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(SLADS) – BAGAMOYO

RESEARCH REPORT ON:

AN ASSESSMENT OF RECORDS RETENTION AND DISPOSAL PRACTICES IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT OFFICES:

A CASE STUDY OF BAGAMOYO DISTRICT COUNCIL

BY

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A research report to be submitted at the School of Library, Archives and Documentation Studies (SLADS) seeking approval to undertake a study as a Partial Fulfillment of requirements for the Award of Diploma in Records and archives management

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CERTIFICATION

The undersigned certifies that he/she has read and hereby recommends for acceptance by the School of Library, Archives and Documentation Studies (SLADS), a research report entitle**d "*Assessment of Records Retention and Disposal Practices in Local Government Offices: A Case Study of Bagamoyo District Council,"***

This report is submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the Ordinary Diploma in Records and Archives Management.

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DEDICATION

This research report is dedicated to my beloved parents, family members, friends, and everyone who provided encouragement, support, and inspiration throughout my academic journey. Their prayers, guidance, moral support, and continuous motivation greatly contributed to the successful completion of this study.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATION

BDC	Bagamoyo District Council
ERM	Electronic Records Management
ERMS	Electronic Records Management System
ISO	International Organization for Standardization
LGA	Local Government Authority
NARA	National Archives and Records Administration
RAM	Records and Archives Management
RAMD	Records and Archives Management Department
SLADS	School of Library, Archives and Documentation Studies
URT	United Republic of Tanzania

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ABSTRACT

This study assessed records retention and disposal practices in local government offices using Bagamoyo District Council as a case study. The study was guided by four specific objectives to examine the existing records retention practices, assess the procedures used in records disposal, identify the challenges affecting effective records retention and disposal, and suggest strategies for improving these practices' descriptive research design with both qualitative and quantitative approaches was employed. Data were collected from 50 respondents through questionnaires, interviews, and observation. The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and thematic. The findings revealed that although the council has records retention schedules and disposal procedures, their implementation is constrained by inadequate staff training, limited financial resources, insufficient storage facilities, weak monitoring mechanisms, and low awareness of records management policies. The study also found that some records are retained beyond their approved retention periods, leading to congestion in registry offices and reduced efficiency in records retrieval. The study concludes that effective records retention and disposal are essential for improving accountability, transparency, administrative efficiency, and compliance with legal and regulatory requirements in local government offices. It recommends regular staff training, strengthening compliance with records management policies, improving storage infrastructure, increasing financial support, adopting electronic records management systems, and conducting regular monitoring and audits to enhance records retention and disposal practices.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the background of the Study, statements of the problem, research objectives, and research questions, significance of the study, scope limitations and definition of key terms.

1.1background of the study

Records retention and disposal are essential components of records management in public sector institutions. They help organizations determine how long records should be kept and when they should be safely destroyed or preserved permanently. In government institutions, records are created daily during the process of delivering services, making decisions, managing finances, and implementing policies. These records serve as evidence of government activities and transactions. Therefore, proper retention ensures that records remain available for as long as they are needed for administrative, legal, financial, and historical purposes, while proper disposal prevents the unnecessary accumulation of records that no longer have value (ISO 15489-1, 2016; Franks, 2018; Shepherd & Yeo, 2003).

Globally, countries such as the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, and Australia have well-established records retention schedules supported by comprehensive legislation and professional oversight bodies (National Archives UK, 2020; National Archives of Australia, 2021; NARA, 2020). These frameworks promote standardized appraisal, retention, and disposal practices across government institutions (Franks, 2018; Shepherd & Yeo, 2003). Despite the availability of such frameworks, studies indicate that many public sector institutions struggle with inconsistent application of retention schedules, poor documentation of disposal actions, and limited staff awareness of records management policies (McLeod & Childs, 2013; Franks, 2018; Smallwood, 2019). These challenges undermine the effectiveness of public administration and weaken institutional accountability (Ngulube, 2019; Shepherd & Yeo, 2003).

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In Africa, the challenges surrounding records retention and disposal are more pronounced due to limited financial resources, weak enforcement of records legislation, inadequate infrastructure, and insufficient professional capacity (Mnjama & Wamukoya, 2007; Ngoepe & Keakopa, 2011; Asogwa, 2019). Research conducted in South Africa, Kenya, Ghana, Botswana, and Nigeria reveals that local government authorities often retain records longer than required or dispose of them arbitrarily without proper authorization, appraisal, or documentation (Ngoepe & Van der Walt, 2010; Kemoni, 2012; Asogwa, 2019; Mosweu & Simon, 2018). Such practices expose institutions to legal, financial, and accountability risks and compromise the preservation of records with enduring value (Ngulube, 2019; Mnjama & Wamukoya, 2019). The transition from paper-based systems to hybrid and electronic records environments has further complicated retention and disposal decisions in many African public sector institutions (Mosweu & Simon, 2018; Ngoepe, 2017; Franks, 2018). Electronic records require specialized retention schedules, secure storage environments, and reliable systems for authentic destruction and long-term preservation (ISO 16175-1, 2020; Smallwood, 2019). However, studies show that many public offices in Africa lack electronic records management systems (ERMS), trained personnel, and policies governing the retention and disposal of digital records (Kemoni, 2012; Ngoepe, 2017; Mosweu & Simon, 2018).

In Tanzania, a comprehensive legal and policy framework designed to ensure that records are created, maintained, retained, and disposed of in a systematic and controlled manner guides the management of public records. The Records and Archives Management Act No. 3 of 2002 provides the primary legal foundation for public records management in the country. The Act established the Records and Archives Management Department (RAMD) under the President's Office – Public Service Management and Good Governance, which is responsible for overseeing records and archives management practices across all public institutions, including Local Government Authorities. RAMD provides professional guidance, standards, and regulatory oversight to ensure that public offices comply with approved records management procedures and policies (URT, 2002; RAMD, 2011; URT, 2017).

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Through this framework, government institutions are required to properly create, maintain, classify, and safeguard records to support accountability and transparency in public administration (Mnjama, 2003; Kemoni & Ngulube, 2008).

Furthermore, the Government of Tanzania has developed several policy and procedural frameworks to strengthen records management and recordkeeping practices in public offices. The National Records and Archives Management Policy and the Records Management Procedures Manual issued by RAMD provide detailed guidelines on the creation, classification, retention, appraisal, and disposal of government records. These frameworks require public institutions to implement approved records retention and disposal schedules, which specify the length of time records should be retained before they are either transferred to archival custody for permanent preservation or disposed of through authorized destruction procedures (RAMD, 2011; URT, 2011; IRMT, 2009). Proper implementation of these policies helps to prevent unnecessary accumulation of records, improve access to information, and ensure that records of enduring administrative, legal, and historical value are preserved for future reference (Ngulube, 2015; Mnjama, 2003).

1.2 Statements of the problem

Despite the existence of records management policies and guidelines in Tanzania, many local government offices continued to face challenges in implementing effective records retention and disposal practices. Proper retention and disposal of records were essential for ensuring that records were kept for the required period and were disposed of in an authorized manner (URT, 2002). However, in many government institutions there was poor adherence to approved retention schedules, accumulation of inactive records, and lack of clear procedures for records disposal (Ndenje-Sichalwe, 2017; Ngulube, 2020). As a result, records offices often experienced congestion, difficulty in retrieving information, and increased risks of loss or damage to important records. These problems negatively affected administrative efficiency, accountability, legal compliance, and the quality of public service delivery (Mnjama, 2016).

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Although the Records and Archives Management Act No. 3 of 2002 and guidelines issued by the Records and Archives Management Department provided a clear framework for the management, retention, and disposal of public records, implementation of these guidelines remained a challenge in many local government authorities (URT, 2002; RAMD, 2011). Several studies examined records management practices in government institutions in Tanzania and other African countries. However, limited research focused specifically on records retention and disposal practices at the district council level, including Bagamoyo District Council (Ndenje-Sichalwe, 2017; Ngulube, 2020). This lack of empirical evidence created risks such as information loss, audit queries, and possible legal disputes arising from improper records management practices.

Objective of the Study

1.3 General Objective

To assess records retention and disposal practices in Bagamoyo District Council

1.4 specific objectives

i. To examine existing records retention practices in Bagamoyo District Council
ii. To assess procedures used in records disposal in the council.
iii. To identify challenges affecting effective retention and disposal practices.
iv. To suggest strategies for improving records retention and disposal practices

1.5 Research questions

i. What records retention practices are used in Bagamoyo District Council?
ii. What procedures are followed in disposing records?
iii. What challenges affect effective retention and disposal of records?
iv. What measures can improve records retention and disposal practices?

1.6 Significance of the study

Policy makers

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Policy makers benefited from this study because it provided evidence about how records retention and disposal policies were implemented at the local government level. The results revealed gaps between existing policies and actual practices. This information helped policy maker's review and improves records management policies, develop clearer guidelines, and allocate resources for proper records management systems. In this way, the study contributed to strengthening governance, transparency, and accountability in public institutions.

Local government offices

This study was important for local government offices because it helped them understand how well their records retention and disposal practices were being implemented. Proper management of records ensured that important information was kept safely for the required period and was disposed of when it was no longer needed. By assessing existing practices, local government offices identified weaknesses such as poor storage, accumulation of unnecessary records, and improper disposal methods.

Records managers

For records managers, the study provided useful insights into the effectiveness of the retention and disposal procedures used in local government institutions. It helped them understand the challenges they faced in implementing records management policies and retention schedules. The study also guided records managers in improving filing systems, storage practices, and disposal procedures to ensure records were managed according to professional standards.

Researchers

The study served as a valuable source of information for researchers who were interested in records management, public administration, and information management. It provided empirical data and analysis on records retention and disposal practices within local government offices. Researchers used the findings as a reference for further studies, comparisons, and expansion of knowledge in the field of records management.

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Students in Records Management

For students studying records and archives management, this research offered practical knowledge about how records retention and disposal were carried out in government institutions. It helped them understand the challenges and realities of managing records in the public sector. The study also served as a learning resource and reference material for academic assignments, research projects, and professional deIvelopment in the field of records management.

1.7 Scope of the study

The study focused on records retention and disposal practices at Bagamoyo District Council. It examined records management policies, compliance with retention and disposal procedures, operational challenges, and strategies for improving records retention and disposal practices.

1.8 Limitation of the study

Time Constraint

The study period was relatively short, which restricted the researcher's ability to observe long term records retention and disposal practices.

Limited Access to Confidential Records

Some records were classified, confidential, or restricted due to legal, ethical, or security reasons. This limited the researcher's ability to review all relevant documents, particularly those involving personnel, legal matters, or sensitive government operations. Consequently, the study relied more on secondary data and staff reports than on the direct examination of records, which affected the completeness of the findings.

Possible Respondent Bias

Information collected through interviews and questionnaires was influenced by some respondents' fear of blame, concerns about job security, or the desire to portray their office in a positive manner. This led to over reporting of compliance with retention

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policies and underreporting of challenges and irregular practices. Such bias affected the reliability and objectivity of the data.

Inadequate Documentation

Some local government offices lacked proper or updated documentation, such as approved retention schedules, disposal authorities, and records management policies. The absence of these documents limited the availability of reliable data and made it difficult to assess compliance with legal and professional standards. It also hindered comparisons across departments and institutions.

1.9 Definition of key term

Records refer to the any recorded information, regardless of format or medium, created, received, and maintained as evidence of business activities or legal obligations, or Records are any form of documented information paper files, electronic documents, emails, audio recordings, or databases that an organization creates or receives during its operations. They serve as official evidence of decisions, transactions, and actions, and must be kept to support accountability, legal compliance, and service deliver (ISO ,2016).

Records Management

Records management is the professional discipline responsible for controlling records throughout their lifecycle. This includes how records are created, classified, stored, accessed, protected, retained, and eventually disposed of. Effective records management ensures information is reliable, secure, and available when needed. (ISO.2016).

Records retention

The practice of keeping records for a specified period to meet legal, administrative, fiscal, or historical requirements. Or Records retention refers to the practice of keeping records for a defined period based on legal, administrative, financial, or historical needs. Retention ensures that records are available for audits, legal cases,

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policy reference, and institutional memory, while avoiding unnecessary storage of outdated materials. (Shepherd. 2003)

Retention schedules

Is a list of records of an organization arranged in a series and sub series of which pre determine dates are set for destruction or being preserved permanently if they appear to have lifelong value. Or a formal document that specifies how long different categories of records should be kept and what action should be taken at the end of their retention period. (NARA.2018).

Records disposal

The actions taken on records once they have met their retention requirements, including destruction or transfer to archives. (ISO.2016) or Records disposal is the final stage in the records lifecycle. It involves either, secure destruction of records that are no longer needed, or transfer of records with permanent value to archival institutions. Proper disposal reduces storage costs and protects sensitive information.

Records appraisal

The actions taken on records once they have met their retention requirements, including destruction or transfer to archives. (ICA.2016), or records appraisal is the systematic evaluation of records to determine their value and how long they should be kept. Appraisal considers legal, administrative, fiscal, and historical significance to decide whether records should be retained temporarily or preserved permanently.

Compliance

Compliance refers to the organization's adherence to relevant laws, regulations, policies, and standards governing records management. In local government, compliance ensures lawful retention, proper disposal, and protection of citizens' rights and government interests. (ISO.209)

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CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0. Introduction

This chapter reviewed scholarly and professional literature on records retention and disposal practices, with particular emphasis on local government institutions, challenges affecting implementation, and strategies for improving records management practices. It drew from international standards, theoretical perspectives, empirical studies, and legal frameworks relevant to public sector records management.

2.1. Records Retention and Disposal Policies in Public Sector Institutions

Policies provided formal rules governing how records were retained and disposed of. The International Council on Archives (ICA, 2016) stressed that public institutions should establish clear regulatory frameworks to ensure transparency, accountability, and preservation of government memory. Such policies defined retention periods, disposal authorization procedures, and the responsibilities of records personnel.

In Tanzania, public institutions operated under the Records and Archives Management Act No. 3 of 2002, which required government offices to manage records according to approved retention schedules and prohibited the destruction of records without authorization from archival authorities. This legislation ensured standardized retention practices across government agencies.

Ngulube (2012) argued that well-defined records management policies enhanced organizational performance by ensuring that information was accessible, reliable, and legally compliant. Conversely, weak policy enforcement led to poor records handling and the accumulation of inactive files, which undermined organizational efficiency. Ngoepe (2014) further noted that policy frameworks supported governance and service delivery by ensuring that accurate information was available for decision-making, particularly in local government institutions that generated large volumes of administrative, financial, and citizen-related records.

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2.2 Compliance with Retention Schedules and Disposal Procedures

Compliance referred to adherence to approved retention schedules, classification systems, and authorized disposal methods. ARMA International (2017) stated that compliance ensured organizations maintained records only for as long as necessary and disposed of them legally and securely.

Empirical research indicated that compliance levels varied significantly across public institutions. Wamukoya and Mutula (2005) found that many government organizations in Africa possessed retention schedules but failed to implement them effectively due to a lack of awareness and monitoring mechanisms. Similarly, Asogwa (2012) reported that public offices often retained records indefinitely because staff was uncertain about disposal procedures. Popoola (2000) observed that organizations with strong records management cultures demonstrated higher compliance because staff understood their responsibilities and the value of records. Compliance was therefore influenced not only by regulations but also by organizational training, supervision, and institutional commitment.

2.3 Challenges Affecting Effective Records Retention and Disposal Practices

Effective records retention and disposal were essential for accountability, transparency, and efficient service delivery in local government offices. However, the literature showed that many public institutions faced practical and institutional barriers that weakened implementation. These challenges were not only technical problems; they reflected deeper issues related to capacity, resources, governance, and technological readiness.

Inadequate Training and Skills

One of the most significant challenges affecting records retention and disposal was the lack of trained and qualified records management personnel. Mnjama (2003) observed that many public institutions in Africa operated without professionally trained archivists or records managers. As a result, appraisal decisions were often made by staff who did not fully understand retention schedules, legal requirements, or archival principles, in many district councils, registry staff were assigned records

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duties without formal education in records and archives management. They often relied on experience or informal practices rather than professional standards. While experience was important, it did not always equip staff with the knowledge needed to interpret retention schedules accurately or to distinguish between records with temporary value and those requiring permanent preservation.

Without proper training, staff did not always appreciate the legal and administrative importance of retention and disposal decisions. This increased the risk of losing valuable institutional memory and exposed organizations to legal disputes. Professional standards such as ISO 15489 (2016) emphasized that organizations should ensure personnel were competent and adequately trained. Therefore, the lack of training represented a serious compliance gap that affected overall records governance.

Resource Constraints

Another major challenge was inadequate financial and physical resources. Kemoni and Ngulube (2007) reported that many public sector institutions struggled with insufficient funding, limited storage space, and a lack of proper equipment for records management. When registries were overcrowded, it became difficult to separate active, semi-active, and inactive records. As a result, records that should have been disposed of remained in offices for years, creating congestion and making retrieval slow and frustrating.

Resource constraints also affected the ability to implement proper disposal procedures. For example, secure destruction methods such as shredding or incineration required equipment or external services that demanded adequate funding. Without these resources, institutions delayed disposal or conducted it informally, increasing the risk of information leakage. Millar (2017) emphasized that proper storage conditions were essential for preserving the integrity of records. Poor environmental conditions led to deterioration, particularly in paper-based systems common in local government offices. Overall, inadequate resources weakened both retention management and safe disposal practices, directly affecting service delivery and accountability.

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Weak Monitoring and Enforcement

Even where retention schedules and policies existed, weak monitoring and enforcement mechanisms often undermined compliance. The International Records Management Trust (IRMT, 2015) noted that the absence of regular audits and supervision led to inconsistent application of retention rules. In many public institutions, retention schedules were approved but were not actively implemented. Staff ignored retention periods because no one checked whether procedures were being followed. Disposal occurred without proper documentation or authorization.

ARMA International (2017) recommended regular records audits to evaluate compliance and identify weaknesses. However, without internal controls and management oversight, these recommendations remained theoretical. In local government settings, weak enforcement had serious consequences. District councils handled financial records, procurement documents, land records, and citizen information. When disposal was not properly monitored, it led to corruption, disputes, and public mistrust.

Technological Challenges

With the increasing digitization of government operations, technological challenges became a major concern. Millar (2017) warned that electronic records required reliable digital preservation systems to ensure authenticity, integrity, and accessibility over time. Many local government offices lacked Electronic Records Management Systems (ERMS) capable of applying automated retention rules. Without such systems, electronic records accumulated in email inboxes, shared drives, or personal computers without proper classification or retention control.

Wamukoya and Mutula (2005) observed that the absence of technological infrastructure in African public institutions made it difficult to manage electronic records effectively. This created a situation in which digital records were either retained indefinitely or were lost without documentation. Furthermore, electronic disposal required secure deletion methods. Simply deleting a file from a computer

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did not guarantee permanent removal. Without proper systems, sensitive information remained recoverable, posing privacy and security risks.

2 .4 Strategies for improving Retention and disposal practices

Improving records retention and disposal practices in local government offices required more than simply having policies in place. The literature showed that effective improvement depended on strengthening institutional capacity, technology, monitoring systems, and leadership commitment. The following strategies were widely recommended by scholars and professional bodies.

Capacity Building and Training

One of the most critical strategies for improving retention and disposal practices was continuous capacity building. Shepherd and Yeo (2003) emphasized that records management was a professional function that required technical knowledge, especially in appraisal, classification, retention scheduling, and disposal authorization. In many local government offices, registry staff learned through experience rather than formal training. While experience was valuable, it was not always sufficient to handle complex retention decisions, especially in environments where both paper and electronic records existed. Without proper knowledge, staff retained records longer than necessary, destroyed records prematurely, or failed to follow legal procedures.

Training also built confidence and accountability among staff. When employees understood why retention and disposal mattered, they were more likely to comply with procedures. Therefore, capacity building was viewed not as a one-time activity but as an ongoing investment in institutional effectiveness.

Implementation of Electronic Records Management Systems (ERMS)

With the increasing use of digital technologies in public administration, electronic records became a major part of government operations. Wamukoya and Mutula (2005) argued that automated retention controls significantly improved compliance because they reduced human error and manual inefficiencies. Technology acted as a control mechanism. Instead of relying entirely on human memory or manual

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registers, electronic systems tracked records systematically. This improved efficiency, transparency, and accountability.

However, implementing ERMS required proper planning, funding, and training. Technology alone could not solve records management problems if staff did not understand how to use it effectively. Therefore, ERMS needed to be integrated with training and policy enforcement mechanisms.

Regular Records Audits

Policies and retention schedules were only effective if they were monitored. ARMA International (2017) recommended regular records audits to assess compliance with retention and disposal procedures. Audits helped identify weaknesses before they became serious problems. For example, an audit revealed that certain departments were retaining records beyond their retention periods or were failing to document disposal decisions.

Regular audits also promoted a culture of accountability. When staff knew that records management practices were monitored, they were more likely to follow procedures carefully. In local government settings, audits were particularly important because councils handled public funds and sensitive citizen information.

Strengthening Policy Enforcement

The International Records Management Trust (IRMT, 2015) stressed that having a policy was not enough; it had to be actively enforced. In many institutions, policies existed only on paper and were rarely implemented in practice. Effective enforcement created consistency across departments. Without enforcement, different offices interpreted retention rules differently, leading to confusion and inconsistency.

In the local government context, strong policy enforcement protected institutions from legal disputes, corruption risks, and the loss of institutional memory. It ensured that all departments operated under the same standards.

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Leadership and Resource Support

Perhaps the most important strategy for sustainable improvement was leadership commitment. Ngoepe (2014) argued that records management success depended heavily on institutional support from top management. Ngoepe (2014) further noted that leadership commitment was the backbone of sustainable records management. Without adequate resources, including budget, storage facilities, and technology, and qualified staff, improvement strategies remained theoretical. When leaders championed records management, they allocated funds, prioritized staff training, and promoted accountability. In practice, this meant that records management was regarded not as a side task but as a core institutional function supported by senior management. Leadership set the tone for organizational culture. When management viewed records management as a minor administrative task, staff did not always take it seriously. However, when leaders emphasized accountability and transparency, records management became an organizational priority.

Resource support was equally important. Even well-trained staff could not perform effectively without proper facilities, secure storage, and appropriate technological tools. Sustainable improvement therefore required both financial investment and strong managerial commitment.

2.5 Theoretical Framework

2.5.1 Records lifecycle

This study was guided by the Records Life Cycle Theory, which explained how records moved through defined stages from creation to final disposition. conceptualized this theory around three broad stages: the current stage, where records were actively created and used to support daily operations; the semi-current stage, where records were referred to less frequently but retained for administrative, legal, or fiscal reference; and the non-current stage, where records were either transferred to archival custody for permanent preservation or destroyed once they no longer served a useful purpose. This model, expanded by ICA (2016), positioned retention scheduling and disposal as the final and most critical stages of the life

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cycle, since decisions made at this point determined whether records with continuing value were preserved or permanently lost.

The life cycle concept was directly relevant to this study because retention and disposal could only be understood as one stage within a broader continuum linking records creation, use, and appraisal. Where local government offices lacked clarity on which stage a record had reached, records were either kept beyond their useful life or disposed of prematurely (Shepherd & Yeo, 2003). Applying the life cycle concept therefore helped explain why the weaknesses discussed earlier in this chapter, such as limited staff training and weak monitoring, translated into registry congestion, loss of institutional memory, and non-compliance at Bagamoyo District Council.

It was also worth noting that later theorists, notably Upward (1996), proposed the records continuum model as an alternative to the linear life cycle, arguing that records management, particularly in electronic environments, did not always proceed in strict sequence but occurred across overlapping dimensions. This study relied primarily on the life cycle concept because records at Bagamoyo District Council remained largely paper-based, while acknowledging that the continuum perspective would become increasingly relevant as the council transitioned toward electronic records management.

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Figure 2.1 Records lifecycle.

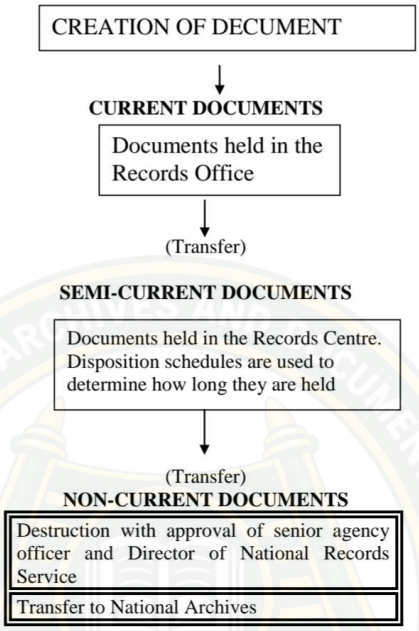


Figure 2.1. Retrieved from Charles G. Magaya

2.6 Conceptual Framework

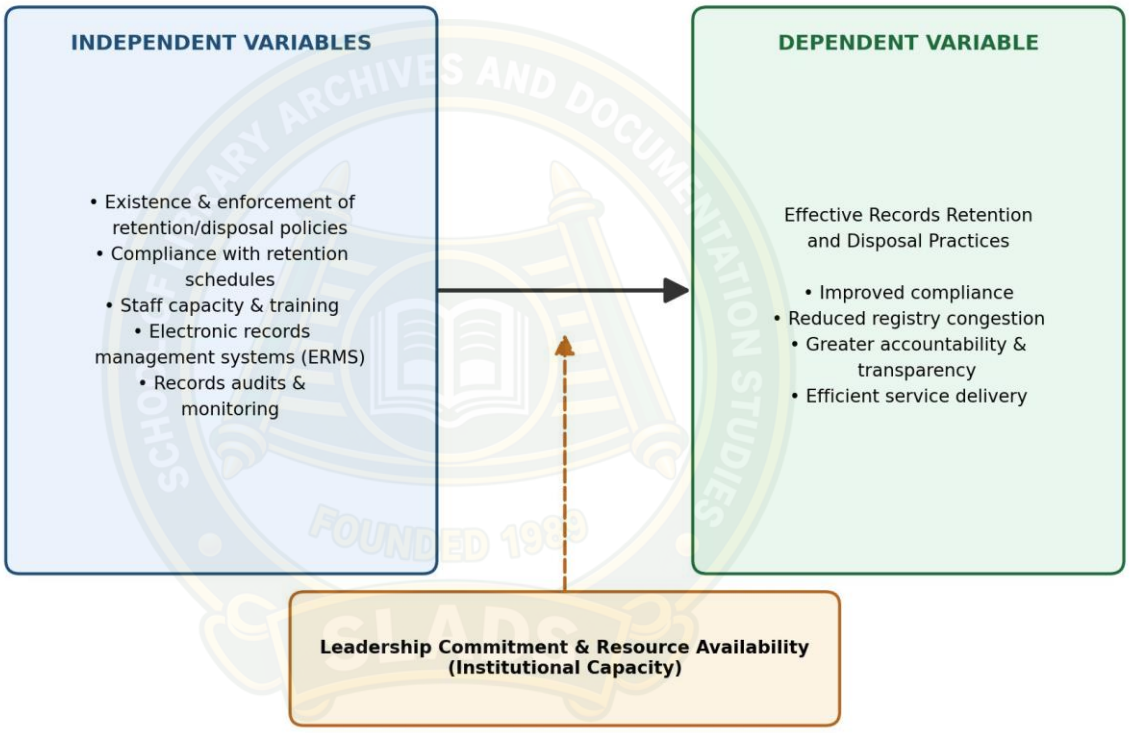
A conceptual framework presented the researcher's understanding of how the variables in a study related to one another and guided the interpretation of findings (Ngulube, 2012). For this study, the framework linked the independent variables identified in the literature review to the dependent variable of effective records retention and disposal practices.

The independent variables comprised the existence and enforcement of records retention and disposal policies (URT, 2002; ICA, 2016), compliance with approved retention schedules (ARMA International, 2017), staff capacity and training (Shepherd & Yeo, 2003), the availability of electronic records management systems (Wamukoya & Mutula, 2005), and regular records audits and monitoring (ARMA International, 2017). These variables were expected to jointly influence the

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dependent variable, measured through improved compliance, reduced congestion, and greater accountability and transparency in service delivery. Leadership commitment and resource availability (Ngoepe, 2014) were treated as intervening variables that strengthened or weakened the relationship between the independent and dependent variables, as illustrated in figure 2.2

Figure 2.2: Conceptual Framework Showing the Relationship Between Records Retention and Disposal Variables



Retrieved from miles 2020

As shown in Figure 2.1, effective records retention and disposal practices at Bagamoyo District Council depended on the combined influence of policy enforcement, compliance, staff capacity, technology, and monitoring, operating within an institutional environment shaped by leadership commitment and resource availability.

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2.7 Research Gap

Although extensive literature existed on records management policies and compliance, few studies had examined implementation at decentralized local government authorities in Tanzania. There was limited empirical evidence on how district councils applied retention schedules, complied with disposal procedures, and addressed implementation challenges. This study addressed that gap by focusing on Bagamoyo District Council.

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CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This section provided the methods, techniques, and procedures that were applied in conducting the study. It highlighted the methodological process, including the research design, research approach, area of the study, population of the study, sample size, sampling techniques, data collection methods, data processing and analysis, data quality control, and ethical considerations.

3.1 Research Design

Research design refers to the overall plan or structure that guides how research is conducted to answer research questions and achieve the study objectives (Kothari, 2004). In this study, a descriptive research design was used because it helped the researcher describe and assess the existing records retention and disposal practices in local government offices. The design enabled the researcher to obtain detailed information about current procedures, challenges faced by staff, and the level of compliance with records management policies at Bagamoyo District Council.

3.2 Research Approach

The research approach defines the method of inquiry used to investigate the research problem (Bryman, 2016). This study adopted a mixed-methods approach, combining both qualitative and quantitative methods to gain a holistic understanding of records retention and disposal practices. The mixed-methods approach was selected because it combined the strengths of qualitative insights and quantitative data, allowing for a more comprehensive analysis.

3.3 Area of the Study

The area of the study refers to the geographical location or institutional setting where the research was conducted (Kothari, 2004). The study was conducted at Bagamoyo District Council in Pwani Region, Tanzania. The council was selected because it was responsible for the creation, maintenance, retention, and disposal of administrative,

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financial, and personnel records in accordance with national policies and the Records and Archives Management Act. The council generated large volumes of records, making it suitable for assessing records retention and disposal practices.

3.4 Population of the Study

Population refers to the entire group of individuals, objects, or elements that share common characteristics relevant to the study (Creswell, 2014). The target population included records management officers, registry staff, administrative officers, and heads of departments. These individuals were directly involved in the creation, maintenance, appraisal, retention, and disposal of records. Their inclusion ensured that data were obtained from knowledgeable and relevant respondents. The study population was approximately 200 staff members and other employees.

3.5 Sample Size

Sample size refers to the number of respondents selected from the population to participate in the study (Kothari, 2004). In this study, the sample size was fifty (50) respondents. The sample included twenty (20) records managers and registry staff, fifteen (15) administrative officers, and fifteen (15) management personnel.

3.6 Sampling Techniques

Sampling techniques refer to the procedures used to select a subset of individuals from the population for participation in the study (Bryman, 2012). This study used both probability and non-probability sampling techniques.

3.6.1 Purposive Sampling

Purposive sampling is a non-probability technique where participants are selected based on their knowledge and relevance to the study (Creswell, 2014). It was used to select records officers and heads of departments because they possessed specialized knowledge regarding records retention and disposal policies.

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3.6.2 Simple Random Sampling

Simple random sampling is a probability technique where each member of the population has an equal chance of being selected (Kothari, 2004). It was used to select registry staff in order to reduce bias and enhance fairness.

3.7 Data Collection Methods

Data collection methods refer to systematic techniques used to gather relevant information for answering research questions. The study used both primary and secondary data collection methods.

3.7.1 Primary Data

Primary data refers to original information collected directly from respondents by the researcher for the specific purpose of the study (Creswell, 2014). Primary data were collected using questionnaires and interviews.

3.7.1.1 Questionnaires

A questionnaire is a data collection tool consisting of a series of questions (Dillman, Smyth, & Christian, 2014). This study utilized structured questionnaires to collect quantitative data. The questionnaires were distributed to selected staff members to gather their views and experiences regarding records retention and disposal practices in their offices. Questionnaires were adopted because they allowed the collection of standardized data from a relatively large number of respondents within a short period, thereby facilitating the analysis of trends and patterns.

3.7.1.2 Interview Method

Babbie (2015) defines an interview as a method of obtaining data by talking directly to respondents. In this study, interviews were conducted with records officers and management staffs at Bagamoyo District Council who were directly involved in records retention and disposal practices. The interviews were conducted through face-to-face interaction to obtain detailed and in-depth information. The interview guide contained both structured and semi-structured questions, which were administered to the respondents. Interviews provided detailed information, achieved

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a high response rate, and offered greater flexibility than many other data collection methods.

3.8 Secondary data

Secondary data refers to information that has already been collected and documented by other researchers, institutions, or organizations (Kothari, 2004). In this study, secondary data were obtained from government reports, records management policies, retention schedules, books, journals, and official documents related to records management. Important documents such as the Records and Archives Management Act No. 3 of 2002, guidelines issued by the Records and Archives Management Department (RAMD), and other academic publications on records management were reviewed.

3.9 Data Processing and Analysis

Data processing involves organizing and preparing data for analysis (Creswell, 2018). The collected data were processed and analyzed using both quantitative and qualitative techniques. Quantitative data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), while qualitative data were analyzed thematically to identify patterns and generate meaningful insights.

3.10 Research Ethics

Research ethics involves ensuring that a study is conducted with integrity and respect for participants (Resnik, 2018). Ethical principles were observed throughout the study. Informed consent was obtained from all participants before data collection. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained, and participants' privacy was protected. The researcher also ensured that the study was conducted honestly, fairly, and in accordance with accepted ethical

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CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the analysis and interpretation of data collected from the study on the assessment of records retention and disposal practices in local government offices, with specific reference to the Bagamoyo District Council. The chapter is organized to provide a clear and detailed examination of the demographic characteristics of respondents, the existing records retention and disposal policies, the level of staff awareness regarding retention schedules, current disposal practices, challenges encountered in implementing retention schedules, consequences of poor disposal practices, and recommended strategies for improvement. Data were collected from 50 respondents comprising records and archives officers, managers and supervisors, IT officers, and other administrative staff within the Bagamoyo District Council. Each section includes tables, data interpretation, and additional observations gathered from interviews with key informants. The findings are analyzed and discussed in relation to existing literature on records management in local government settings.

4.2 Demographic Information

4.2.1 Gender Distribution of Respondents

The first question in the questionnaire asked respondents to indicate their gender. This information is important for understanding the composition of the workforce responsible for records management at the Bagamoyo district Council, and for ensuring that the findings represent the views of both male and female staff members. The results are presented in Table 4.1 below.

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Table 4:1 Gender Distribution of Respondents(N=50)

Gender	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	28	56.0
Female	22	44.0
Total	50	100.0

Source: Field Data 2026

As shown in Table 4.1, the majority of respondents were male, comprising 28 (56%) of the total sample, while 22 (44%) were female. Although males slightly outnumbered females, both genders were substantially represented, indicating that records management responsibilities at the Bagamoyo District Council are shared across gender lines.

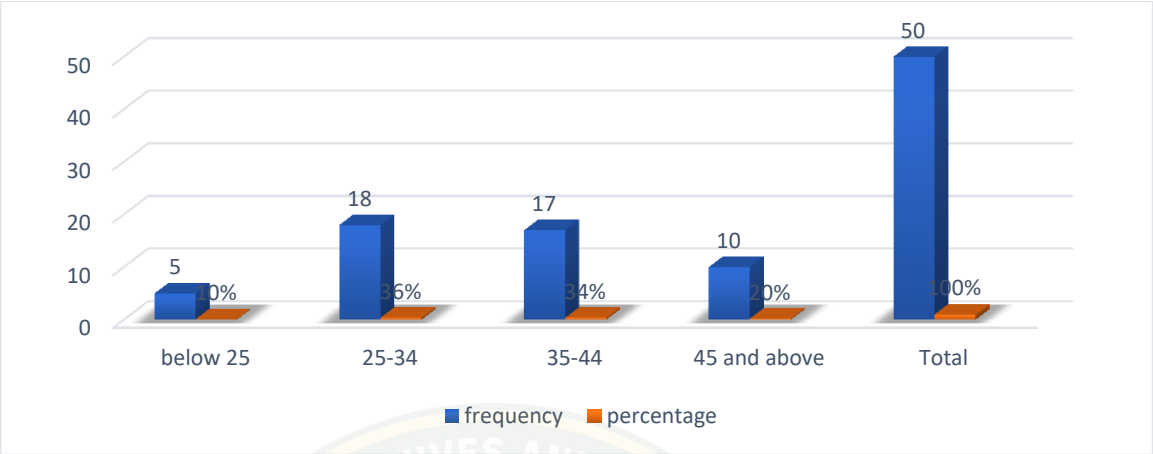
The moderate gender gap observed may reflect broader workforce trends in local government institutions in Tanzania, where men have historically occupied a larger proportion of administrative and records management roles. Nevertheless, the significant representation of female respondents ensures that the study captures a diversity of perspectives on records retention and disposal practices. This balanced participation reduces the risk of gender bias in the interpretation of findings.

4.2.2 Age Distribution of Respondents

The second question aimed to determine the age distribution of respondents. Understanding the age profile of staff involved in records management is important, as it can influence attitudes toward modern records practices, familiarity with digital tools, and experience with established retention procedures. The findings are presented in Table 4.2 below.

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Figure 4.3, Age Distribution of Respondents



Source: Field Data, 2026

figure 4.3 reveals that the largest group of respondents, 18 (36%), were aged between 25 and 34 years, followed closely by 17 (34%) in the 35–44 age group. Respondents aged 45 years and above accounted for 10 (20%) of the total, while only 5 (10%) were below 25 years of age. This distribution indicates that the workforce engaged in records management at the Bagamoyo District Council is predominantly composed of middle-aged adults.

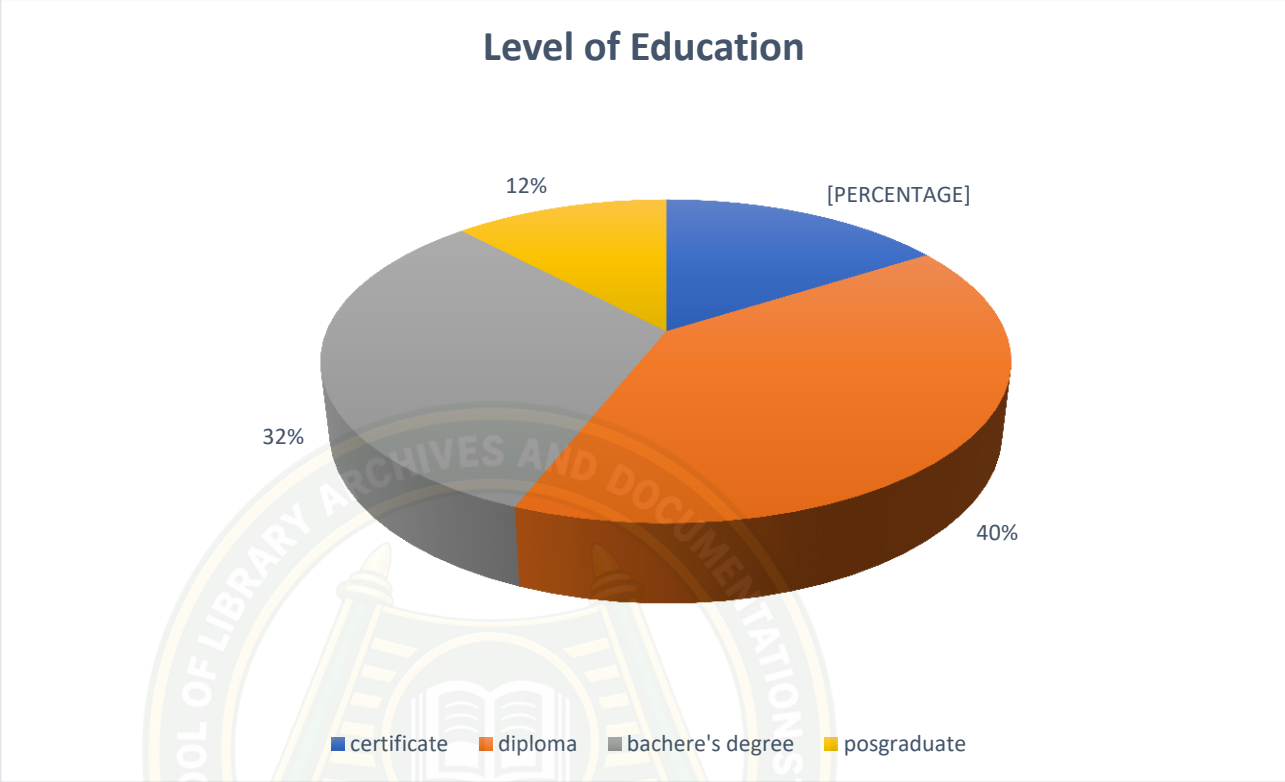
The dominance of the 25–44 age range suggests that most records management staff are in the active and experienced phase of their careers. This age group is likely to have received some formal training in records management and to be familiar with both traditional paper-based systems and emerging digital records technologies. The smaller proportion of younger staff (below 25 years) indicates limited recruitment of new graduates into records management positions, which could affect the long-term capacity of the institution to adopt modern records management practices. Older staff members (45 and above), while fewer in number, bring valuable institutional memory and experience with historical records.

4.2.3 Level of Education

The third question sought to establish the educational qualifications of respondents. Educational background is a significant factor in records management, as it influences staff capacity to understand, implement, and comply with retention and disposal schedules. The findings are presented in Table 4.3 below.

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Figure 4.3 Education level of respondent



Source: Field Data 2026

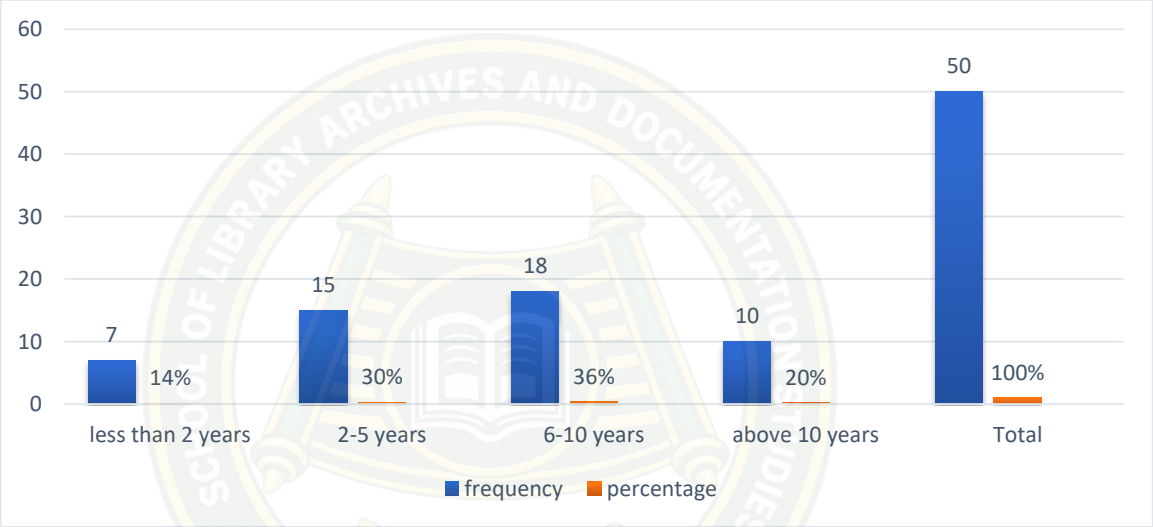
As presented in figure 4.4, the majority of respondents held a diploma qualification, accounting for 20 (40%) of the total. This was followed by those with a bachelor's degree, comprising 16 (32%). Certificate holders made up 8 (16%), while 6 (12%) held postgraduate qualifications. These results indicate that the majority of records management staff at the Bagamoyo District Council possess at least a diploma-level education. The predominance of diploma and degree holders suggests that most staff have a reasonable level of academic preparation to understand records management principles, policies, and legal requirements related to retention and disposal. However, the relatively small proportion of postgraduate-qualified staff (12%) may indicate limited specialized expertise in advanced records and archives management. Key informants noted that while many staff members have general administrative qualifications, very few have received formal training specifically in records management or archival science, which affects the quality of retention and disposal practices in practice.

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4.2.4 Work Experience of Respondents

This question sought to determine the length of work experience among respondents, particularly in roles related to records and information management. Experience is an important indicator of familiarity with institutional records systems, disposal routines, and compliance requirements. The findings are presented in Table 4.4 below.

Figure 4.5: Work Experience of Respondents



Source: Field Data 2026

Figure 4.5 shows that the largest group of respondents, 18 (36%), had between 6 and 10 years of work experience, followed by 15 (30%) with 2 to 5 years of experience. Respondents with more than 10 years of experience accounted for 10 (20%), while 7 (14%) had less than 2 years of experience. These results indicate that the majority of respondents are experienced members of staff with substantial familiarity with the records environment at the Bagamoyo District Council.

The significant proportion of staff with 6 or more years of experience suggests that the institution has a relatively stable records management workforce. This is important for maintaining institutional memory and ensuring continuity in records practices. However, key informants observed that long-serving staff members sometimes rely on informal habits and established routines rather than formally approved retention schedules. This tendency can lead to inconsistencies in how

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records are retained and disposed of across different departments and offices within the Council.

4.3 Existence of Records Retention and Disposal Policy

This question investigated whether the Bagamoyo District Council has a formal written policy governing records retention and disposal. The existence of such a policy is a fundamental requirement for systematic and legally compliant records management. The findings are presented in Table 4.5 below.

Table 4.2Existence of records retention and disposal policy

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes_ a written policy exists	18	36.0
Yes_ but is outdated	12	24.0
No written policy exists	14	28.0
Not sure/ unaware of any policy	6	12.0
Total	50	100.0

Source: Field Data 2026

Table 4.2 reveals that only 18 (36%) of respondents confirmed the existence of a current written retention and disposal policy. A further 12 (24%) acknowledged that a policy exists but stated that it is outdated. A substantial proportion of respondents, 14 (28%), indicated that no written policy currently exists, while 6 (12%) were unsure or unaware of any policy. These results paint a concerning picture of the policy environment governing records management at the Bagamoyo District Council

During an interview, one Records Officer explained That:

"*The Council has a documented records retention schedule. However, there is no clear operational guideline that adequately explains how the schedule should be implemented in day-to-day records management activities. As a result, implementation is not consistent across departments."*

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The combined responses suggest that 64% of respondents either reported no written policy, an outdated one, or were unaware of any policy indicating that effective policy governance of records retention and disposal is largely absent. This finding is consistent with observations by Shepherd and Yeo (2003, p. 155), who note that without a formally approved and current retention schedule, organizations cannot manage their records systematically or ensure legal compliance. Key informants from the management category confirmed that although the Council has some general records management guidelines, a comprehensive and up-to-date retention and disposal schedule has never been formally developed and approved. This gap leaves staff without clear guidance on which records to keep, for how long, and how to properly dispose of them.

4.4 Level of Staff Awareness Regarding Records Retention Schedules

This question assessed how well staff at the Bagamoyo District Council understand records retention schedules – what they are, how they work, and how to apply them. Staff awareness is a critical factor in the successful implementation of any retention and disposal program. The findings are presented in Table 4.6 below.

Table 4.3 level of staff awareness regarding records retention schedules

Level of awareness	Frequency	Percentage
Very aware_ can explain and apply schedule	10	20.0
Aware _ have seen or heard schedules	18	36.0
Slightly aware _ have limited knowledge	14	28.0
Not aware at all	8	16.0
Total	50	100.0

Source: Field Data 2026

As shown in Table 4.3, only 10 (20%) of respondents described themselves as very aware of retention schedules, meaning they could explain and apply them confidently in their work. A further 18 (36%) said they were aware in that they had seen or heard

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of retention schedules, but their understanding was not necessarily sufficient for practical application. A significant proportion, 14 (28%), indicated that they had only slight or limited knowledge, while 8 (16%) stated they had no awareness of retention schedules at all.

During an interview, one Head of Department stated explain that:

> *"I have some knowledge about records retention schedules, but only at a general level. I do not have comprehensive practical skills regarding the physical implementation of records retention schedules because I have never received formal training in this area."*

These results indicate that more than half of the respondents (56%) have limited or no practical knowledge of records retention schedules. This is a serious gap, as records officers and other staff cannot apply a tool they do not understand. The findings align with those of Kemoni and Ngulube (2008, p. 18), who found that low awareness of records management tools is one of the leading causes of poor records practices in local government institutions across sub-Saharan Africa. Key informants from the records department observed that most staff have never received structured training on retention schedules and instead rely on informal instructions passed on from more experienced colleagues, which often leads to inconsistent and unreliable practices

4.5 Current Records Disposal Practices at the Bagamoyo District Council

This question examined the specific records disposal methods currently being used at the Bagamoyo District Council. Understanding what disposal practices are in use – and whether they follow approved procedures – is central to assessing the overall quality of records management at the institution. The findings are presented in Table 4.7 below.

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Table 4.4 current records disposal practices at the Bagamoyo municipal council

Disposal practice used	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Destruction by shredding or burning	16	32.0
Transfer to national or regional archives	10	20.0
Digital migration (scanning and storing)	12	24.0
Records are kept indefinitely without disposal	9	18.0
No formal disposal practice in place	3	6.0
Total	50	100.0

Source: Field Data 2026

Table 4.4 shows that the most commonly reported disposal method was destruction by shredding or burning, cited by 16 (32%) respondents. Digital migration – the scanning and electronic storage of records – was reported by 12 (24%), while transfer to national or regional archives was mentioned by 10 (20%). A significant concern is that 9 (18%) of respondents indicated that records are kept indefinitely without any formal disposal, and 3 (6%) stated that no formal disposal practice of any kind is in place.

During an interview, one Records Officer explained that

> *"Records disposal is carried out at specific intervals according to the required procedures. However, disposal cannot take place until official authorization has been obtained from the responsible higher authority."*

The prevalence of destruction by shredding or burning as the primary disposal method raises concerns about whether these actions are being carried out under proper authorization and in line with a formally approved retention schedule. Penn, Pennix and Coulson (1994, p. 92) emphasize that records destruction without authorization and documented approval constitutes an irregular disposal action,

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regardless of the method used. The fact that 18% of respondents reported keeping records indefinitely points to a culture of record hoarding, which leads to storage overload and makes it difficult to retrieve useful records efficiently. The relatively low rate of archival transfers (20%) also suggests that records with long-term historical and evidential value may not be systematically identified and preserved as required by the Records and Archives Management Act of Tanzania (2002). Key informants noted that digital migration, while being adopted by some departments, is happening without proper procedures or metadata standards, creating risks for the long-term integrity of electronic records.

4.6 Challenges Faced in Implementing Records Retention and Disposal Schedules

This question identified the main obstacles experienced by staff at the Bagamoyo District Council when trying to implement records retention and disposal schedules. Understanding these challenges is essential for designing effective solutions and improving records management practices. The findings are presented in Table 4.8

Table 4.5 challenges faced in implementing records retention and disposal schedules

Challenges	Frequency	Percentage%
Lack of trained records management personnel	14	28.0
Absence or inadequacy of written policies	12	24.0
Insufficient storage space and facilities	9	18.0
Lack of financial resources and equipment	7	14.0
Poor ICT infrastructure for electronic records	5	10.0
Resistance from staff and management	3	6.0
Total	**50**	**100.0**

Source: Field Data 2026

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As shown in Table 4.8, the most frequently cited challenge was the lack of trained records management personnel, identified by 14 (28%) respondents. The absence or inadequacy of written policies was noted by 12 (24%), while insufficient storage space and facilities were mentioned by 9 (18%). Lack of financial resources and equipment was cited by 7 (14%), poor ICT infrastructure by 5 (10%), and resistance from staff and management by 3 (6%).

The prominence of personnel training as the leading challenge confirms the findings reported in Section 4.4 regarding low staff awareness. Without adequately trained and knowledgeable records officers, even a well-designed retention schedule cannot be effectively implemented. This finding supports the argument made by Ngulube (2004, p. 155) that human capacity development is the most critical investment an institution can make to improve records management outcomes

The second most cited challenge the absence of inadequacy of written policies directly reinforces the findings in Section 4.3, which revealed that a large proportion of respondents were either unaware of a current policy or knew that the existing one was outdated. Without a clear policy framework, staffs are left to improvise, leading to inconsistent and non-compliant records practices. The challenges of inadequate storage, limited financial resources, and poor ICT infrastructure reflect the broader resource constraints faced by many local government institutions in Tanzania, where records management is often treated as a low-priority function in budget allocation (Kemoni and Ngulube, 2008, p. 22). Key informants also confirmed that resistance from management – though cited by the fewest respondents can be particularly damaging when it manifests as a failure to allocate resources or approve disposal actions in a timely manner.

4.7 Consequences of Poor Records Retention and Disposal Practices

This question examined the practical consequences that poor records retention and disposal practices have had on operations at the Bagamoyo District Council. Identifying these consequences helps to illustrate the real cost of inadequate records management and strengthens the case for urgent improvement. The findings are presented in Table 4.10 below

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Table 4.6 consequences of poor records retention and disposal practices

Consequences identified	Frequency	Percentage%
Accumulation of obsolete and unnecessary records	15	30
Difficult retrieving needed information quickly	13	26
Loss of important records before their time	10	20
Legal noncompliance and audits failures	7	14
Unauthorized access to confidential records	5	10
Total	**50**	**100**

Source: Field Data 2026

Table 4.6 shows that the most widely experienced consequence was the accumulation of obsolete and unnecessary records, reported by 15 (30%) respondents. Difficulty in retrieving needed information quickly was cited by 13 (26%). The loss of important records before their time was noted by 10 (20%), legal non-compliance and audit failures by 7 (14%), and unauthorized access to confidential records by 5 (10%).The high rate of record accumulation and retrieval difficulties are interconnected problems: when records are not disposed of on schedule, staff must search through large volumes of both current and obsolete material to find what they need, reducing efficiency and increasing the cost of information access. This finding aligns with Kennedy and Scheduler (1998, p. 148), who argue that failure to apply retention schedules consistently results in unmanageable record accumulations that undermine the operational effectiveness of any organization. The premature loss of important records (20%) is equally serious. When records are destroyed informally – without reference to an approved schedule – records of continuing administrative, legal, or historical value may be lost permanently. This directly undermines accountability and institutional memory. Legal non-compliance and audit failures (14%) represent a concrete risk to the Bagamoyo District Council, as government agencies are legally obligated under the

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Records and Archives Management Act (2002) to maintain and dispose of records in accordance with approved schedules. The risk of unauthorized access to confidential records (10%), while cited by fewer respondents, is a serious governance concern, particularly for records containing personal or financial information about residents and council employees.

4.8 Recommendations for Improving Records Retention and Disposal Practices

Respondents

were asked to suggest practical measures that would improve records retention and disposal practices at the Bagamoyo District Council. The aim was to collect staff-informed recommendations that are grounded in the realities of the institution's working environment. The findings are presented in Table 4.9 below.

Table 4.7: Recommendations for Improving Records Retention and Disposal Practices

Recommend strategies	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Develop and implement updated retention and disposal schedule	14	28.0
Provide regular training for records staff	12	24.0
Invest in ICT system for electronic records management	10	20.0
Strengthens supervision and compliance monitoring	8	16.0
Improves storage facilities and resources	4	8.0
Collaborate with Tanzania national archives	2	4.0
Total	**50**	**100.0**

Source: Field Data, 2026

As shown in Table 4.7, the most strongly supported recommendation was the development and implementation of updated retention and disposal schedules, cited by 14 (28%) respondents. Providing regular training for records staff was

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recommended by 12 (24%), while investing in ICT systems for electronic records management was suggested by 10 (20%). Strengthening supervision and compliance monitoring was recommended by 8 (16%), improving storage facilities by 4 (8%), and collaboration with the Tanzania National Archives by 2 (4%).

The strong support for developing updated retention and disposal schedules reflects respondents' clear awareness that the absence of a current, formally approved schedule is the root cause of many of the challenges and consequences identified in earlier sections. This recommendation is consistent with international best practice: the International Council on Archives (ICA, 2016, p. 28) identifies the development of a comprehensive retention schedule as the foundational step in building an effective records management program.

During an interview, one Head of Department commented:

> *"There should be a properly documented records retention and disposal schedule that is formally reviewed, verified, and approved by the responsible higher authorities. Such a schedule would promote consistency, accountability, and compliance across all departments."*

The second-highest recommendation regular staff training (24%) directly addresses the awareness and capacity gaps documented in Sections 4.4 and 4.6. Respondents clearly recognize that policy alone is not sufficient; staff must be equipped with the knowledge and skills to implement it effectively. The significant support for ICT investment (20%) reflects awareness among respondents that modern records management requires reliable digital infrastructure to manage growing volumes of electronic records efficiently and securely. Key informants emphasized that stronger supervision and monitoring (16%) is essential to prevent informal and non-compliant disposal actions, which currently represent one of the most damaging aspects of records management at the Council. Collaboration with the Tanzania National Archives (4%), though the least frequently cited recommendation, was described by key informants as critically important for ensuring that records of national significance and permanent value are properly transferred and preserved

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CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSSION AND RECOMMENDATION

5.1Introduction

This chapter presents the conclusion, recommendations, and areas for further study of the research on the assessment of records retention and disposal practices in local government offices, with specific reference to the Bagamoyo District Council. The chapter brings together the key findings from Chapter Four and interprets them in the context of effective records management. It also proposes clear and practical recommendations that the Bagamoyo District Council and similar local government institutions can adopt to improve their records retention and disposal practices.

5.2 summary findings

The study produced important findings across eight key areas, which are summarized below. Regarding the demographic characteristics of respondents, the study found that the majority of the 50 participants were male (56%), with females accounting for 44%. Most respondents were aged between 25 and 44 years, indicating that the records management workforce at the Bagamoyo District Council is predominantly composed of middle-aged adults. In terms of education, 40% held a diploma and 32% had a bachelor's degree, suggesting that most staff have a reasonable level of academic preparation. The majority of respondents had between 6 and 10 years of work experience, which reflects a relatively stable and experienced workforce. The sample included records and archives officers (40%), managers and supervisors (32%), IT officers (18%), and other administrative staff (10%), ensuring a broad range of perspectives.

Concerning the existence of a records retention and disposal policy, the findings were deeply concerning. Only 36% of respondents confirmed the existence of a current written policy. A further 24% stated that a policy exists but is outdated, while 28% reported that no written policy exists at all and 12% were unaware of any policy. Taken together, these results mean that 64% of respondents were working without the guidance of a current and effective retention and disposal policy. This is

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a major gap that affects every other aspect of records management at the Council (Tanzania Records and Archives Management Department, 2012).

Regarding staff awareness of retention schedules, the study found that only 20% of respondents were very aware of retention schedules and able to apply them confidently. A further 36% had some awareness, while 28% had only limited knowledge and 16% had no awareness at all. These findings reveal a serious capacity gap: more than half of all staff lack the knowledge needed to implement retention schedules properly. Kemoni and Ngulube (2008, p. 18) observe that low staff awareness of records management tools is one of the leading causes of poor records practices in local government institutions across sub-Saharan Africa, and this study confirms that pattern at the Bagamoyo District Council.

In terms of current disposal practices, the most commonly used method was destruction by shredding or burning (32%), followed by digital migration through scanning (24%) and transfer to archives (20%). However, 18% of respondents reported that records are kept indefinitely without any disposal, and 6% stated that no formal disposal practice exists at all. The absence of a guiding policy means that many of these disposal actions are carried out informally and without proper authorization, creating significant risks for legal compliance and the preservation of important records.

The most significant challenges identified were the lack of trained records management personnel (28%) and the absence or inadequacy of written policies (24%). These were followed by insufficient storage space and facilities (18%), lack of financial resources and equipment (14%), poor ICT infrastructure (10%), and resistance from staff and management (6%). These challenges are not unique to Bagamoyo: Ngulube (2004, p. 155) identifies human capacity limitations and resource constraints as the most common obstacles to effective records management across local government institutions in developing countries.

Respondents recommended several practical strategies to improve records retention and disposal practices. The most strongly supported recommendation was the development and implementation of updated retention and disposal schedules (28%),

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followed by regular training for records staff (24%), investment in ICT systems (20%), stronger supervision and compliance monitoring (16%), improved storage facilities (8%), and collaboration with the Tanzania National Archives (4%). These recommendations reflect a clear understanding among respondents of the institutional changes needed to bring records management at the Council up to the standard required by law and best practice (International Council on Archives, 2016).

5.3 Conclusion

This study concludes that records retention and disposal practices at the Bagamoyo District Council are seriously inadequate. The absence of a current and formally approved retention and disposal schedule, combined with low staff awareness and limited institutional capacity, has created an environment in which records are managed informally, inconsistently, and in many cases unlawfully. As a result, the Council faces significant operational, legal, and accountability risks. The study found that most staff do not have the knowledge or tools they need to manage records in line with the requirements of the Records and Archives Management Act of Tanzania (2002) or international standards such as ISO 15489-1, 2016. Records are being destroyed without authorization, kept indefinitely without review, and digitized without proper procedures. Important records are at risk of premature destruction, while obsolete records continue to fill storage spaces that are already insufficient. These problems do not arise from a lack of willingness among staff. The findings show that respondents clearly understand what is going wrong and have strong views about how to fix it. The root causes are structural there is no policy framework to guide action, no training to build capacity, and no system to monitor and enforce compliance. As Ngulube and Tafor (2006, p. 74) argue, good records management in local government cannot happen by accident – it requires deliberate investment in policy, people, and technology.

Despite these challenges, there is a strong foundation for improvement. The Council has an experienced workforce, an ongoing process of digital migration, and staff who understand the value of proper records management. With the right support – in the form of updated policies, targeted training, adequate resources, and stronger

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leadership commitment – the Bagamoyo District Council has the potential to develop a records management program that meets both national legal requirements and the needs of the communities it serves. In summary, the study underscores that effective records retention and disposal is not simply a technical or administrative matter. It is a fundamental aspect of good governance, public accountability, and the preservation of institutional and community memory. When records are properly managed, government institutions become more transparent, more efficient, and more trustworthy. The Bagamoyo District Council must treat records management as a priority not a bureaucratic formality if it is to fulfil its responsibilities to the people of Bagamoyo.

5.4 Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions of this study, the following recommendations are made to the Bagamoyo District Council and to relevant government authorities in Tanzania. These recommendations are practical, evidence-based, and aligned with national law and international best practice in records management.

5.4.1 Develop and Implement an Updated Records Retention and Disposal Schedule

The most urgent priority for the Bagamoyo District Council is to develop a comprehensive, written, and formally approved records retention and disposal schedule. This schedule should identify all records series held by the Council, specify how long each series must be kept, state the legal or administrative justification for each retention period, and define the authorized disposal action at the end of each retention period. The development of the schedule should involve records officers, departmental managers, legal advisors, and IT staff working together. It should be carried out in consultation with the Tanzania Records and Archives Management Department (RAMD) and, where necessary, the Tanzania National Archives. Once approved, the schedule must be formally adopted by senior management and communicated to all relevant staff. The International Council on Archives (2016, p. 28) identifies the development of an approved retention schedule as the single most important step in building a sound records management program.

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5.4.2 provides regular training for records management staff

The study found that more than half of all staff have limited or no practical knowledge of records retention schedules. This cannot be addressed by policy alone. The Bagamoyo District Council should establish a regular and structured training program that covers the principles and procedures of records retention and disposal, the requirements of the Records and Archives Management Act (2002), the application of approved retention schedules, and the proper use of both paper-based and electronic records systems.

Training should be provided to all staff involved in records management, including records officers, managers, and IT staff. New staff should receive induction training before they begin working with records. Refresher training should be provided at least once every two years, or whenever significant changes are made to the retention schedule or related policies. Kemoni and Ngulube (2008, p. 22) strongly recommend that local government institutions invest in ongoing staff development as the most effective means of improving records management outcomes over the long term.

5.4.3 strengthen supervision and compliance monitoring

Even the best retention schedule will fail if there is no system to check that it is being followed. The Bagamoyo District Council should establish a formal monitoring and compliance mechanism, which could include regular internal audits of records management practices, periodic review of disposal certificates and registers, and reporting to senior management on the status of records management compliance across departments. A designated Records Management Officer or Unit should be given clear authority and responsibility for overseeing the implementation of the retention schedule and for investigating any cases of unauthorized or irregular disposal. argues that supervision and accountability mechanisms are essential for translating records management policies into consistent daily practice. Senior management must also demonstrate visible commitment to compliance, as resistance or indifference from leadership is one of the key barriers to effective implementation identified in this study.

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5.4.4 Establish secure and authorized disposal procedures

All records disposal actions at the Bagamoyo District Council must be carried out under clear authorization and following documented procedures. The Council should establish a Disposal Review Committee made up of the records manager, relevant departmental heads, a legal representative, and an IT officer. This committee should meet regularly at least every six months to review records that have reached the end of their retention period and to authorize their disposal.

All disposal actions should be recorded in a disposal register that captures the records destroyed or transferred, the date of disposal, the method used, and the name of the authorizing officer. Records containing personal or sensitive information must be disposed of securely, for example by cross-cut shredding for paper records and certified data erasure for electronic records. This is required by the Records and Archives Management Act (2002) and by basic principles of data protection. ARMA International (2017, p. 57) recommends that all organizations maintain a documented chain of authorization for every disposal action as a key protection against legal challenges.

5.4.5 Invest in ICT Systems 5for Electronic Records Management

As the Bagamoyo District Council increasingly generates and receives electronic records, it must invest in reliable and appropriate ICT infrastructure to manage them properly. This includes the adoption of an Electronic Document and Records Management System (EDRMS) that allows the Council to track records, apply retention periods automatically, and generate alerts when records are due for review or disposal.

The Council should also develop clear procedures for the digitization of paper records, including standards for scanning quality, metadata, file naming, and long-term storage. Without these procedures, digital migration however well-intentioned can create new problems of lost, inaccessible, or poorly described electronic records. Mnjama and Mnjama and Wamukoya (2007, p. 279) emphasize that technology alone cannot solve records management problems; it must be accompanied by proper

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procedures, trained staff, and institutional commitment. Any investment in ICT systems should therefore be closely linked to the training and policy recommendations described above.

5.4.6 Collaborate with the Tanzania National Archives and RAMD

The Bagamoyo District Council should build a stronger working relationship with the Tanzania Records and Archives Management Department (RAMD) and the Tanzania National Archives. RAMD has a statutory mandate to support government agencies in developing and implementing records management policies and retention schedules. The Council should actively seek technical assistance from RAMD in developing its retention schedule and training its staff. The Council should also establish a routine process for identifying records with long-term historical, evidential, or informational value and transferring them to the Tanzania National Archives for permanent preservation. This is required by the Records and Archives Management Act (2002) and is essential for protecting the historical memory of the Bagamoyo district. Luyombya (2010, p. 88) notes that local government institutions that maintain strong links with national archives benefit from technical support, shared expertise, and greater consistency in records governance across government as a whole.

5.5 Areas for further study

This study has provided valuable insights into records retention and disposal practices at the Bagamoyo District Council. However, several areas merit further investigation to deepen understanding and to support the development of more effective records management systems in local government settings across Tanzania.

5.5.1 Comparative Study Across Multiple Local Government Authorities

This study focused on a single institution. A comparative study covering several local government authorities in different regions of Tanzania would provide a broader picture of records retention and disposal practices across the local government sector, helping to identify common patterns, best practices, and systemic challenges that require national-level policy responses.

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5.5.2 Impact of Poor Records Management on Service Delivery

Future research should investigate the direct relationship between inadequate records retention and disposal practices and the quality of public services delivered by local government. Understanding how poor records management affects service delivery outcomes would strengthen the business case for investing in records management improvement programmes.

5.5.3 Electronic Records Management in Local Government

As local government institutions in Tanzania increasingly move toward digital working environments, there is a need for research specifically focused on electronic records management practices, including the challenges of managing digital retention schedules, ensuring the long-term integrity of electronic records, and protecting personal data held in digital formats.

5.5.4 Legal Compliance and Records Management in Tanzania

A study specifically examining the extent to which local government authorities comply with the Records and Archives Management Act (2002) and related legislation would provide important data for policy reform. Such research could include an assessment of enforcement mechanisms and the role of RAMD in supporting and monitoring compliance across different levels of government.

5.5.5 Staff Training Needs and Capacity Development

Further research is needed to assess the specific training needs of records management staff in Tanzanian local government and to evaluate the effectiveness of existing training program. This would help institutions and training providers to design targeted, practical, and relevant capacity-building program that produce measurable improvements in records management performance.

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APPENDEX I

QUESTIONNAIRES FOR RECORDS MANAGERS

INTRODUCTION

Hello, my name is TYSON ASAJIREMWAKAGIRE, a student pursuing a diploma in Records and archives management. I am conducting a research study on assessment of records retention and disposal practices in local government offices, specifically focusing on Bagamoyo Council. Your participation in this survey is important as it will help us understand current practices, challenges, and opportunities in the field of records retention and disposal practices. Your responses will be kept confidential and used solely for academic purposes. Thank you for your time and cooperation.

Demographic information

1. Gender

a) male

b) Female [ ]

2. Age

a) 20-29 years

b) 30-39 years [ ]

c) 40-49 years

d) 50 years and above

3. level of education

a) Certificate

b) Diploma [ ]

c) Bachelor's degree

d) master degree

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OBJECTIVE QUESTIONS

4. Does your office have a documented records retention schedule?

a) Yes

b) No [ ]

c) Not sure

5 How often is the retention schedule reviewed or updated?

A) Annually

B) Every 2–3 years. [ ]

C) Rarely

D) Never

E) Not sure

6 Who is responsible for implementing retention policies?

A) Records Officer

B) Head of Department

C) ICT Officer. [ ]

D) Top Management

E) Not clearly assigned

7 What methods are used to dispose of paper records?

A) Shredding

B) Burning

C) Dumping [ ]

D) Recycling

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E) Not applicable

8 What is the major challenge affecting disposal practices?

A) Fear of losing important information

B) Lack of authorization procedures

C) Insufficient funding [ ]

D) Staff negligence

E) Legal uncertainties

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APPENDIX II

INTERVIEW GUIDE

1.Does your office have a formal records retention and disposal policy?

2. How does your office comply with national records and archives laws?

3. How are records identified for retention or disposal?

4. What procedures are followed before destroying records?

5. How often are archival records transferred to the National Archives?

6. What challenges does your office face in implementing retention policies?

7. Are there enough trained personnel?

8. What improvements are needed to strengthen records retention?

9. What recommendations would you give to policymakers?

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APPENDIX III

BUDGET

ACTIVITIES	COST ANALYSIS	COST TOTAL
Local transport	20,000 per week x 6 weeks	120,000/=
Secretarial service	20 pages@ 300x20x5	30,000/=
Stationary	2 Reams of paper A4	20,000/=
Binding	5 Copies@3000 x5	30,000/=
Total		200,000

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APPENDEX IV

TIME SCHEDULE SHOWING.

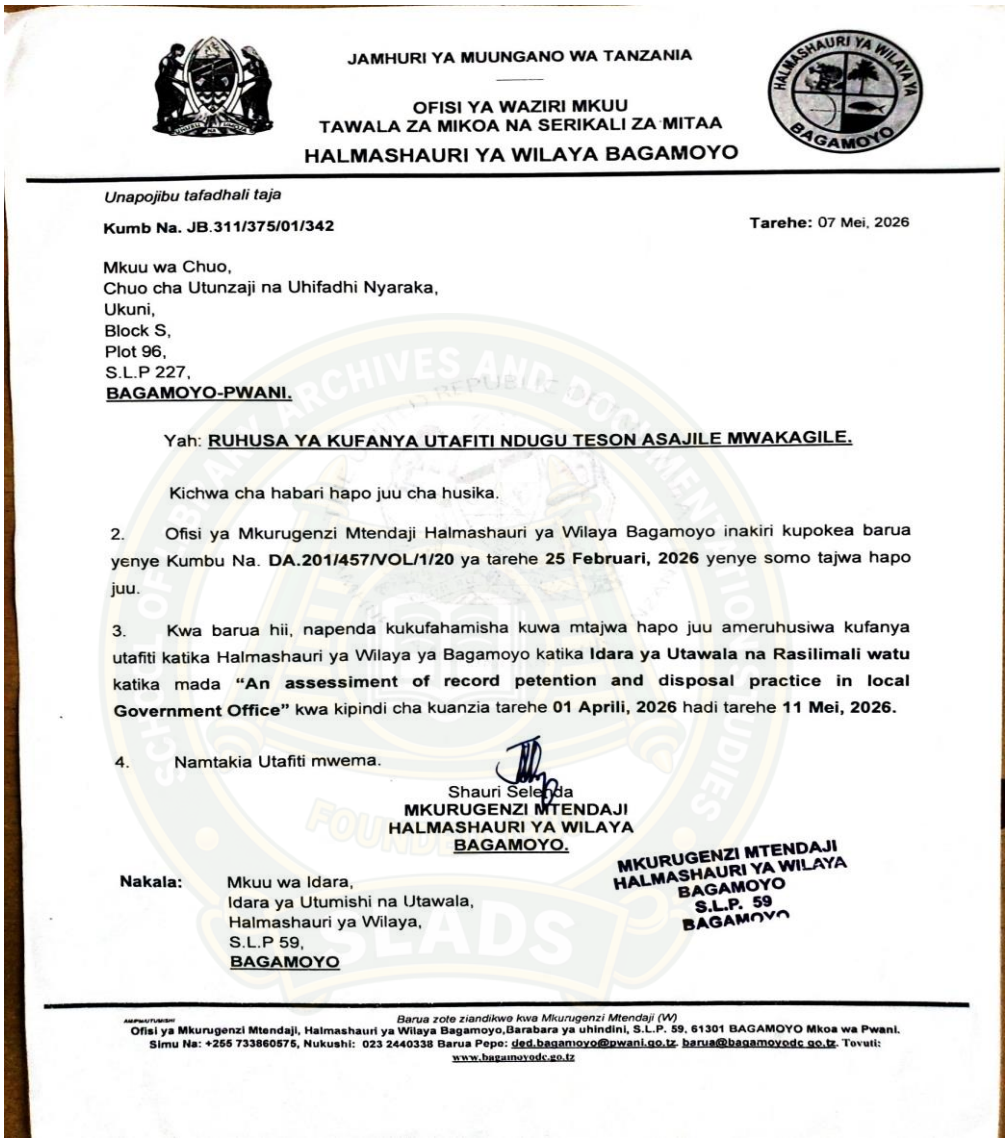
DURING RESEARCH WORK

ACTIVIES	**1st MONTH**	**2nd MONTH**	**3rd MONTH**	**4th MONTH**	**5th MONTH**	**6th MONTH**
Writing of proposal						
Submission of proposal						
Collection of data from the field through questionnaires						
Data processing and interpretation ready for report drafting						
Preparation of the first draft report						
Submission of the report at SLADS						

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APPENDEX V

APPROVAL LETTER



JAMHURI YA MUUNGANO WA TANZANIA

OFISI YA WAZIRI MKUU
TAWALA ZA MIKOA NA SERIKALI ZA MITAA
HALMASHAURI YA WILAYA BAGAMOYO

Unapojibu tafadhali taja

Kumb Na. JB.311/375/01/342

Tarehe: 07 Mei, 2026

Mkuu wa Chuo,
Chuo cha Utunzaji na Uhifadhi Nyaraka,
Ukuni,
Block S,
Plot 96,
S.L.P 227,
BAGAMOYO-PWANI.

Yah: **RUHUSA YA KUFANYA UTAFITI NDUGU TESON ASAJILE MWAKAGILE.**

Kichwa cha habari hapo juu cha husika.

2. Ofisi ya Mkurugenzi Mtendaji Halmashauri ya Wilaya Bagamoyo inakiri kupokea barua yenye Kumbu Na. **DA.201/457/VOL/1/20** ya tarehe **25 Februari, 2026** yenye somo tajwa hapo juu.

3. Kwa barua hii, napenda kukufahamisha kuwa mtajwa hapo juu ameruhusiwa kufanya utafiti katika Halmashauri ya Wilaya ya Bagamoyo katika **Idara ya Utawala na Rasilimali watu** katika mada **"An assessiment of record petention and disposal practice in local Government Office"** kwa kipindi cha kuanzia tarehe **01 Aprili, 2026** hadi tarehe **11 Mei, 2026.**

4. Namtakia Utafiti mwema.

Shauri Selenda
MKURUGENZI MTENDAJI
HALMASHAURI YA WILAYA
BAGAMOYO.

MKURUGENZI MTENDAJI
HALMASHAURI YA WILAYA
BAGAMOYO
S.L.P. 59
BAGAMOYO

Nakala: Mkuu wa Idara,
Idara ya Utumishi na Utawala,
Halmashauri ya Wilaya,
S.L.P 59,
BAGAMOYO

Barua zote ziandikwe kwa Mkurugenzi Mtendaji (W)
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