Information governance: *Beyond risks and compliance*. PrimaVera Working Paper. http://primavera.fee.uva.nil

Bentil, A. (2018). The use of information and communication technology (ICT) in students' records management: A case study of University of Professional Studies, Accra. University of Ghana UGSpace. http://ugspace.ug.edu.gh/handle/123456789/26851

Bowen, G. A. (2009). Document Analysis as a qualitative research method. *Qualitative Research Journal*, *9*(2), 27-40. https://doi.org/10.3316/QRJ0902027

Bretschneider, P., Cirilli, S., Jones, T., Lynch, S., & Wilson, N. (2017). *Document review as a qualitative research data collection method for teacher research*. https://doi.org/10.4135/9781473957435

Brooks, J. (2019. Perspectives on the relationship between records m*anagement and* information governance. *Records Management Journal, 29*(1/2), 5-17. http://doi.org/10.1108/RMJ-09-2018-0032

Buchanan, S. A., Stratton, C., Sun, Y., & Chaudhary, A. (2017). Survey research on tasks and competencies to inform records management education. Records Management Journal, *27*(1), 2-18. https://doi.org/10.1108/RMJ-11-2015-0041

Bwalya, K. J., & Mutula, S. (2016). A conceptual framework for e-government development in resource-constrained countries: The case of Zambia. *Information Development, 32*(4), 1183–1198. https://doi.org/10.1177/0266666915593786

Chawinga, W., Duwe, G., Kanyundo, A. and Hamis, A. 2016. Thriving on the power of a record: Experiences from Mzuzu University, Malawi. 1-15.

Chawinga, W. D. (2019). Research data management in public universities in Malawi. https://etd.uwc.ac.za/handle/11394/6951

Chawinga, W. D., & Zozie, P. A. (2016). Increasing access to higher education through Open and Distance Learning: Empirical findings from Mzuzu University, Malawi. *The International Review of Research in Open and Distributed Learning*, *17*(4). https://doi.org/10.19173/irrodl.v17i4.2409

Chawinga, W. D. (2017). Taking social media to a university classroom: teaching and learning using Twitter and blogs. *International Journal of Educational Technology in Higher Education, 14*(1), 1-19.

Chawinga, W. D., & Majawa, F. (2018). An Assessment of Mzuzu University Library after a Fire Disaster. *African Journal of Library, Archives & Information Science, 28*(2).

Chawinga, W., & Ngwira, F. (2015). The role of the Mzuzu American Corner Information Technology and Communication Centre, Malawi. *Innovation: journal of appropriate librarianship and information work in Southern Africa, 2015(50)*, 20-43.

Chinyemba, A., & Ngulube, P. (2005). Managing records at higher education institutions: A case study of the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg Campus. *South African Journal of Information Management.* https://7.10.4102/sajim.v7i1.250

Chorley, M. K. (2017). The challenges presented to records management by open government data in the public sector in England: The case study. *Records Management Journal*, *27*(2), 149-158.

Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2011). *Research methods in education* (7th ed.) Routledge.

Creswell, J. (2009). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (3rd ed.). Sage

Creswell, J. W., & Plano *Clark*, V. L. (2011). *Designing and conducting mixed methods research* (2nd ed.). SAGE Publications

Creswell, J. (2012). *Educational research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research* (4th ed.). Pearson Education.

Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Qualitative inquiry & research design: Choosing among five approaches* (3rd ed.). SAGE.

Creswell, J. W. (2014). Research Design: *Qualitative, Quantitative and Mixed Methods Approaches* (4th ed.). Sage.

Dano, I., A. & Ibrahim, M. M. (2021). Management of students' academic records in tertiary institutions in North-East Nigeria: The new media imperative. *Library Philosophy and Practice (e-ournal)*, https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/libphilprac/5483

De Mingob, C. A., & Martíneza, C. A. (2018). Improving records management to promote transparency and prevent corruption. *Journal of Information Management*, *38* 256-261. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijinfomgt.2017.09.005

Dikopoulou, A., & Mihiotis, A. (2012). The contribution of records management to good governance. *The TQM Journal*, *24*(2), 123-141. http://doi.org/10.1108/17542731211215071

Doyle, L., Brady, A., & Byrne, G. (2009). An overview of mixed methods research. *Journal of Research in Nursing*, *14*(2), 175–185. https://doi.org/10.1177/1744987108093962

Duffus, K (2017). Recruitment of records management practitioners in Jamaica's public sector and its implications for professional practice. *Records Management Journal, 27*(2), 205-222. https://doi.org/10.1108/RMJ-10-2016-0039

Egwunyenga, J. E. (2017). Recording keeping in universities: Associated problems and management options of record keeping among universities in the South Geo-Political Zone of Nigeria. *International Journal of Educational Sciences, 1*(2),109-113. https://doi.org/10.1080/09751122.2009.11889983

Erima, J. A., & Wamukoya, J. (2012). Aligning records management and risk management with business processes: A case study of Moi University in Kenya. *Journal of the South African Society of Archivists, 45.* 24-38.

Evans, J., McKemmish, S., & Rolan, G. (2019). Participatory information governance: transforming recordkeeping for childhoodout-of-home care. *Records Management Journal 29*(1/2). https://doi.org/10.1108/RMJ-09-2018-0041

Etikan, I., & Babatope, O. (2019). A basic approach in sampling methodology and sample size calculation. *Medlife Clinics. 1*2689-5943.

Florida Department of State Division of Library and Information Services (2010). *Records management*. https://dos.myflorida.com/library-archives/records-management/

Fridah W. M. (2002). Sampling in research. http://hdl.handle.net/11295/54895

Frimpong, D. A., Agyekum, O. B., & Asare, H. A. (2018). Challenges in administrative records management in Technical Universities in Ghana. *International journal of innovative research & development, 7*(3), 173-183 https://doi.org/10.24940/ijird/2018/v7/i3/MAR1805

Frings-Hessami, V. (2022). Continuum, continuity, continuum actions: reflection on the meaning of a continuum perspective and on its compatibility with a life cycle framework. *Archival Science*, *22*(1), 113-128. https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10502-021-09371-2

Galala, K. A. Y., & Yusof, Z. M. (2013). *Electronics records management in three institutions of higher learning in Libya:* A case study. *Journal of Information & Knowledge Management, 12*(1). https://doi.org/10.1142/S0219649213500019

Gerrard, D. M., Mooney, J. E., & Thompson, D. (2018). Digital preservation at Big Data Scales: proposing a step-change in preservation system architectures. *Library Hi Tech, 36*(3), 524–538. https://doi.org/10.1108/LHT-06-2017-0122

Golafshani, N. (2003). Understanding reliability and validity in qualitative research. *The Qualitative Report, 8.* 597-606.

Government of Malawi (2017). *The Constitution of the Republic of Malawi*. Government Print

Haries, S. (2009). Managing records, making knowledge and good governance. *Records Management Journal*, *19*(1), 16-25. https://doi.org/10.1108/09565690910937218

Henn, M., & Weinstein, M., & Foard, N. (2009). A critical introduction to social research. https://us.sagepub.com/en-us/nam/a-critical-introduction-to-social research/book233441

Higgins, S., & Goldman, C. (2012). Things to consider when managing an institutional repository. Library Research and Practice Forum. https://scholarworks.sjsu.edu/library_forum/2012/Program/8/

Hussein, M. K. (2017). Local governance in Malawi sighs and sobs in district councils? *The international Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities Invention, 4*(1), 3222-3230.

Hussin, N., Akmar Ismail, S., Farik Mat Yatin, S., Nazir Ahmad, M., & Shamsul Mohd Shoid,M. (2018). Employing Qualitative Methods in Developing Functional Requirements for Electronic Records Management Research. *International Journal of Engineering & Technology, 7*(3.7), 270. https://doi.org/10.14419/ijet.v7i3.7.16389

Igwenagu, C. (2016). Fundamentals of research methodology and data collection. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/303381524.

Ismail, A., & Jamaludin, A. (2009). Towards establishing a framework for managing trusted records in the electronic environment. *Records Management Journal. 19*(2), 134-145. https://doi.org/10.1108/09565690910972084

International Standard Organisation (2016). *ISO 15489*-1 Information and documentation: Records Management Part 1: General. International Standard Organisation. https://www.iso.org/obp/ui/#iso:std:iso:15489:-1:ed-1:v1:en

Israel, G. (2015). Determining the size sample. http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/pdffiles/PD/PD00600.pdf

Jacob, S. A., & Furgerson, S. P. (2012). Writing interview protocols and conducting Interviews: Tips for students new to the field of qualitative research. *The Qualitative Report*, *17*(42), 1-10. https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2012.1718

Kalusopa, T. (2016). Extent of the integration of information communication and technology (ICT) systems in the management of records in labour organisations in Botswana. 49. 102. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/309705424

Kalusopa, T., & Ngulube, P. (2012). Records management practices in labour organisations in Botswana. *South African Journal of Information Management*. *14* (1) 513. http://dix.doi.org/10.4102/sajim.v14i1.513

Katuu, S. (2015). The development of archives and records management education and training in Africa: Challenges and opportunities. https://doi.org/10.1080/01576895.2015.1050677

Kaushik, V., & Walsh, C. A. (2019). Pragmatism as a research paradigm and its implications for social work research, 8, 1-17. https://doi.org.10.3390/socsci8090255

Keakopa, S. M. (2007). The management of electronic records in Botswana, Namibia and South Africa: Opportunities and challenges. *(*Doctoral thesis, University College

Kootshabe, T. J. (2014). *Preservation of government records in Botswana. 47*

Kwatsha, N. (2010). *Factors affecting the implementation of an electronic document and records management system. December, 119*. https://scholar.sun.ac.za/handle/10019.1/5152

Liu, Y. (Linda). (2014). Electronic records preservation in China – An exploratory inquiry. *Information Development,30*(3),213–222. https://doi.org/10.1177/0266666913485473

London, London, United Kingdom). https://discovery.ucl.ac.uk/id/eprint/1445627/

Lubanga, S., Majawa, F., Kapondera, S., & Chawinga, W. D. (2018). Web based student information management system in universities: experience from mzuzu university.

Kemoni, H. (2009). Management of electronic records. Review of empirical studies from the Eastern, Southern Africa Regional Branch of the International Council on Archives (ESARBICA) region, *Records Management Journal,* 19, 190-203. https://10.1108/09565690910999184

Khumaro, B., N., & Chigaliro, D. (2016*)*. Making a case for the development of a university records and archives management programme at the National University of Science and Technology in Zimbabwe. *Journal of the South African Society of Archivists, 50*, 67-78.

Kothari, C. R. (2004). *Research methodology: Methods and techniques* (Second Revised ed.). New Age International Limited Publishers.

Kumar, R. (2011). *Research methodology, a step-by-step guide for beginners* (3rd ed.). SAGE Publishers Ltd.

Kwak, N., Lee, C. C., Hwang, S. H., & Yun, H. (2020). IT maturity model for public agencies in developing countries: The case of Mongolia. *Information Development, 36*(2), 224–239. https://doi.org/10.1177/0266666919837740

Latham, B. (2018). Digital Government Information: The Challenges of Collaborative Preservation. *Journal of Academic Librarianship, 44*(5), 674–676. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.acalib.2018.07.005

Langkos, S. (2014). Data collection method and tools. https://doi.org/10.13140/2.1.3621.4083

Lihoma, P. (2012). *The impact of administrative change on record keeping in Malawi* (Doctoral thesis, University of Glasgow, Glasgow, Republic of Ireland).

Lomas, E. (2010). Information governance: Information security and access within a UK context. *Records Management Journal*, *20*(2), 182–198. https://doi.org/10.1108/09565691011064322

Luyombya, D. & Ndagire, S. (2020). Records management procedures and service delivery in private universities: a case study of the Islamic University in Uganda. *Journal of South African Society of Archivists*, 1012-2796. https://dx.doi.org/10.4314/jsasa.v53i1.1

Mabera, S. M. (2020). Implications of poor management of students' academic records in Nigerian Universities. *Information Impact: Journal of Information and Knowledge Management*, *11*(3), 31-40, https://.doi.org/10.4314/iijikm.v11i3.4

Machimbidza, T. (2014). The adoption and use of peer reviewed electronic journals by academics at selected Zimbabwean state universities. https://ukzn-dspace.ukzn.ac.mw

Major, B. N., & Omenu, F. (2016). Records management in higher educational institutions in Bayelsa State: Implications for school administration. https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper

Malanga, D. F., & Kamanga, B. C. G. (2019). E-records readiness at Karonga District Council in Malawi: Applying IRMT E-Records Readiness Assessment Framework. *Information Development*, *35*(3) 482–491. https://doi.org/10.1177/0266666918766971

Magama, B. (2018). Strategies for preservation of digital records in Masvingo Province of Zimbabwe. *ESARBICA Journal*, *37*, 18-38.

Malanga, D. & Chawinga, W. (2017). E-Records readiness in Malawi Local Government Councils: The case study of Karonga Town Council. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/319139626

Marutha, N. S., & Ngulube, P. (2012). Electronic records management in the public health sector of the Limpopo province in South Africa. *Journal of the South African Society of Archivists*, *45*, 39–67.

Marsh, R. M. (2015). The role of institutional repositories in developing the communication of scholarly research. *OCLC Systems & Services: International digital library perspectives*, *31*(4), 163-195. https://doi.org/10.1108/OCLC-04-2014-0022

Masenya, M. T. (2020). Application of modern technologies in the management of records in public libraries in South Africa. *African Journals Online, 53* https://doi.org/10.4314/jsasa.v53i1.5

Matangira, V., Katjiveri-Tjiuoro, M., & Lukileni, N. H. (2013). Establishing a university record management programme: A case study of the University of Namibia. https://repository.unam.edu.na/handle/11070/1402

Matlala, E. M., & Maphoto, R. A. (2020). Application of the Records Life-cycle and Records Continuum Models in organizations in the 21st century. *African Journals Online, 39*(1), https://doi.org/10.4314/esarjo.v39i1.6

McKemmish, S., & Rolan, G. (2019). Participatory information governance: Transforming recordkeeping for childhood out-of-home Care. *Records Management Journal.* https://doi:29.10.1108/RMJ-09-2018-0041

McLeod, J. & Childs, H. (2006). *How to manage records in the e-Environment* (2nd ed.). Routledge Taylor and Francis Group.

McLeods, J., Childs, S., & Heaford, S. (2007). Records management capacity and compliance toolkits: A critical assessment. *Records Management Journal*, *17*(3), 216-232. https://doi.org/10.1108/09565690710833116

Melody, N. M., & Loyce, C. (2014). Qualitative record management skills for effective service delivery in Nigerian Education System. *American Journal of Educational Research*, 2, *1250-1256.* https://doi.org/10.12691/EDUCATION-2-12-19

Michetti, G. (2014). Knowledge, skills, and competences: An Italian standard to define the archivist's profile within the European Qualifications Framework. *International Council on Archives – Section on Archival Education and Training, 1*(1), 19-37

Middleton, F. (2020). Reliability vs validity: What's the difference. https://www.scribbr.com/methodology/reliability-vs-validity/

Millar, L. (2009). *Managing the creation, use and disposal of electronic records*. International Records Management Trust

Moloi, J., & Mutula, S. (2007). E-records management in an E-government setting in Botswana. *Information Development. 23*(4), http://doi.org/10.1177/0266666907084765

Molloy, L. (2015). Performances, preservation, and policy implications: Digital curation and Preservation awareness and strategy in the performing arts. *New Review of Information Networking, 20*(1), 179–193. https://doi.org/10.1080/13614576.2015.1115297

Mohammed, S., Tetteh, R., & Azumah, A. (2018). Challenges associated with records management in Sunyani Technical University. MPRA Paper 89261, https://mpra.ub.uni-muenchen.de/89261/

Momot, N., & King, L. (2019). A records management model for an Intelligent, *Journal of the South African of Archives, 52.* https://www.ajol.info

Moseti, I. (2016). Digital preservation and institutional repositories: case study of universities in Kenya. *Journal of the South African Society of Archivists, 49*, 137–154.

Mosweu, O., Bwalya, K. J., & Mutshewa, A. (2017). A probe into the factors for adoption and usage of electronic document and records management systems in the Botswana context. *Information Development, 33*(1), 97–110. Https://doi.org/10.1177/0266666916640593

Mosweu, O. (2019). Knowledge and skills requirements for a records manager in Botswana in the networked environment. *Journal of the South African Society of Archivists, 52.*

Mishra, B., S. & Alok, S. (2017). *Handbook of research methodology: A compendium for scholars & researchers*. Educational Publishing.

Msiska, M., Khwima, A., & Kumitawa, B. (2017). Factors affecting the utilisation of electronic medical records system in Malawian central hospitals. *Malawi Medical Journal*. *29*, 247-253. https://doi.org/10.4314/mmj.v29i3.4

Muchaonyerwa, N. & Khayundi, F. (2014). The Management of Digital Records in the Office of the Premier of the Eastern Cape Province, South Africa, *African Journal of Library, Archives and Information Science*, *24*(1). 41-52.

Musembe, N. C. (2016a). Records management in institutions of higher learning: Towards the business support function. *International Journal of Library and Information Science Studies, 2*(1), 13-28.

Musembe, N. C. (2016b). Strategies for improvement of records management in enhancing quality of services in institutions of higher learning: A Focus on Moi University, Kenya. *Information and Knowledge Management*, *6*(8). 18-26.

Mutula, S. M., & Mostert, J. (2010). Challenges and opportunities for e-government in South Africa. *The Electronic Library*, *28*(1). 38-53. https://doi.org/10.1108/02640471

Mweso, C. (2019). Where are the records in public sector reform? Advocating for integration of records management into public sector reforms in Malawi. *ESARBICA Journal: Journal of the Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Branch of the International Council on Archives, 38*(1), 194-207. https://www.ajol.info/index.php/esarjo/article/view/191927

Ngoepe, M., & Van der Walt, T. (2009). Strategies for the preservation of electronic records in South Africa: Implications on access to information. *Innovation*, *38*(1). https://doi.org/10.4314/innovation.v38i1.46971

Ntim, C. G., Soobaroyen, T., & Broad, M. J. (2017). Governance structures, voluntary disclosures and public accountability: The case of UK higher education institutions. *Accounting, Auditing and Accountability Journal*, *30*(1), 65–118. https://doi.org/10.1108/AAAJ-10-2014-1842.

Nyasulu, C., & Chawinga, W. D. (2018). The role of information and communication technologies in the delivery of health services in rural communities: Experiences from Malawi. *South African Journal of Information Management*, *20*(1), 1-10.

O'Flaherty, E. (2015). Trinity college archives: A digital curation challenge. *New Review of Information Networking*, *20*(1), 200–213. https://doi.org/10.1080/13614576.2015.1112185.

O'Gorman, K. & MacIntosh, R. (2015). Research methods for business & management: A guide to writing your dissertation. (2 nd ed.). Goodfellow Publishers Limited. Available on http://www.goodfellowpublishers.com

Öberg, L.-M., & Borglund, E. (2006). "What are the characteristics of neighborhoodness?" *International Journal of Public Information Systems*, *2006*(1), 55–76. https://www.ltu.se/cms_fs/1.83857!/file/WhatAreTheCharacteristicsOfRecords.pdf

OECD. (2020). OECD Greece Economic Overview 2020. *Oecd*, *1*(July), 78.

Of, J., Eastern, T. H. E., Africa, S., Branch, R., The, O. F., & On, I. C. (2013). Esarbica journal. *Journal of the Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Branch of the International Council on Archives*, *32*, 6450.

Olivier, G. & Foscarine, F. (2015). The value of international standards for records management: Perspectives from education and training. *Archives and Manuscripts 43*, (3), 181-193. https://doi.org/10.1080/01576895.2015.1084937

Oulasvirta, L. O., & Bailey, S. J. (2016). Evolution of EU public sector financial accounting standardisation: critical events that opened the window for attempted policy change. *Journal of European Integration*, *38*(6), 653–669. https://doi.org/10.1080/07036337.2016.1177043

Oyaro, J. (2013). *The impact of records management on service delivery in Kenya's Immigration Department*. 1–71.

Pandey P., & Pandey, M. M. (2015). *Research methodologies: Tools and techniques*. Bridge Centre.

Peng, C., Song, X., Jiang, H., Zhu, Q., Chen, H., Chen, J. M., Gong, P., Jie, C., Xiang, W., Yu, G., & Zhou, X. (2016). Towards a paradigm for open and free sharing of scientific data on global change science in China. *Ecosystem Health and Sustainability, 2(5)*. https://doi.org/10.1002/ehs2.1225

Phiri, M. J., & Tough, A. G. (2017). Managing university records in the world of governance. *Records Management Journal, 28*(1), 47-6. https://doi.org/10.1108/RMJ-11-2016-0042

Phiri, M. J. (2016). *Managing university records and documents in the world of governance, audit and risk: Case studies from South Africa and Malawi* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Glasgow, Glasgow, Ireland

Popoola, S. O. (2009). Organizational commitment of records management personnel in Nigerian private universities. *Records Management Journal, 19*(3), 204-217. https://doi.org/10.1108/09565690910999193

Public Sector Reforms Management Unit (2022). Making Malawi work. Https://www.reforms.gov.mw/psrmu/eforrms/localcouncils

Ravenwood, C., Muir, A., & Matthews, G. (2015). Stakeholders in the Selection of Digital Material for Preservation: Relationships, Responsibilities, and Influence. *Collection Management, 40*(2), 83–110. https://doi.org/10.1080/01462679.2015.1011816

Read, J., & Ginn, L. M. (2015). *Records management*. Cengage Learning

Rehman, A. & Alharthi, K. (2016). An introduction to research paradigms. *International Journal of Educational Investigations, 3(8),* 51-59 https://www.ijeionline.com/attachments/article/57/IJEI.Vol.3.No.8.05.pdf

Rutta, M., & Ndenje-Sichalwe, E. (2021). The state of records management practices in public offices: A case of Kinondoni Municipal Council in Dares Salaam, Tanzania. *University of Dares Salaam Library Journal, 16*(2), 223-238.

Saunders, N., M. (2009). Understanding research philosophy and approaches to theory development. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/309102603.

Seniwoliba, A. J., Mahama, A. V., & Abilla, B. J. (2017). Challenges of records management in higher education in Ghana: The case of University for Development Studies. *international Journal of Educational Policy Research and Review, 4*(3), 29-41. https://doi.org/10.15739/IJEPRR.17.005

Silic, M., & Back, A. (2014). Information security: Critical review and future directions. https://doi.org/10.1108/IMCS-05-2013-0041

Soyka, H., A. (2015). *Records as force multiplier: Understanding the Records Continuum as a framework for examining the role of records in a community* (Doctoral thesis, University of Pittsburgh, City, country). https://www.semanticsscholar.org

Suber, P. (2012). Ensuring open access for publicly funded research. https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.e5184

Svard, P. (2013). The impact of information culture on information/records management: A case study of a Municipality in Belgium. *Records Management Journal 24*(1), 5-21. https://doi.org/10.1108/RMJ-04-2013-0007

Tagbotor, D. P., Adzido, R. Y. N., & Agbanu, P. G. (2015). Analysis of records management and organizational performance. *International Journal of Academic Research in Accounting, Finance and Management Sciences, 5*(2), 1-16. https://ideas.repec.org/a/hur/ijaraf/v5y2015i2p1-16.html

Taherdoost, M. (2016). Validity and reliability of the research instrument: How to test the validation of a questionnaire/survey in research. *International Journal of Academic Research in Management. 5*(3), 28-36. https://www.elvedit.com

Tashakkori, A., & Creswell, J. W. (2007). Editorial: Exploring the nature of research questions in mixed methods research. *Journal of Mixed Methods Research*, *1*(3), 207–211. https://doi.org/10.1177/1558689807302814

Touray, R. (2021). A review of records management in organisations. *Open Access Library Journal*, *8*, 1-23. https://doi.org/10.4236/oalib.1108107.

Walters, T. O., & Skinner, K. (2010). Economics, sustainability, and the cooperative model in digital preservation. *Library Hi Tech*, *28,* 259-272. https://doi.org/10.1108/07378831011047668

Wamukoya, J., & Mutula, S. M. (2005). Capacity-building requirements for E-records management: The cawo in East and Southern Africa. *Records Management Journal, 15*(2), 71-79. https://doi.org/10.1108/09565690510614210

Willis, A. (2005). Corporate governance and management of information and records. *Records Management Journal, 15*(2), 86-97. https://doi.org/10.1108/09565690510614238

Unegbu, V. E., & Adenike, B. O. (2013). Challenges of records management practices in the Ministry of Information and Strategy, Lagos State, Nigeria. *Journal of Library & Information Science, 3*(2), 240-263.

Zach, L., & Peri, F. M. (2010). Practices for college and university electronic records management (ERM) programs: Then and now. *JSTOR 73(1),* 05-128. https://www.jstor.org/stable/27802717

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Informed consent form

Mzuzu University Research Ethics Committee (MZUNIREC)

Informed Consent Form for Research in Masters in Library and Information Science

Introduction

I am **Naris Kapanda**, a Master of Library and Information Science student from Mzuzu University**.** I am doing research titled ***"Records management practices at Kasungu Municipal Council"***. This consent form may contain words that you do not understand. Please ask me to stop as we go through the information and I will take time to explain. If you have questions later, you can ask them of me or of another researcher.

Purpose of the research

This research aims to investigate records management practices at Kasungu Municipal Council

Type of Research Intervention

This research requires your voluntary participation in responding to a questionnaire/interview questions.

Participant Selection

You are being invited to take part in this research because you are one of the Kasungu Municipal Council staff member.

Voluntary Participation

Your participation in this research is entirely voluntary. It is your choice whether to participate or not. If you choose not to participate nothing will change. You may skip any question and move on to the next question.

Duration

The research may take a period of three months.

Risks

You do not have to answer any question or take part in the discussion/interview/survey if you feel the question(s) are too personal or if talking about them makes you uncomfortable.

Reimbursements

You will not be provided any incentive to take part in the research.

Sharing the Results

The findings from this study will be shared with you as a participant and your community before it is accessible to the public. The results of the study may also be published for the broader viewership of interested researchers.

Who to Contact?

If you have any questions, you can ask them now or later. If you wish to ask questions later, you may contact: Miss **Naris Kapanda**. (Airtel Malawi Limited: 0993988092/0884511112)

This proposal has been reviewed and approved by Mzuzu University Research Ethics Committee (MZUNIREC) whose task is to make sure that research participants are protected from harm. If you wish to find more about the Committee, contact Mr. Gift Mbwele, Mzuzu University Research Ethics (MZUNIREC) Administrator, Mzuzu University, P/Bag 201, Luwinga, Mzuzu 2, Phone: 0999404008/0888641486

Do you have any questions?

Part II: Certificate of Consent

I have been invited to participate in research about **"Records Management Practices at Kasungu Municipal Council"**.

I have read the foregoing information, or it has been read to me. I have had the opportunity to ask questions about it and any questions I have been asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I consent voluntarily to be a participant in this study

Print Name of Participant__________________
Signature of Participant ___________________
Date ___________________________
Day/month/year

If illiterate [1]

I have witnessed the accurate reading of the consent form to the potential participant, and the individual has had the opportunity to ask questions. I confirm that the individual has given consent freely.

Print name of witness____________ **Thumb print of participant**

Signature of witness _____________

Date ________________________

[1] A literate witness must sign (if possible, this person should be selected by the participant and should have no connection to the research team). Participants who are illiterate should include their thumb print as well.

Day/month/year

Statement by the researcher/person taking consent

I have accurately read out the information sheet to the potential participant, and to the best of my ability made sure that the participant understands the research project. I confirm the participant was given an opportunity to ask questions about the study, and all the questions asked by the participant have been answered correctly and to the best of my ability. I confirm that the individual has not been coerced into giving consent, and the consent has been given freely and voluntarily.

Signature of Researcher /person taking the consent

Date ____________________________

Day/month/year

Appendix 2: Questionnaire for Departmental staff members
Instructions:

Please indicate against the appropriate response(s) in the context of Kasungu Municipal Council (KMC) and that it should be to the best of your knowledge.

SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

1. Please indicate your gender. ***Select one option only***

   Male [ ]

   Female [ ]

2. Please indicate your age group. ***Select one option only***

   20 – 30 [ ]

   31 – 40 [ ]

   41 – 50 [ ]

   51 Above [ ]

3. Please indicate the highest academic qualification you currently hold. ***Select one option only***

   Certificate [ ]

   Diploma [ ]

   Bachelor's [ ]

   Master's [ ]

   PhD [ ]

4. Please indicate the department you work under. ***Select one option only***

   Administration [ ]

   Information Technology [ ]

   Human resources [ ]

   Public works [ ]

   Finance [ ]

   Planning [ ]

   Education and Health [ ]

SECTION B: Types of records created or received at Kasungu Municipal Council

5. Please indicate by ticking in the appropriate box(es) records that are created or received at Kasungu Municipal Council. ***You are allowed to tick more than one by selecting all that apply.***

Financial records	[ ]
Legal papers	[ ]
Historical and archival documents	[ ]
Conference proceedings	[ ]
Mails	[ ]
Technical documentations	[ ]
Memoranda	[ ]
Meetings	[ ]
Reports	[ ]
Policy documents	[ ]

Others (Please specify) ______________________________________

6. Please indicate how records are created in your office or department. ***You are allowed to tick more than one by selecting all that apply***

Handwriting notes	[ ]
Completing forms or templates	[ ]
Creating and transmitting an email	[ ]
Creating a memorandum or note	[ ]
Creating word processed document, spreadsheet	[ ]
Taking photographs	[ ]
Making audio tapes, CD and other recordings	[ ]
Entering data into database	[ ]

Others (Please specify) ____

7. Indicate the format(s) in which the records the Department receive or create. ***You are allowed to only one***

Print or paper based format only	[ ]
Electronic format only	[ ]
Hybrid: both print and electronic	[ ]

Others (Please specify) ____

SECTION C: Records preservation strategies

8. What equipment do you use to keep electronic records? ***You are allowed to tick more than one by selecting all that apply***

Computer/laptop	[ ]
Cloud storage	[ ]
Electronic Recording Delivery System (ERDs)	[ ]
Flash disks	[ ]
External had drive	[ ]

Compact Discs (CDs) [ ]
Secure Digital Cards (SD cards) [ ]

Others (Please specify) ____

9. What are the equipment for keeping the records traditionally? ***You are allowed to tick more than one by selecting all that apply***

Shelves [ ]
Hard files [ ]
Cartons [ ]
Hard containers [ ]
Folders [ ]

Others (Please specify) ____

10. Does Kasungu Municipal Council have a working records information centre or records registry? Select one option only

Yes [ ]
No [ ]

11. How are records at Kasungu Municipal Council (KMC) classified? ***You are allowed to tick more than one by selecting all that apply***

General to Specific [ ]
Alphabetization [ ]
Numbering [ ]
Subject specific [ ]
None [ ]
Others (Please specify) ____

12. Please indicate the extent to which it takes for a record to be retrieved or accessed from any storage facilities available in your department. ***Select one option only***

0 – 5 minutes [ ]
6 – 10 minutes [ ]
11 – 20 minutes [ ]
21 – 30 minutes [ ]
More than ½ hr [ ]

13. Is there a functional record management policy at Kasungu Municipal Council? ***Select one option only***

Yes [ ]
No [ ]

SECTION D: Factors influencing records management practices at Kasungu Municipal Council

14. What are the encouraging factors influencing records management practices at Kasungu Municipal Council? ***You are allowed to tick more than one by selecting all that apply***

    Transparency of business transactions [ ]
    Accountability of business undertakings [ ]
    Compliance with statutory requirements [ ]
    Enhancing information access [ ]
    For litigation purposes [ ]
    Others (Please specify)

    ____

factors influencing records management practices at Kasungu Municipal Council

15. What are the challenges of records management practices at Kasungu Municipal Council

    Technical and human expertise [ ]
    Management commitment [ ]
    Finances and other resources [ ]
    Policy and legislative guidelines [ ]
    ICT infrastructure [ ]

Others (Please specify)

____

Appendix 3: Interview guide for Key Informants
SECTION A: Demographic Information

1. Gender
2. Age ground
3. Academic Qualification
4. Position

SECTION B: Types of records created or received at Kasungu Municipal Council

5. How are records created and captured in your department?

SECTION C: Records preservation strategies

6. What are the storage facilities for records?
7. How are such storage facilities secure from internal and external interference?
8. Are there any records management policies, guidelines and standards put in place to facilitate storage (records equipment), maintenance and disposal of records at Kasungu Municipal Council?
9. Is there a classification system put in place to facilitate organization of records?

SECTION D: Factors influencing records management practices at Kasungu Municipal Council

10. What are the encouraging factors influencing records management practices at Kasungu Municipal council?
11. What are the challenges militating against operations of records management practices at Kasungu Municipal Council?

Appendix 4: MZUNIREC approval letter

MZUZU UNIVERSITY

DIRECTORATE OF RESEARCH

Mzuzu University
Private Bag 201
Luwinga
Mzuzu 2
MALAWI
TEL 01 320 722
FAX 01 320 648

MZUZU UNIVERSITY RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (MZUNIREC)

Ref No: MZUNIREC/DOR/23/06 **13/01/2023.**

Naris Kapanda,
Mzuzu University,
P/Bag 201,
Luwinga,
Mzuzu 2.

naris92@gmail.com

Dear Naris,

RESEARCH ETHICS AND REGULATORY APPROVAL AND PERMIT FOR PROTOCOL REF NO: MZUNIREC/DOR/23/06: RECORDS MANAGEMENT PRACTICES AT KASUNGU MUNICIPAL COUNCIL

Having satisfied all the relevant ethical and regulatory requirements, I am pleased to inform you that the above referred research protocol has officially been approved. You are now permitted to proceed with its implementation. Should there be any amendments to the approved protocol in the course of implementing it, you shall be required to seek approval of such amendments before implementation of the same.

This approval is valid for one year from the date of issuance of this approval. If the study goes beyond one year, an annual approval for continuation shall be required to be sought from the Mzuzu University Research Ethics Committee (MZUNIREC) in a format that is available at the Secretariat. Once the study is finalised, you are required to furnish the Committee with a final report of the study. The Committee reserves the right to carry out compliance inspection of this approved protocol at any time as may be deemed by it. As such, you are expected to properly maintain all study documents including consent forms.

Wishing you a successful implementation of your study.

Committee Address:
Secretariat, Mzuzu University Research Ethics Committee, P/Bag 201, Luwinga, Mzuzu 2; E-mail address: mzunirec@mzuni.ac.mw

Yours Sincerely,

Gift Mbwele

SENIOR RESEARCH ETHICS ADMINISTRATOR

For: CHAIRMAN OF MZUNIREC

MZUZU UNIVERSITY
RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

13 JAN 2023

PRIVATE BAG 201, LUWINGA
MZUZU 2

Appendix 5: Gatekeepers' letter

Naris Kapanda
Airtel Malawi PLC
P.O Box 57
Lilongwe
0993988092/0884511112
kapandanaris@gmail.com

THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE ©
KASUNGU MUNICIPAL COUNCIL
04 APR 2023
P.O. BOX 333
KASUNGU

Kasungu Municipal Council
P. O Box 333
Kasungu
03rd April, 2024

SUBJECT: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT A RESEARCH AT KASUNGU MUNICIPAL COUNCIL

I am **Naris Kapanda**, a Master of Library and Information Science student from Mzuzu University. I am seeking permission to do research at Kasungu municipal council.

I am conducting research on Records management practices. This research aims to investigate records management practices at Kasungu Municipal Council. I am interested in Kasungu municipal council because very few or no studies have been conducted on records management practices in municipal councils. Another reason for conducting this study at this institution is to appreciate how records are being managed and understand the procedures they follow when managing records.

The research will entail collecting data from staff members including top senior management staff that are involved in the records management practices. Therefore, I request permission to get access to some documents for example the policy if any.

I will invite staff members from your institution to participate in this studyIf they agree, they will be asked toanswer questionnaires; and some will be interviewed. The recipients will be required to spend at least 10 minutes for a questionnaire and for those interviewed will be required to spend about 15 minutesand this will be happening on Kasungu Municipal Council premises and during working hours. And for interviews, the respondent will be audio recorded.

Participants will be asked to give their written or verbal consent before the research begins. Their responses will be treated confidentially, and identities (their names)will be anonymous unless. Individual privacy will be maintained in all published and written data resulting from the study.

I therefore request permission in writing to conduct my research at your institution. The permission letter should be on your organization's headed paper, signed and dated, and specifically referring to myself by name and the title of my study.

Please let me know if you require any further information. I look forward to your response as soon as is convenient

Yours sincerely,

Naris Kapanda.

kapandanaris@gmail.com

Appendix 6: Editor's report

April 19, 2024

To whom it may concern

Dear Sir/Madam,

Editor's Report on a Dissertation titled "Records Management Practices at Kasungu Municipal Council, Malawi"

I write to confirm that I edited the dissertation mentioned above, which was submitted in the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in partial fulfilment for the award of Master of Library and Information Science at Mzuzu University.

As requested, I conducted an in-depth proofreading / light editing service, which is reserved for well-written work that, nevertheless, still requires a thorough proofread and final check. This included minor editing and proofing for spelling mistakes, typos, punctuation problems, capitalization errors, clumsy grammar and overall flow and readability.

In general, I have corrected language errors and made suggestions where necessary. And please feel free to consult me wherever you feel the need.

Yours Sincerely,

Wesley Paul Macheso

Associate Professor and Head of the Department of Literary Studies, University of Malawi

Cell: +265 999 761 296, Email: wesleymacheso@yahoo.com / wmacheso@cc.ac.mw

About the Editor

Wesley Macheso is a Malawian writer, editor, and academic. He holds a PhD in English Studies from Stellenbosch University, and he is an Associate Professor of Literature and Creative Writing at the University of Malawi. He is an Honorary Fellow in Writing of the University of Iowa (USA). His short story "This Land is Mine" was shortlisted for the 2015 Short Story Day Africa Prize and is published in *Water: new short story fiction from Africa* (2016). He won the 2015 Peer Gynt Literary Award for his children's book *Akuzike and the Gods* (2017). Some of his poems are anthologised in *Wreaths for a Wayfarer* (2020), and his collection of poetry, *A Masquerade of Spirits* was published in 2020. He also made the shortlist for the Miles Morland Writing Scholarship, 2020. Some of his work can be read online on *African Writer*, *Brittle Paper*, *Storymoja*, *The Kalahari Review*, and *Agbowo* magazines. He edits for www.africanwriter.com and www.africainwords.com