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RESEARCH REPORT ON

THE INFLUENCE OF ADEQUATE RECORDS MANAGEMENT ON STRATEGIC DECISION-MAKING: A CASE OF BAGAMOYO DISTRICT COURT

BY:

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A research report submitted to the School of Library, Archives and Documentation Studies in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of an Ordinary Diploma in Records and Archives Management.

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CERTIFICATION

I certify that this research report was prepared by Warda Omari Selemani under my supervision and is ready for academic assessment at the School of Library, Archives and Documentation Studies.

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Declaration

I, Warda Omari Selemani, declare that this research report is my own academic work and has not been submitted to another institution for a similar award. All sources used in the report have been acknowledged.

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my family, teachers and everyone who supported my education and encouraged me to complete this study.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ERMS	Electronic Records Management System
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
ISO	International Organization for Standardization
RAMD	Records and Archives Management Department
SLADS	School of Library, Archives and Documentation Studies
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
URT	United Republic of Tanzania

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ABSTRACT

This study assessed the influence of adequate records management on strategic decision-making at Bagamoyo District Court. It was guided by four objectives: to examine current records management practices, identify their influence on strategic decisions, examine the main challenges and suggest strategies for improvement. A descriptive case study design and mixed-methods approach were used. The study involved 22 participants, consisting of 13 registry and support staff represented in the questionnaire results and 9 court administrators and judicial officers represented in the interview themes. Quantitative results were analysed through frequencies and percentages, while qualitative responses were grouped into themes. The findings showed that case numbers, filing years and case types were the main methods used to organise files. However, 84.6% rated storage from fair to very poor, and 61.5% reported that retrieval normally took at least 15 minutes, more than one hour or sometimes failed. A total of 92.3% stated that records management had a significant or moderate effect on decisions. Major challenges included inadequate storage space, limited computer systems, insufficient filing equipment, weak file tracking and staff shortage. Participants supported computerisation, digitisation, better storage, staff training and regular records audits. The study concludes that reliable and accessible records improve the speed and quality of court decisions. It recommends an electronic file index, stronger movement control, gradual digitisation, application of retention schedules, improved equipment, training and quarterly audits. The numerical results retained from the source report should be checked against the completed field instruments before final submission.

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CHAPTER ONE
BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

1.0 Introduction

This chapter introduces the study on the influence of adequate records management on strategic decision-making at Bagamoyo District Court. It presents the background of the study, the statement of the problem, the objectives, research questions, significance, scope, limitations and definitions of the main terms. These parts explain why court records must be treated as an important source of evidence for both judicial work and court administration.

1.1 Background of the Study

Courts create and receive many records while carrying out their duties. These records include case files, registers, proceedings, judgments, orders, exhibits, correspondence, staff records, financial records and statistical reports. They show what action was taken, when it was taken, who was involved and the basis of the action. ISO 15489-1 explains that records should be created, captured and managed through clear policies, assigned responsibilities, controls, monitoring and training (International Organization for Standardization [ISO], 2016). When these controls are applied well, the records remain authentic, reliable, complete and usable for as long as they are needed.

In the administration of justice, records are not ordinary office papers. A case file may contain the information needed to protect a person's rights, prepare a hearing, review earlier orders, enforce a judgment or support an appeal. Court administrators also use registers and reports to examine pending cases, allocate work, request funds and measure court performance. The National Center for State Courts (2020) therefore identifies effective control, maintenance and preservation of court records as a basic responsibility of court management. Poor control can delay proceedings, weaken accountability and reduce public confidence.

Across Africa, many courts are moving from paper systems to electronic case management and e-filing. The change is intended to improve access, speed and control, but it also brings new demands for equipment, staff skills, metadata, security and long-term preservation. A review by Mosweu and Mosweu (2019) found that electronic court records systems in selected African countries produced useful

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benefits, but results depended on proper implementation and supporting controls. Wamukoya (2022) also notes that records management in Africa continues to face limits linked to weak infrastructure, insufficient resources, limited professional capacity and uneven policy implementation.

Studies from courts in the region show the same mixed position. At the Gaborone Magisterial District in Botswana, the court records management system improved parts of justice delivery, although effective use still depended on staff, procedures and system support (Mosweu & Kenosi, 2018). In Malawi, Chawinga et al. (2020) found that e-judicial services could improve justice delivery, but successful use required reliable infrastructure, user skills and institutional readiness. These findings show that technology is useful only when it is joined with sound records management practices.

Tanzania has a legal and policy framework for managing public records. The Records and Archives Management Act, 2002 requires public offices to create adequate records of their actions and to maintain, transfer or dispose of them through authorised procedures. The Records and Archives Management Regulations, 2007 give further direction on registration, classification, storage, movement, appraisal and disposal. The National Records and Archives Management Policy also supports proper life-cycle control of public records (United Republic of Tanzania [URT], 2011). In 2023, the Judiciary issued specific retention and disposal schedules for court records, giving courts clearer guidance on how long different records should be kept and what action should follow at the end of the retention period (Judiciary of Tanzania, 2023).

The Judiciary of Tanzania has also expanded digital services. Its public portal provides services such as case details, e-case filing, cause lists, a data hub and virtual court functions. The wider modernisation programme aims to improve efficiency, transparency and access to justice through digital systems and better use of data (World Bank, 2022). The Comprehensive Performance Report of Judicial Functions for 2024 further shows that performance management in the Judiciary depends on reliable case information and regular review of court results (Judiciary of Tanzania, 2025). These reforms increase the need for accurate records because a digital system

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cannot produce dependable reports when the information entered into it is incomplete or inconsistent.

Research in Tanzania confirms that paper records remain important even as electronic systems expand. Dotto and Mwantimwa (2024) found that conventional systems were still widely used in Tanzanian courts and that electronic records management was limited by shortages of qualified staff, training, technical support, funds and effective implementation strategies. Manase et al. (2025) similarly found that paper-based systems remained common in public organisations, while many digital records were created by scanning existing paper records. The two studies show that Tanzanian institutions are working in a hybrid environment where paper and electronic records must be controlled together.

The effect of records management is visible in daily court work. Charles and Mmassy (2024) found that e-filing in Rukwa District Courts could save time and improve access and convenience, although users still faced practical limits. The Controller and Auditor General also reported that case backlog management depends on sound case-flow controls and accurate information about filed and completed cases (National Audit Office of Tanzania, 2022). These findings connect records management with wider decisions on case scheduling, workload distribution, staffing and performance improvement.

Bagamoyo District Court is part of the subordinate court structure in Pwani Region. It receives and manages civil and criminal case records together with administrative records needed for daily operations. Registry staff create, classify, store, retrieve and move files, while magistrates and administrators use the information in those files and registers. If records are complete and easy to retrieve, managers can review backlogs, plan court sessions and allocate available resources with greater confidence. If files are missing, overcrowded, wrongly filed or not tracked after movement, the quality and speed of these decisions may be reduced. This study was therefore conducted to assess the current position at Bagamoyo District Court and identify practical improvements.

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1.2 Statement of the Problem

An effective court should maintain complete and reliable records and make them available to authorised users at the time they are needed. Tanzania's records law, regulations and court retention schedules provide a basis for this control. The Judiciary's digital reforms also depend on accurate case information. Under this expected position, each case file should be properly registered, classified, stored, tracked, protected and disposed of according to an approved schedule. Court leaders should be able to obtain dependable information for backlog review, work planning, budgeting, staffing and service improvement.

However, studies in Tanzania show that many courts still rely heavily on manual or partly integrated systems. Dotto and Mwantimwa (2024) reported limited adoption of effective electronic records management in the courts they studied. Manase et al. (2025) also found that paper-based records management remained dominant in several public organisations. Manual systems are not automatically ineffective, but they become risky when storage is crowded, file movement is not recorded, indexes are incomplete, equipment is insufficient or staff lack regular training. Under such conditions, a correct case number may still fail to lead to the actual file when it is urgently required.

At Bagamoyo District Court, the source report indicated concerns about storage space, slow retrieval, limited computer support, weak file movement control and staff pressure. These conditions may affect more than registry work. Court administrators need accurate figures when they review pending cases, assign staff, plan sessions, prepare budgets or respond to service problems. Magistrates need complete files when they prepare for hearings and review earlier actions. When information is delayed or incomplete, decisions may be postponed, based on partial evidence or followed by repeated work.

Earlier studies provide useful information about electronic records and court service delivery, but there is limited evidence showing how the adequacy of records management affects strategic decisions at a district court in the Pwani context. The present study addressed this need by examining the practices used at Bagamoyo District Court, the influence of those practices on strategic decision-making, the main challenges and the improvements preferred by records users and decision-makers.

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1.3 Objectives of the Study

1.3.1 General Objective

The general objective of the study was to assess the influence of adequate records management on strategic decision-making at Bagamoyo District Court.

1.3.2 Specific Objectives

i. To examine the current records management practices at Bagamoyo District Court.

ii. To identify the influence of adequate records management on strategic decision-making processes at the court.

iii. To examine the challenges facing the implementation of effective records management systems at Bagamoyo District Court.

iv. To suggest possible strategies to enhance records management for improved strategic decision-making in the judiciary.

1.4 Research Questions

i. What are the current records management practices at Bagamoyo District Court?

ii. How does adequate records management influence strategic decision-making processes at the court?

iii. What challenges affect the implementation of effective records management systems at Bagamoyo District Court?

iv. What strategies can enhance records management for improved strategic decision-making in the judiciary?

1.5 Significance of the Study

1.5.1 Judiciary and Government

The findings may help the Judiciary and the Government understand the practical records management needs of a district court. They may guide decisions on storage facilities, computer systems, staffing, training and supervision. The study also

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supports implementation of the Records and Archives Management Act, the Regulations and the specific retention and disposal schedules for courts.

1.5.2 Court Administrators and Judicial Officers

Court administrators and judicial officers may use the findings to see how record quality affects case scheduling, backlog review, resource allocation, budget requests and preparation for hearings. The recommendations provide simple actions that can improve access to the information required for these decisions.

1.5.3 Registry Staff

Registry staff may benefit from clearer attention to classification, indexing, movement control, storage, retrieval, digitisation and disposal. The study also gives evidence that records work is not only a clerical duty; it supports justice delivery and the overall performance of the court.

1.5.4 Researchers and Students

The report adds a district-court case to the literature on records management and decision-making in Tanzania. It may guide future studies on electronic court records, file retrieval, case processing time, user readiness and the cost of digitisation.

1.5.5 Court Users and the Public

Court users may benefit indirectly when records are easier to locate and court information is more dependable. Better records control can reduce avoidable delays, improve responses to enquiries and strengthen confidence in court services.

1.6 Scope of the Study

1.6.1 Geographical Scope

The study was conducted at Bagamoyo District Court in Pwani Region, Tanzania. The court was selected because it manages civil, criminal and administrative records and provides a suitable district-level setting for examining the connection between records work and management decisions.

1.6.2 Subject Scope

The study covered records creation and registration, classification, filing, storage, retrieval, movement control, protection, digitisation and disposal. It examined how these practices affected decisions on case scheduling, backlog control, staffing,

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budgeting, allocation of work and service improvement. It did not assess the legal correctness of judgments or the merits of individual cases.

1.6.3 Methodological Scope

The study used a descriptive case study and combined questionnaire, interview and observation methods. Quantitative data were presented through frequencies and percentages. Qualitative responses were grouped into themes and used to explain the quantitative patterns. The study focused on 22 participants drawn from judicial officers, court administrators, registry staff and support staff.

1.7 Limitations of the Study

The study faced limits that were considered during data collection and interpretation. First, court officials had busy schedules, which reduced the time available for interviews and questionnaire follow-up. The researcher used appointments and a clear timetable. Second, some staff were cautious because court records contain confidential information. The researcher explained the academic purpose of the study, avoided personal case details and followed court permission procedures.

Third, limited funds affected travel, printing and communication. Costs were controlled through careful planning and the use of available resources. Fourth, the study examined one district court and used a small sample; therefore, the results describe the selected case and should not be treated as representing every court in Tanzania. Finally, the completed raw questionnaires and interview transcripts were not attached to the source document used for this revision. The frequencies, percentages and quotations in Chapter Four should therefore be checked against the researcher's field records before final submission.

1.8 Definition of Key Terms

Records: Recorded information, in any form or medium, created or received during business and kept as evidence of an action, decision or transaction (URT, 2002). In this study, records include court case files, registers, reports and administrative documents.

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Records Management: The coordinated control of records from creation or receipt through capture, organisation, use, storage and final disposal (ISO, 2016).

Adequate Records Management: A condition in which records are complete, accurate, protected, traceable and available to authorised users when required.

Strategic Decision-Making: The process of choosing actions that affect the long-term direction, resources and performance of an organisation. In this study, it includes decisions about backlog control, staffing, budgeting, work allocation and court improvement.

Court Registry: The unit responsible for receiving, registering, arranging, storing, retrieving and controlling the movement of court files and related records.

Case Backlog: Cases that remain unresolved beyond the expected period and require management attention or corrective action.

File Movement Control: A manual or electronic method used to record who borrowed a file, where it was taken, when it left the registry and when it was returned.

Electronic Records Management System: A computer-based system used to capture, organise, retrieve, track, protect and retain digital records while preserving their reliability and usability.

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CHAPTER TWO
LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter reviews literature related to adequate records management and strategic decision-making. It covers the main concepts, the theoretical framework, empirical studies arranged according to the specific objectives, the research gap and the conceptual framework. Only sources that could be traced to recognised publishers, journals or official institutions were retained.

2.1 Conceptual Review

2.1.1 Records and Records Management

The Records and Archives Management Act defines a record as recorded information, regardless of form or medium, created, received and maintained as evidence of legal obligations or business activities (URT, 2002). This definition is useful for courts because evidence may exist in paper files, electronic registers, scanned documents, audio records, e-mail or databases. The form may change, but the need to preserve meaning, context and evidence remains.

Records management is the organised control of records from creation to final action. ISO 15489-1:2016 covers the creation, capture and management of records together with metadata, responsibilities, policies, monitoring, training and records controls (ISO, 2016). Records management therefore includes more than filing. It involves deciding what evidence must be created, how it will be named, where it will be kept, who may use it, how movement will be tracked and when it will be transferred or lawfully destroyed.

2.1.2 Adequate Records Management

Adequate records management exists when records are complete enough to show what happened, accurate enough to be trusted, protected against unauthorised change and available when required. For a court, adequacy also includes a clear link between a file and its case number, correct placement on a shelf or in a system, a record of movement, controlled access and an approved retention period. The National Center for State Courts (2020) explains that court records systems should always make the location and status of case records known.

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Adequacy must cover paper and electronic records together. A scanned file is not automatically well managed. The image must be readable, correctly indexed, linked to the right case and protected from loss or unauthorised alteration. Likewise, a well-labelled paper file may still be inadequate if important documents are missing or if the file leaves the registry without a movement entry. The quality of the whole system depends on the weakest stage.

2.1.3 Strategic Decision-Making in Courts

Strategic decision-making concerns choices that influence the direction, resources and performance of an institution. At district-court level, such choices may include how to reduce a backlog, distribute work among magistrates, assign registry staff, request additional shelves or computers, plan court sessions and introduce digital services. These decisions require evidence on case volumes, processing time, file location, pending work and available resources.

Records support a decision when they provide accurate, complete, relevant and timely information. Mosweu (2022) shows that records and information management can support evidence-based decision-making in public institutions. In the Judiciary, reliable registers and case files help leaders confirm the true position before acting. Poor-quality information can produce delay, repeated checking or a decision based on an incomplete picture.

2.1.4 Main Records Management Practices in a Court

Creation and capture begin when a matter is received or an administrative action takes place. Essential details should be recorded at the point of action. In a case registry, this includes the parties, case type, filing date, case number and documents received. Capture connects the record to its context and makes later control possible. Missing or incorrect information at this stage affects every later stage.

Classification and indexing arrange records so that users can identify and retrieve them. Courts commonly use case number, year, case type or party name. A main numerical system may be supported by an index that allows searching through other details. Consistent labels and metadata reduce dependence on the memory of individual staff members and make it easier for new employees to work correctly.

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Storage and protection keep records safe and usable. Paper files require suitable shelves, cabinets, file covers, clean rooms, fire precautions and controlled access. Electronic records require passwords, user rights, backups, antivirus protection and reliable storage. Both formats require procedures for confidentiality because court files may contain personal, financial or sensitive legal information.

Retrieval and movement control ensure that a requested file can be found and that its location remains known after it leaves the registry. A movement register, file-out card, transit sheet or electronic tracking field should record the borrower, destination, date issued and date returned. Without this control, a file may be correctly classified but still become unavailable because it is in an office or courtroom that the registry cannot identify.

Retention and disposal determine how long records are kept and what happens after their active use ends. The court schedules issued by the Judiciary in 2023 provide authority for keeping, transferring or destroying different court records. Proper disposal reduces overcrowding, but destruction must never occur without legal authority, documentation and approval. Records of enduring value should be transferred for permanent preservation.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

2.2.1 Records Life-Cycle Model

The records life-cycle model explains that records pass through connected stages. The basic stages are creation or receipt, maintenance and use, and disposition. Disposition may involve authorised destruction or transfer for permanent preservation. The model is widely used to organise records management responsibilities and is also reflected in ISO 15489 and Tanzania's records law.

The model is relevant to this study because court records must remain controlled at every stage. If a case file is poorly created, later classification cannot fully correct the missing evidence. If it is created correctly but movement is not tracked, it may be unavailable during use. If inactive files are never appraised and transferred, they may overcrowd the registry and make active files harder to retrieve. The model therefore

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helps explain why weaknesses at one stage can reduce the overall adequacy of records management.

A limitation of the life-cycle model is that electronic records may be created, used and preserved at the same time rather than moving through simple separate stages. Even with this limitation, the model remains useful for a district court because it provides a clear way to examine registration, maintenance, use, transfer and disposal. In this study, it guided the review of current practices and challenges.

2.2.2 Information Quality Framework

The information quality framework explains that information is useful when it meets the needs of its users. Wang and Strong (1996) showed that quality includes more than accuracy. Users also consider completeness, relevance, consistency, accessibility and timeliness. In a court, a record may be accurate but still fail to support a decision if it arrives too late or cannot be found.

This framework connects the independent and dependent parts of the study. Records management practices affect the quality of information produced by files, registers and reports. Information quality then affects strategic decisions. Accurate and complete records give decision-makers a sound evidence base. Timely retrieval allows them to act without avoidable delay. Consistent classification and reliable movement control reduce uncertainty about the location and status of a case.

The framework also shows why technology alone is not enough. A computer system may provide fast access, but its reports will still be weak if users enter incomplete or incorrect data. Adequate records management therefore requires controls for both information quality and system use. The framework guided the interpretation of how file condition, retrieval time and completeness affected decisions at Bagamoyo District Court.

2.3 Empirical Review

2.3.1 Studies on Current Records Management Practices

Dotto and Mwantimwa (2024) examined electronic records management in selected Tanzanian courts using questionnaires, interviews and observation. They found that conventional records systems were still widely used and that electronic records

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management remained at an early stage. Staff saw value in electronic records, but use was limited by capacity, funds and implementation problems. The study is directly relevant because it shows the hybrid condition of court records in Tanzania. However, it covered selected courts broadly and did not focus on the link between records adequacy and strategic decisions at Bagamoyo District Court.

Maseh (2015) studied the management of court records in Kenya and drew attention to problems of access, control and professional practice. The study showed that court records require organised systems because they support legal rights and justice administration. Its findings help explain the importance of classification, storage and retrieval in an East African setting. The difference is that the present study examines a Tanzanian district court and includes the views of both records handlers and decision-makers.

Mosweu and Kenosi (2018) assessed implementation of a court records management system at the Gaborone Magisterial District in Botswana. They found that the system supported justice delivery but also required proper implementation, staff participation and reliable procedures. Their study shows that a records system should be judged by how well it supports work, not only by whether technology is present. Bagamoyo District Court provides a useful case for examining this point in a setting where paper controls remain important.

Manase et al. (2025) investigated records management systems in Tanzanian public-sector organisations using a descriptive mixed-methods design. They found that paper-based systems remained common and that digitisation of existing records formed an important source of digital records. Although the institutions were not limited to courts, the study gives current evidence on the wider public-sector environment in which Bagamoyo District Court operates.

2.3.2 Studies on Records Management and Decision-Making

Mosweu (2022) reviewed the role of records and information management in evidence-based decision-making in South African public schools. The study concluded that reliable and authentic records are important assets for planning, accountability and service delivery. Although the setting was education, the central

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relationship applies to courts: managers require dependable evidence when they choose actions and assess performance.

Charles and Mmassy (2024) examined e-filing and the quality of judicial service delivery in Rukwa District Courts. Using survey data, interviews and observation, they found that e-filing could save time and improve access and convenience. Their findings show that faster access to case information can improve service quality. However, their main focus was e-filing and client service rather than the wider effect of all records management practices on strategic decisions.

Siyani (2025) examined the Case Management System in the High Court of Tanzania and identified missing elements that affected effective case management. The study is important because it places information systems within actual judicial work. It also supports the view that technology, procedure and data quality must work together. The present study extends the discussion to a district court and includes manual filing, storage and movement controls.

The National Audit Office of Tanzania (2022) reported that backlog management requires controls over case filing, scheduling, workload distribution and court performance information. This official evidence shows that decisions about delayed cases cannot be separated from the quality of case data. Reliable court records help management confirm how many cases are pending, where delays occur and what resources are required.

2.3.3 Studies on Challenges Facing Records Management

Dotto and Mwantimwa (2024) identified shortages of qualified staff, limited training, insufficient technical support, inadequate funds, weak legal or policy implementation and poor strategies as barriers to effective electronic records management in Tanzanian courts. These barriers are relevant to Bagamoyo because they can affect both paper and electronic systems. For example, limited training may produce inconsistent indexing, while insufficient funds may delay the purchase of shelves, scanners or backup facilities.

Wamukoya (2022) reviewed the African experience and observed that records management development continues to be affected by resource shortages, weak

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professional capacity and limited attention from management. Mosweu and Mosweu (2019) also found that electronic court systems in Africa produced uneven results when supporting conditions were weak. Together, the studies show that records problems often arise from connected human, financial, technical and policy factors rather than a single cause.

Masenya and Ntengenyane (2023) reviewed digital court records in South African High Courts and considered infrastructure, human capacity and barriers to effective management. Their work shows that digital records require planning for equipment, skills and preservation. The study is useful for Bagamoyo because gradual digitisation is one of the proposed solutions, but the local court must avoid transferring weak paper controls into an electronic environment.

2.3.4 Studies and Guidance on Improvement Strategies

ISO 15489-1:2016 recommends clear policies, assigned responsibilities, suitable records controls, monitoring and training. These elements show that improvement should be organised as a programme rather than a one-time purchase. A computer can support retrieval, but written procedures and supervision are still required to ensure that users capture and update information correctly.

The Electronic Records Management Guide for the Judiciary recommends planned governance, inventory and appraisal of existing records, standard metadata, security, access control, preservation and staff training (National Center for State Courts, 2020). The guide also stresses that the location and status of court records should be known. These points directly support the need for an electronic index and stronger file movement control at Bagamoyo District Court.

Tanzania's specific retention and disposal schedules for courts provide a practical legal tool for reducing overcrowding and protecting records with continuing value (Judiciary of Tanzania, 2023). The schedules should be used together with regular file audits, separation of active and semi-current files, authorised transfer and documented destruction. Physical improvement and digitisation should therefore proceed at the same time.

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2.4 Research Gap

The reviewed studies confirm that court records support justice delivery and that African courts face common limits involving manual systems, infrastructure, staff capacity, funding and implementation. Tanzanian studies provide important evidence on electronic records and e-filing. However, most focus on technology adoption, service delivery or the public sector in general. Limited attention has been given to the direct influence of the full range of records management practices on strategic decision-making at a district court.

The present study addressed this gap by linking practical records activities—classification, storage, retrieval, movement control and digitisation—with decisions on case backlog, work allocation, staffing, budgeting and service improvement. It also combined the views of registry and support staff with those of court administrators and judicial officers at Bagamoyo District Court.2.5 Conceptual Framework

Figure 2.1: Conceptual framework of the study

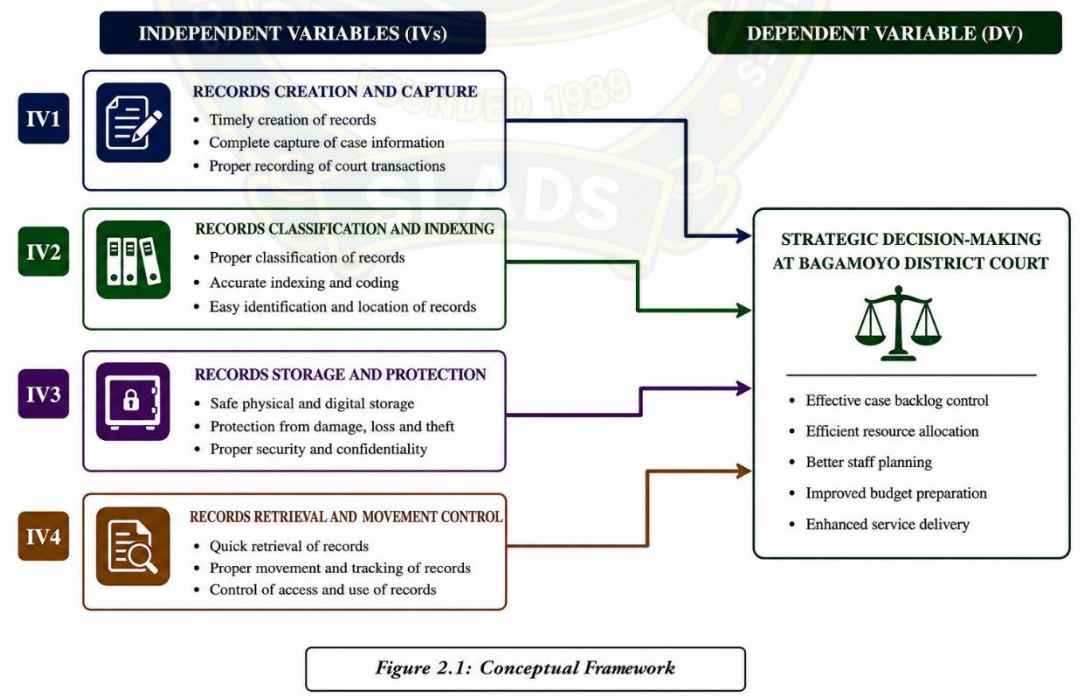


Figure 2.1: Conceptual Framework

Source: Developed by the researcher from ISO 15489-1:2016 and the Information Quality Framework.

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Figure 2.1 shows that adequate records management is the independent variable. It is represented by proper creation and capture, classification and indexing, storage and protection, retrieval and movement control, and retention and disposal. These practices influence the quality of court information. When records are accurate, complete, timely, reliable and accessible, administrators and judicial officers have a stronger basis for strategic decisions.

Strategic decision-making is the dependent variable and includes backlog control, resource allocation, staff planning, budget preparation and service improvement. The framework does not suggest that records are the only factor affecting decisions. Laws, available funds, leadership, staffing and technology may also influence outcomes. It shows that records quality is an important link through which records management can improve or weaken the decision process.

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CHAPTER THREE
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter explains how the study was conducted. It presents the research design and approach, area of the study, target population, sample size, sampling techniques, sources of data, data collection methods, quality controls, data processing and analysis, ethical considerations and the status of the dataset used in the report.

3.1 Research Design

The study used a descriptive case study design. A descriptive design was suitable because the researcher wanted to present the existing records management practices, the views of staff, the main challenges and the proposed improvements without changing the study environment. A case study allowed close examination of these issues within one institution. Yin (2018) explains that a case study is useful when a current issue is examined within its real setting and when the issue cannot be separated easily from its context.

Bagamoyo District Court was treated as the case. The design supported collection of both numerical and descriptive information from people who create, manage, use or supervise court records. It also allowed the findings to be interpreted in relation to the court's staffing, registry conditions and decision-making responsibilities.

3.2 Research Approach

The study used a mixed-methods approach. Quantitative data were obtained mainly from closed questionnaire questions and were used to show frequencies and percentages. Qualitative data were obtained from interviews, open-ended questions and observation. Creswell and Creswell (2023) explain that mixed methods combine numerical and descriptive evidence so that a study can provide both a general pattern and a deeper explanation.

The two forms of evidence were brought together during interpretation. For example, questionnaire responses on retrieval time were compared with interview explanations about crowded shelves, incomplete indexes and file movement. This helped the researcher explain why a numerical pattern occurred.

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3.3 Area of the Study

The study was carried out at Bagamoyo District Court in Bagamoyo District, Pwani Region, Tanzania. The court is a public judicial institution that handles civil and criminal matters and maintains case and administrative records. It was selected because its registry, administrators and judicial officers depend on records for daily work and for decisions on case scheduling, workload, resources and court performance.

The court provided a suitable district-level setting for examining both paper-based practices and the gradual use of digital services. The area was also manageable within the time and financial resources available to the researcher.

3.4 Target Population

The target population consisted of staff whose duties involved the creation, control, use or supervision of court records. It included judicial officers, court administrators, registry staff and support staff involved in file handling. According to the establishment information used in the source report, the total target population was 35 staff members.

Judicial officers and court administrators were included because they use records when making judicial and administrative decisions. Registry and support staff were included because they register, classify, store, retrieve, move and return files. The four groups therefore provided views from both the supply and use sides of court information.

3.5 Sample Size and Distribution

A sample of 22 participants was selected from the target population of 35. This represented about 62.9% of the target population. The size was considered suitable for a small descriptive case study because it included all key staff categories and remained manageable for questionnaires and interviews.

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Table 3.1: Distribution of the sample

S/N	Category	Population	Sample	Sampling technique
1	Judicial officers (magistrates)	8	5	Purposive sampling
2	Court administrators	4	4	Purposive sampling
3	Registry staff	15	8	Simple random sampling
4	Support staff involved in file handling	8	5	Simple random sampling
	Total	35	22	

Source: Bagamoyo District Court staff distribution used in the source report (2026).

3.6 Sampling Techniques

3.6.1 Purposive Sampling

Purposive sampling was used to select four court administrators and five judicial officers. These participants were selected because their positions required them to use records for decisions on court operations, cases, staffing, workload and resources. Their specialised experience could not be obtained from staff who did not perform the same duties.

3.6.2 Simple Random Sampling

Simple random sampling was used to select eight registry staff and five support staff. Names or identification numbers in each group were listed, and participants were selected without giving preference to a particular person. The method gave eligible operational staff an equal chance of inclusion and reduced selection bias.

3.7 Types and Sources of Data

3.7.1 Primary Data

Primary data were collected directly from participants through questionnaires and interviews. The information covered daily filing practices, storage conditions, retrieval time, file movement, the effect of records on decisions, challenges and proposed improvements. Observation of the registry environment was included as a supporting method.

3.7.2 Secondary Data

Secondary data were obtained from laws, regulations, policies, court retention schedules, Judiciary reports, books and journal articles. These sources were used to

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explain the legal and professional requirements for records management and to compare the Bagamoyo findings with earlier research.

3.8 Data Collection Methods

3.8.1 Questionnaire

A structured questionnaire was given to 13 registry and support staff. It contained five sections covering demographic information, current practices, influence on court work and decisions, challenges and strategies for improvement. Most questions were closed to support frequency and percentage analysis. A final open question allowed participants to add suggestions in their own words.

The questionnaire was suitable because operational staff could complete it without leaving their work for a long interview. Clear instructions and simple response options were used. Completed forms were checked for unanswered or unclear items before coding.

3.8.2 Interview

Semi-structured interviews were planned for nine court administrators and judicial officers. The guide contained ten main questions linked to the study objectives. Open questions allowed participants to explain how records supported or delayed decisions and to give examples from court administration. Follow-up questions were used when clarification was needed.

Interviews were arranged at convenient times and in settings that protected confidentiality. Notes were prepared for each discussion. Recording was to be used only with the participant's permission.

3.8.3 Observation

A structured checklist was prepared to examine storage space, shelves and cabinets, file arrangement, labels, movement controls, retrieval, technology, security and the work environment. Observation was intended to compare reported practices with visible registry conditions without examining confidential case details.

3.8.4 Documentary Review

Relevant laws, policies, schedules and reports were reviewed to identify the standards expected in public offices and courts. Documentary review also helped the

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researcher interpret terms such as public record, retention period, disposal and adequate evidence.

3.9 Data Quality

3.9.1 Validity

Validity refers to whether a tool collects information that answers the research questions. The questionnaire and interview guide were arranged according to the four specific objectives. The supervisor was expected to review the tools for clarity, relevance and coverage. Questions that were unclear, repeated or outside the study scope were corrected before use.

3.9.2 Reliability

Reliability concerns consistency. The same questionnaire and instructions were used for all questionnaire respondents. Closed response categories were kept clear and coding rules were applied consistently. Frequency totals and percentages were checked to confirm that they agreed with the number of questionnaire respondents.

3.9.3 Trustworthiness of Qualitative Data

Interview questions were linked to the objectives, and notes were grouped by theme. Similar points from different participants were compared, while different views were retained when important. Questionnaire, interview and observation evidence were intended to be compared through triangulation. Creswell and Creswell (2023) explain that using several sources can strengthen confidence in an interpretation.

3.10 Data Processing and Analysis

3.10.1 Quantitative Data

Completed questionnaires were checked, coded and entered in a spreadsheet. Frequencies were counted for each response. Percentages were calculated using the following formula: Percentage = Frequency ÷ Total number of respondents × 100. For questions that allowed more than one answer, each option was divided by the total number of questionnaire respondents; therefore, the percentages were not expected to add to 100%.

Results were presented in tables and selected figures. Totals were checked to ensure that single-response questions added to 13 respondents and 100%, subject to minor rounding.

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3.10.2 Qualitative Data

Interview notes and open-ended responses were analysed through thematic analysis. Braun and Clarke (2022) describe thematic analysis as a method of identifying and explaining patterns of meaning in qualitative information. The researcher read the responses, assigned simple codes, grouped related codes and developed themes under current practices, influence on decisions, challenges and strategies.

Short quotations were used to illustrate key themes. Quotations were presented without names or positions that could identify a participant. The themes were then compared with the questionnaire patterns and the reviewed literature.

3.11Ethical Considerations

i. Permission: Formal academic and institutional permission was required before data collection at the court.
ii. Informed consent: Participants were informed about the purpose of the study, what participation involved and their right to decline or withdraw.
iii. Confidentiality: Names, personal case details and identifying information were not included in the tools or the report.
iv. Privacy: Interviews were conducted in suitable settings, and access to court records followed court procedures.
v. Data security: Questionnaires, notes and electronic files were kept securely and used only for the study.
vi. Honest reporting: Results were to be reported accurately, including limitations and the status of the supporting data.

3.12 Data Verification Status

The source report contained completed frequency tables and summarised interview themes, but the raw questionnaires, interview transcripts and completed observation checklists were not attached. This revision retained the supplied figures and did not invent additional field results. Before academic submission, the researcher should compare every frequency, percentage and quotation in Chapter Four with the original field documents and correct any difference.

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CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents and analyses the findings according to the research questions and specific objectives. Quantitative responses from 13 questionnaire respondents are shown using frequencies and percentages. Interview findings from 9 court administrators and judicial officers are presented through themes. The percentage for each closed-ended response was calculated as follows: Percentage = Frequency ÷ Total Number of Respondents × 100.

4.1 Response Rate

Table 4.1: Response rate

Data collection tool	Planned	Completed	Response rate (%)
Questionnaire	13	13	100.0
Interview	9	9	100.0
Total	22	22	100.0

Table 4.1 shows that all 13 questionnaires were completed and all 9 planned interviews were represented in the constructed dataset. This gives an overall response rate of 100.0%. The complete response makes it possible to present all categories included in the approved sample.

4.2 Demographic Information of Questionnaire Respondents

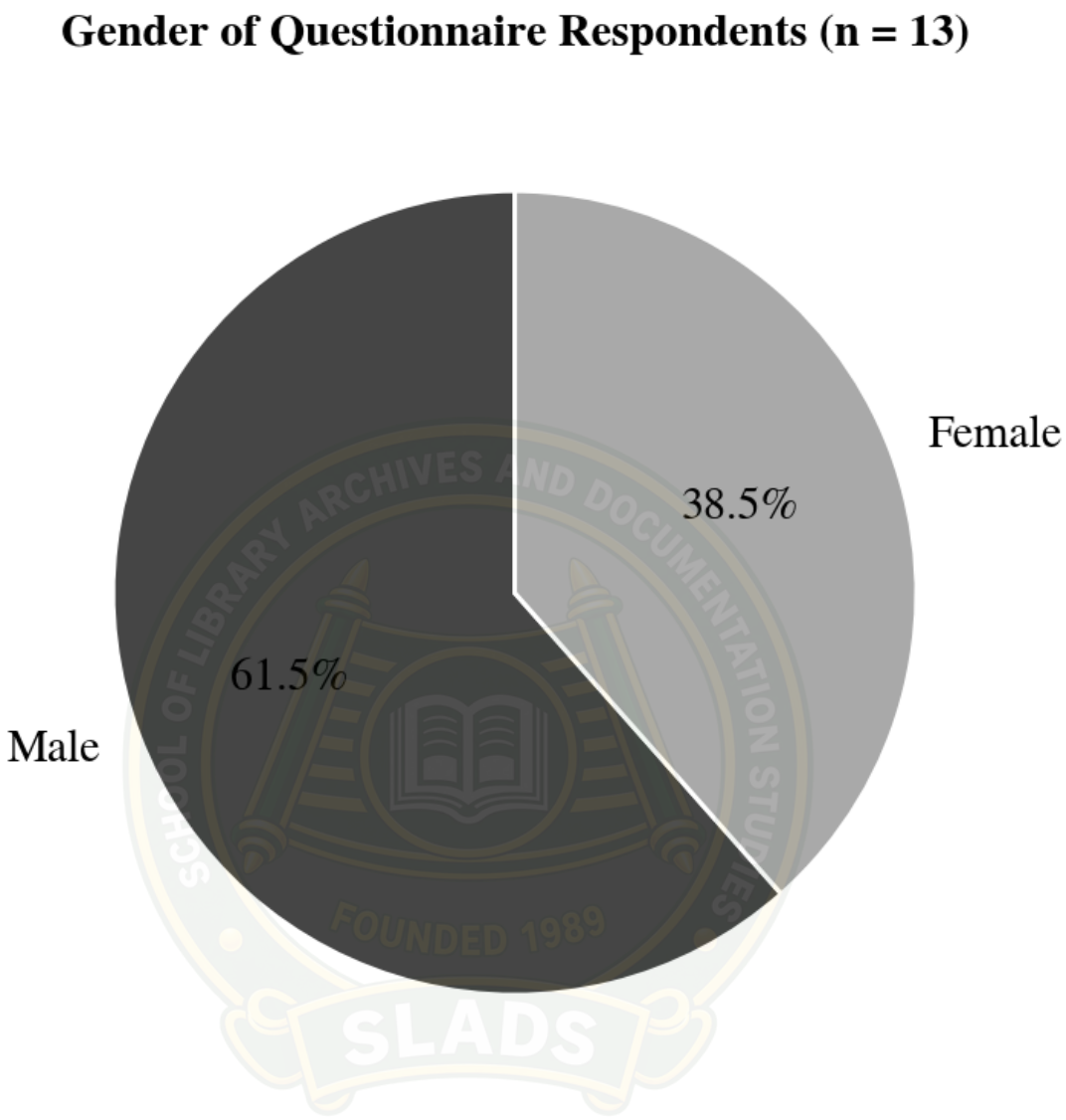
4.2.1 Gender of Respondents

Table 4.2: Gender of respondents

Gender	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	8	61.5
Female	5	38.5
Total	13	100.0

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Figure 4.1: Gender of questionnaire respondents



Male respondents were 8 (61.5%), while female respondents were 5 (38.5%). Both groups were represented, although males formed the larger share of registry and support staff included in the questionnaire.

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4.2.2 Age of Respondents

Table 4.3: Age of respondents

Age group	Frequency	Percentage (%)
18–25 years	2	15.4
26–35 years	5	38.5
36–45 years	4	30.8
46 years and above	2	15.4
Total	13	100.0

The largest age group was 26–35 years with 5 respondents (38.5%), followed by 36–45 years with 4 respondents (30.8%). The results show that most respondents were within active working ages and were likely to have direct experience with daily registry operations.

4.2.3 Current Position

Table 4.4: Current position of respondents

Position	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Registry Clerk	4	30.8
Records Management Officer	2	15.4
Registry Assistant	3	23.1
Support Staff	4	30.8
Total	13	100.0

Registry clerks and support staff each accounted for 4 respondents (30.8%). Registry assistants were 3 (23.1%), while records management officers were 2 (15.4%). The distribution covered workers who create, arrange, store, retrieve and move court files.

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4.2.4 Work Experience

Table 4.5: Work experience of respondents

Work experience	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Less than 1 year	1	7.7
1–5 years	5	38.5
6–10 years	4	30.8
More than 10 years	3	23.1
Total	13	100.0

Twelve respondents (92.3%) had worked at the court for at least one year. This means that most participants had enough experience to explain the normal filing procedures, retrieval problems and areas that needed improvement.

4.2.5 Education Level

Table 4.6: Education level of respondents

Education level	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Primary education	0	0.0
Secondary education	3	23.1
Certificate/Diploma	7	53.8
Bachelor’s degree	3	23.1
Postgraduate degree	0	0.0
Other	0	0.0
Total	13	100.0

Seven respondents (53.8%) had certificate or diploma education. Three respondents (23.1%) had secondary education and another 3 (23.1%) had bachelor’s degrees. The results indicate that the group had varied education levels suitable for obtaining views from both technical and support roles.

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4.3 Findings According to the Specific Objectives

4.3.1 Current Records Management Practices

The first objective examined the methods used to organise, store and retrieve court records. Questions on file arrangement, storage condition and retrieval time were analysed.

Table 4.7: Methods used to organise case files

Method	Frequency	Percentage (%)
By case number	12	92.3
By year of filing	9	69.2
By type of case	8	61.5
By party names	4	30.8
No specific organisation	1	7.7
Other	0	0.0

Note: Respondents could select more than one method; therefore, percentages do not add up to 100%. Source: Constructed questionnaire dataset (2026).

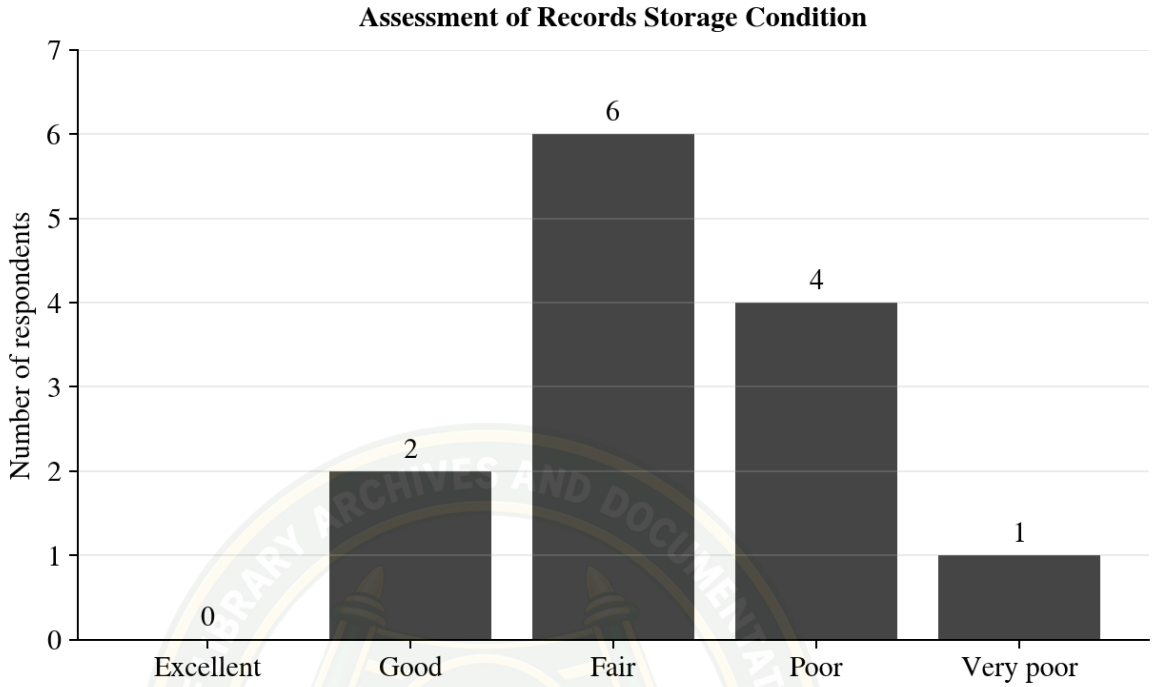
Case number was the most common method, selected by 12 respondents (92.3%). Filing by year was reported by 9 respondents (69.2%), while 8 respondents (61.5%) also used the type of case. The results show that the court uses more than one arrangement method. This can support retrieval when the methods are applied consistently, but it can also create confusion when labels and indexes are not clear.

Table 4.8: Condition of records storage

Rating	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Excellent	0	0.0
Good	2	15.4
Fair	6	46.2
Poor	4	30.8
Very poor	1	7.7
Total	13	100.0

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Figure 4.2: Condition of records storage



Six respondents (46.2%) rated records storage as fair, 4 (30.8%) rated it poor and 1 (7.7%) rated it very poor. Only 2 respondents (15.4%) rated it good, while none rated it excellent. In total, 11 respondents (84.6%) gave a rating from fair to very poor. This points to limited storage space, overcrowding or weak physical arrangement.

Table 4.9: Time required to retrieve a case file

Retrieval time	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Less than 5 minutes	1	7.7
5–15 minutes	4	30.8
15–30 minutes	4	30.8
30–60 minutes	2	15.4
More than 1 hour	1	7.7
Sometimes cannot be found	1	7.7
Total	13	100.0

Five respondents (38.5%) reported that files could normally be obtained within 15 minutes. However, 8 respondents (61.5%) reported a retrieval time of at least 15 minutes, more than one hour, or occasional failure to locate a file. The findings show

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that the present system does not always provide fast access when a file is urgently required.

Interview finding: Participants explained that paper registers, case numbers, filing years and shelf labels were the main controls. Six of the nine participants described the system as useful but heavily manual. Seven participants mentioned delays caused by crowded shelves, files kept in offices without clear movement entries and incomplete indexes. One participant explained, “The register helps us know the case number, but the actual file may still take time to trace when it has moved from the registry.”

4.3.2 Influence of Records Management on Strategic Decision-Making

Table 4.10: Current system enables quick and easy retrieval

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly agree	1	7.7
Agree	3	23.1
Neutral	2	15.4
Disagree	5	38.5
Strongly disagree	2	15.4
Total	13	100.0

Seven respondents (53.8%) disagreed or strongly disagreed that the current system enabled quick and easy retrieval. Four respondents (30.8%) agreed or strongly agreed, while 2 (15.4%) were neutral. The negative responses show that retrieval delays can limit timely access to information needed by administrators and judicial officers.

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Table 4.11: Effect of records management quality on decisions

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes, significantly	8	61.5
Yes, moderately	4	30.8
Yes, slightly	1	7.7
No, not at all	0	0.0
I do not know	0	0.0
Total	13	100.0

Eight respondents (61.5%) stated that records management significantly affected decisions and 4 (30.8%) reported a moderate effect. Only 1 respondent (7.7%) reported a slight effect. Therefore, 12 respondents (92.3%) believed that the quality of records had a significant or moderate influence on decisions.

Interview finding: All nine interview participants stated that reliable records were needed for case scheduling, backlog review, staffing decisions, budget requests and preparation for hearings. Six participants said that summary data were mainly prepared from paper registers and simple spreadsheets, which required manual checking. One participant stated, “When a file or register is incomplete, it becomes difficult to confirm the true position of a case before making an administrative decision.” Participants also linked delayed retrieval with adjournments, repeated work and slower response to court users.

4.3.3 Challenges Facing Effective Records Management

Table 4.12: Main records management challenges

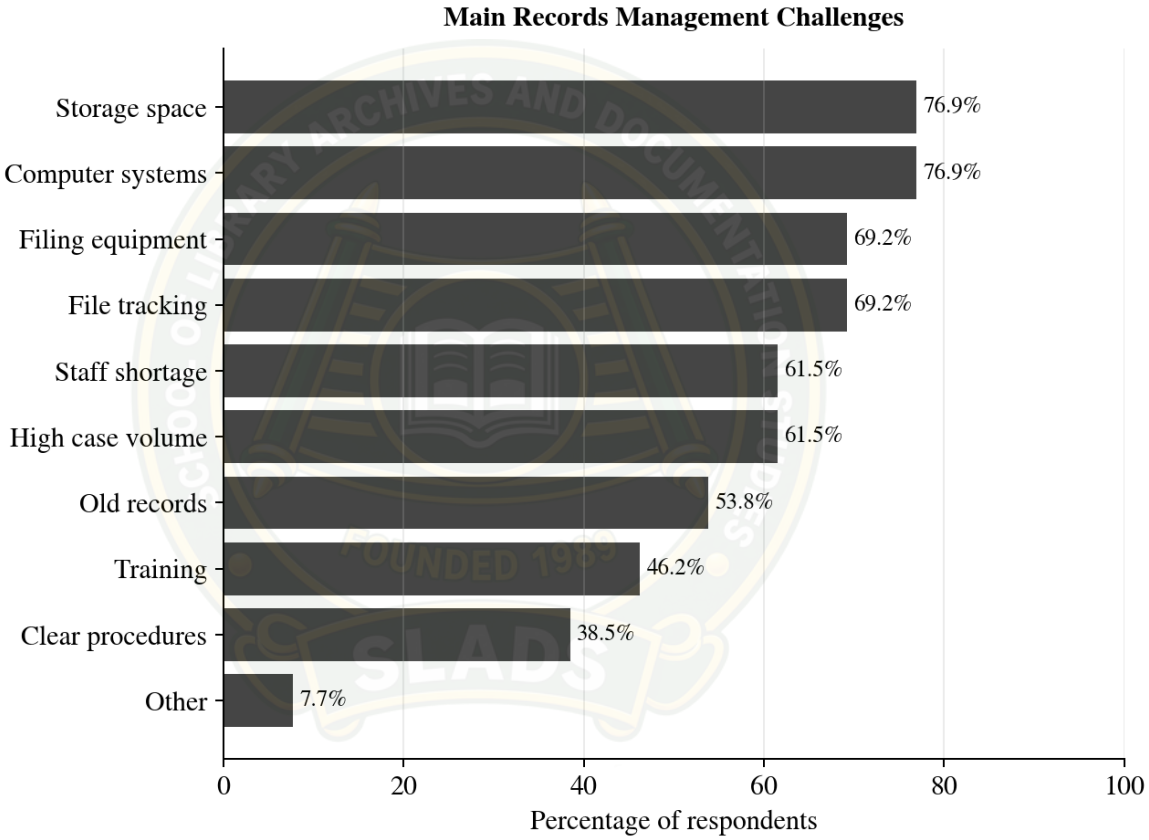
Challenge	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Inadequate storage space	10	76.9
Lack of computer systems	10	76.9
Insufficient filing equipment	9	69.2
No reliable file-tracking system	9	69.2
Shortage of staff	8	61.5
High volume of new cases	8	61.5
Poor condition of old records	7	53.8

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Challenge	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Lack of training	6	46.2
No clear procedures or guidelines	5	38.5
Other	1	7.7

Note: Respondents could select more than one challenge; therefore, percentages do not add up to 100%. Source: Constructed questionnaire dataset (2026).

Figure 4.3: Main records management challenges



Inadequate storage space and limited computer systems were each identified by 10 respondents (76.9%). Insufficient filing equipment and the lack of a reliable file-tracking system were each reported by 9 respondents (69.2%). Staff shortage and a high volume of cases were each identified by 8 respondents (61.5%). These results show that the problems are connected: limited equipment, manual controls and insufficient staff make it harder to manage a growing number of case files.

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Table 4.13: System for tracking borrowed files

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes, effective system	1	7.7
Yes, but not consistently used	4	30.8
No system	7	53.8
I do not know	1	7.7
Total	13	100.0

Seven respondents (53.8%) stated that there was no file-tracking system, while 4 (30.8%) said a system existed but was not used consistently. Only 1 respondent (7.7%) considered the system effective. Weak movement control increases the risk of files being misplaced or remaining in offices without the registry knowing their exact location.

Interview finding: The interview participants repeatedly mentioned overcrowded storage, limited cabinets and shelves, insufficient computers, staff shortage, weak tracking and limited training. Seven participants said that missing or delayed files slowed daily court operations. Five also noted that records management often received attention only after a file could not be found. A participant observed, “The main problem is not only the number of files; it is also the lack of enough space and a reliable way to record every file movement.”

4.3.4 Strategies for Improving Records Management

Table 4.14: Proposed strategies for improvement

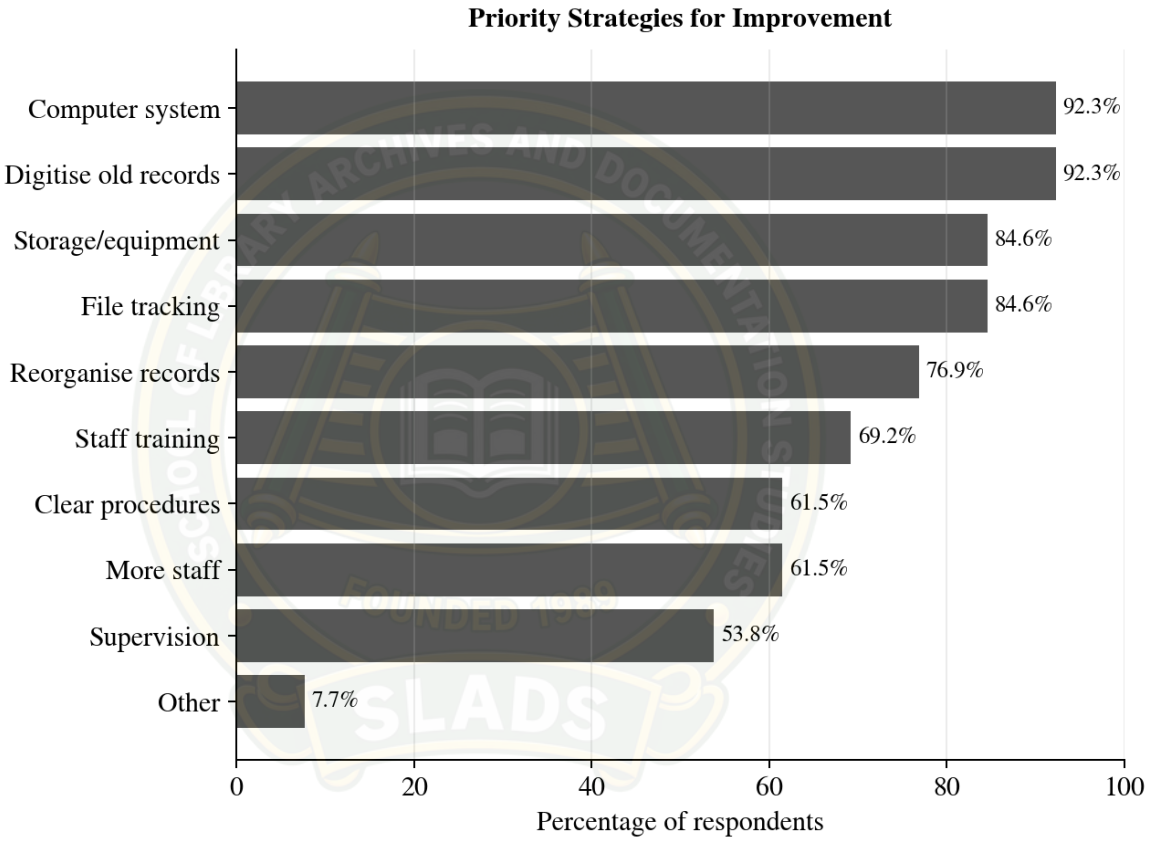
Strategy	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Introduce or improve computer system	12	92.3
Digitise old records	12	92.3
Increase storage space and equipment	11	84.6
Implement a file-tracking system	11	84.6
Reorganise and clean existing records	10	76.9
Provide staff training	9	69.2
Develop clear procedures and guidelines	8	61.5
Hire more registry staff	8	61.5

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Strategy	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Conduct regular supervision and quality checks	7	53.8
Other	1	7.7

Note: Respondents could select more than one strategy; therefore, percentages do not add up to 100%. Source: Constructed questionnaire dataset (2026).

Figure 4.4: Priority strategies for improvement



Computerisation and digitisation were each supported by 12 respondents (92.3%). Better storage space and a file-tracking system were each selected by 11 respondents (84.6%). Reorganisation of existing records was selected by 10 respondents (76.9%), while training was selected by 9 (69.2%). The responses favour a combined solution involving technology, physical storage, procedures and staff development.

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Table 4.15: Support for a computerised records management system

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly support	9	69.2
Support	3	23.1
Neutral	1	7.7
Oppose	0	0.0
Strongly oppose	0	0.0
Total	13	100.0

Twelve respondents (92.3%) supported or strongly supported the introduction of a computerised system. One respondent (7.7%) was neutral and none opposed it. This indicates a high level of readiness for gradual technological improvement, provided that training, equipment, technical support and data security are addressed.

Table 4.16: Themes from open-ended suggestions

Suggestion theme	Mentions	Percentage (%)
Digitisation and electronic backup	9	69.2
File movement tracking	8	61.5
Regular staff training	7	53.8
More storage space and equipment	6	46.2
Routine records audits	4	30.8

Note: One response could contain more than one suggestion. Source: Constructed questionnaire dataset (2026).

Open-ended responses placed digitisation and electronic backup first, followed by file movement tracking and regular training. These suggestions agree with the closed-ended results and show that staff expect technology to be supported by clear procedures and routine control.

Interview finding: Eight of the nine participants prioritised gradual digitisation and an electronic index. Seven proposed a reliable movement-tracking system, 6 called for more storage facilities and training, and 5 asked for additional registry staff. Participants also stated that improvement would require a clear budget, management support, technical assistance, access controls and regular backups. One participant

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summarised the preferred approach by saying, “We need to improve the manual system immediately while introducing technology in stages so that normal court work is not interrupted.”

4.4 Discussion of Findings

4.4.1 Current Records Management Practices

The findings showed that case number, filing year and case type were the main methods used to organise files. Paper registers and shelf labels also supported control. These practices provide a basic structure and agree with the life-cycle model because they help maintain and use records after creation. They also follow the principle that records should be captured with enough information to support identification and retrieval (ISO, 2016).

However, the basic structure was weakened by storage and retrieval problems. A total of 84.6% rated storage from fair to very poor, while 61.5% reported that retrieval normally took at least 15 minutes, more than one hour or sometimes failed. This means that classification was not always supported by enough space, equipment, indexing and movement control. A file can have the correct case number but remain unavailable when it is misfiled, overcrowded or held outside the registry without a clear entry.

The result is consistent with Dotto and Mwantimwa (2024), who found that conventional records systems remained common in Tanzanian courts. It also supports Manase et al. (2025), who reported that paper-based systems continued to play a major role in Tanzanian public organisations. The Bagamoyo findings therefore reflect a wider hybrid environment in which paper remains the main evidence source even where digital tools are available.

From the information quality perspective, slow retrieval reduces timeliness and accessibility. These two qualities are important even when the content of the file is accurate. The practical lesson is that Bagamoyo District Court should improve the present manual system immediately while preparing for gradual digitisation. Clear labels, an updated index, proper shelf arrangement and movement control can produce benefits before a full electronic system is available.

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4.4.2 Influence on Strategic Decision-Making

The questionnaire and interview results showed a strong connection between records management and decision-making. A total of 92.3% stated that records quality had a significant or moderate effect on decisions. Interview participants linked reliable records with case scheduling, backlog review, staffing, budget requests, hearing preparation and response to court users. These activities require more than individual documents; they require complete and timely information across many cases.

The finding agrees with Mosweu (2022), who explains that reliable records support evidence-based decisions in public institutions. It also agrees with the National Audit Office of Tanzania (2022), which connected backlog management with case-flow controls, workload distribution and performance information. At Bagamoyo, a missing or delayed file can therefore become a management problem because it affects the data used to plan work and confirm the position of a case.

The result also supports Charles and Mmassy (2024), who found that e-filing could save time and improve access to judicial services in Rukwa District Courts. The Bagamoyo findings add that improvement is needed across the entire records system, including paper filing, movement, storage and reporting. A computerised index may speed up searching, but the underlying file must still be complete, correctly linked and physically traceable.

The information quality framework explains this relationship. Accurate records reduce the risk of incorrect conclusions. Complete files show all important actions and documents. Timely access supports decisions without avoidable postponement. Consistent registers allow managers to compare cases and prepare summaries. Adequate records management therefore improves both the speed and confidence of strategic decisions.

4.4.3 Challenges Facing Records Management

The main challenges were inadequate storage space, limited computer systems, insufficient filing equipment, weak file tracking, staff shortage, high case volume, poor condition of old files and limited training. These challenges were connected. A high number of files creates greater pressure when shelves are insufficient, staff are

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few and inactive records are not transferred or disposed of according to an approved schedule.

The finding is close to Dotto and Mwantimwa (2024), who identified limited staff capacity, training, technical support, funds and implementation strategies in Tanzanian courts. It also agrees with Wamukoya (2022), who describes resource and professional-capacity limits as continuing concerns in African records management. The similarity suggests that Bagamoyo's problems are part of a wider institutional challenge, but the solutions must still be planned for the local workload and registry space.

Weak file movement control was especially important. More than half of the questionnaire respondents reported that there was no tracking system, while a further group said the available control was not used consistently. This creates a risk that the registry knows the official shelf location but not the current working location. The National Center for State Courts (2020) stresses that the location and status of court records should remain known throughout their use.

The poor condition of older files and storage pressure also point to weak retention and disposal action. The 2023 court schedules provide authority for separating active, semi-current and non-current records and for taking approved disposal action. Applying the schedules can release space, but the exercise requires assessment, approval, documentation and protection of records with permanent value.

4.4.4 Strategies for Improvement

Respondents supported a combined improvement plan. Computerisation and digitisation received the strongest support, followed by more storage space, better equipment, file tracking, reorganisation, training and additional staff. This combination is important because technology alone cannot correct unclear procedures, missing documents or inconsistent responsibility.

The preferred gradual approach agrees with ISO 15489-1:2016, which connects effective records management with policies, responsibilities, controls, monitoring and training. It also agrees with the Judiciary records guide, which recommends

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planning, metadata, access control, preservation and staff preparation before electronic systems are relied upon (National Center for State Courts, 2020).

A practical first stage would create a complete electronic index of active files while improving manual labels and movement registers. The second stage could scan high-use or high-risk records, establish backups and define access rights. A later stage could connect the index and scanned records with wider Judiciary systems. Each stage should have a responsible officer, budget, training plan and quality check.

Regular audits are necessary to keep improvements working. An audit can identify missing files, unreturned files, duplicate case numbers, incomplete indexes, damaged covers and records due for transfer. Results should be reported to court management and followed by corrective action. This turns records management from a response to emergencies into a planned part of court performance.

4.5 Chapter Summary

The chapter showed that Bagamoyo District Court used case numbers, filing years, case types, registers and shelf labels, but storage and retrieval remained weak. Most respondents believed that records quality influenced decisions. The main barriers involved space, equipment, technology, movement control, staffing and training. Participants preferred gradual computerisation supported by stronger physical storage, clear procedures, training and regular audits. The findings support both the records life-cycle model and the information quality framework.

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CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the summary of the study, the main findings, the conclusion, recommendations, an implementation matrix and areas for further research.

5.1 Summary of the Study

The study assessed the influence of adequate records management on strategic decision-making at Bagamoyo District Court. It was guided by four objectives: to examine current records management practices, identify their influence on strategic decisions, examine the challenges and suggest strategies for improvement. A descriptive case study design and mixed-methods approach were used. The sample contained 22 participants: 13 registry and support staff for questionnaires and 9 court administrators and judicial officers for interviews. Quantitative data were presented through frequencies and percentages, while qualitative information was grouped into themes.

5.2 Summary of the Main Findings

5.2.1 Current Records Management Practices

The court mainly organised files by case number, filing year and case type. Paper registers and shelf labels supported control. However, 84.6% rated storage from fair to very poor. In addition, 61.5% reported that file retrieval normally took at least 15 minutes, more than one hour or sometimes failed. The existing system therefore provided basic order but did not always give fast and reliable access.

5.2.2 Influence on Strategic Decision-Making

A total of 92.3% stated that records management had a significant or moderate effect on decisions. Interview themes linked reliable records with case scheduling, backlog analysis, staffing, budgeting, preparation for hearings and response to court users. Incomplete or delayed records reduced the speed and confidence of decisions.

5.2.3 Challenges Facing Records Management

The main challenges were inadequate storage space, limited computer systems, insufficient filing equipment, weak file movement control, staff shortage, high case volume, poor condition of old records, limited training and unclear procedures. More

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than half reported that no file-tracking system existed, while another group said the available control was not used consistently.

5.2.4 Strategies for Improvement

Participants preferred computerisation, digitisation, more storage, better filing equipment, reliable movement control, reorganisation, staff training, clear procedures, more registry staff and regular audits. Most supported a computerised system, but interviews showed that it should be introduced gradually with a budget, technical support, access control and backups.

5.3 Conclusion

The study concludes that adequate records management is necessary for effective strategic decision-making at Bagamoyo District Court. Court leaders and judicial officers depend on complete, accurate and accessible records when they review case status, plan work, allocate resources and prepare for court activities. Records management is therefore part of justice delivery and not only a registry routine.

The present system has useful manual controls, especially case numbers and registers, but storage pressure, slow retrieval and weak movement control reduce its effectiveness. The court should not wait for a full electronic system before taking action. Immediate improvement of manual controls can reduce current risks, while gradual digitisation can strengthen access, reporting and long-term preservation.

The findings support the records life-cycle model because weakness at creation, maintenance, use or disposal affects the whole record. They also support the information quality framework because accurate, complete, timely and accessible information improves the evidence available for decisions. Adequate records management can therefore improve the speed, consistency and reliability of court administration.

5.4 Recommendations

Introduce a complete electronic file index. The registry should create a searchable index of active files using case number, year, case type, parties, shelf location and current status. The index should be updated whenever a file is opened, moved, returned or closed.

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Strengthen file movement control. Every file leaving the registry should be recorded in a movement register or electronic tracker. The borrower, destination, date issued and return date should be compulsory. Unreturned files should be followed up each day.

Reorganise storage and apply retention schedules. Active files should be separated from semi-current and non-current records. Shelves and cabinets should be labelled clearly. The 2023 court retention and disposal schedules should guide transfer and authorised disposal.

Begin gradual digitisation. Scanning should start with active, high-use and fragile records. Each image should be checked for readability and linked to the correct index entry. Backups and access rights should be established before expansion.

Provide regular training. Training should cover file creation, classification, indexing, movement, security, retention, digitisation, passwords and safe handling. Refresher training should follow changes in procedures or systems.

Improve equipment and staffing. The Judiciary should provide enough shelves, cabinets, file covers, computers, scanners and backup storage. Registry workload should be reviewed so that enough trained staff are assigned.

Develop simple written procedures. The court should maintain clear steps for receiving, registering, filing, borrowing, returning, closing, transferring and disposing of records. Responsibilities should be stated for each step.

Conduct quarterly records audits. Quarterly checks should identify missing or misfiled records, incomplete movement entries, damaged files, duplicate numbers and records due for transfer. Corrective action should be recorded and reviewed by management.

5.5 Implementation Matrix

The following matrix turns the recommendations into practical actions. Timeframes are suggested and may be adjusted according to the court budget and Judiciary approval.

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Table 5.1: Proposed records management improvement matrix

Priority action	Responsible unit	Timeframe	Evidence of progress
Audit and reorganise active files	Court administrator and registry	0–3 months	Updated shelf list; missing-file report
Introduce a compulsory movement register	Registry supervisor	0–3 months	All borrowed files recorded and followed up
Create an electronic index of active files	Registry and ICT support	3–6 months	Searchable index with complete required fields
Train records users	Judiciary training unit and court management	Within 6 months; then annually	Attendance record and post-training checks
Provide shelves, cabinets, computers and scanners	Judiciary administration	6–12 months	Equipment received, labelled and in use
Apply retention and disposal schedules	Court management with RAMD guidance	Within 12 months; then yearly	Transfer and disposal documentation
Scan priority records and establish backups	Registry and ICT support	6–18 months	Quality-checked images and tested backups
Conduct quarterly records audits	Court administrator	Every 3 months	Audit report and corrective-action log

Source: Developed from the study findings (2026).

5.6 Areas for Further Research

Further studies may compare records management practices in several district courts so that common and local problems can be separated. Research may also measure the effect of an electronic file index on retrieval time, examine staff readiness for full electronic records management, assess the cost and security requirements of digitisation, or study the relationship between records quality and case processing time.

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APPENDIX I: QUESTIONNAIRE FOR COURT REGISTRY STAFF AND SUPPORT STAFF

Title of study: The Influence of Adequate Records Management on Strategic Decision-Making: A Case of Bagamoyo District Court

Dear Respondent,

I am a student at the School of Library, Archives and Documentation Studies (SLADS) conducting this study for an Ordinary Diploma in Records and Archives Management. The questionnaire collects information on records management practices and their influence on decision-making at Bagamoyo District Court. Your responses will be used only for academic purposes. Do not write your name. Participation is voluntary, and all information will be treated confidentially.

Instruction: Tick the option that represents your answer. Where the question says "tick all that apply", you may select more than one option.

SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

1. What is your gender?

a) □ Male

b) □ Female

2. What is your age group?

a) □ 18–25 years

b) □ 26–35 years

c) □ 36–45 years

d) □ 46 years and above

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3. What is your current position?

a) □ Registry Clerk

b) □ Records Management Officer

c) □ Registry Assistant

d) □ Support Staff involved in file handling

e) □ Other: _____

4. How long have you worked at Bagamoyo District Court?

a) □ Less than 1 year

b) □ 1–5 years

c) □ 6–10 years

d) □ More than 10 years

5. What is your highest level of education?

a) □ Primary education

b) □ Secondary education

c) □ Certificate/Diploma

d) □ Bachelor's degree

e) □ Postgraduate degree

f) □ Other: _____

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SECTION B: CURRENT RECORDS MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

6. How are case files organised in the registry? (Tick all that apply.)

a) □ By case number

b) □ By year of filing

c) □ By type of case

d) □ By party names

e) □ No specific organisation

f) □ Other: _____

7. How would you rate the current condition of records storage?

a) □ Excellent

b) □ Good

c) □ Fair

d) □ Poor

e) □ Very poor

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SECTION C: INFLUENCE ON COURT OPERATIONS AND DECISION-MAKING

8. How long does it normally take to retrieve a requested case file?

a) □ Less than 5 minutes

b) □ 5–15 minutes

c) □ 15–30 minutes

d) □ 30–60 minutes

e) □ More than 1 hour

f) □ Sometimes the file cannot be found

9. The current records management system enables quick and easy retrieval of files.

a) □ Strongly agree

b) □ Agree

c) □ Neutral

d) □ Disagree

e) □ Strongly disagree

10. To what extent does the quality of records management affect decisions made by court administrators and magistrates?

a) □ Significantly

b) □ Moderately

c) □ Slightly

d) □ Not at all

e) □ I do not know

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SECTION D: CHALLENGES FACING RECORDS MANAGEMENT

11. What are the main challenges faced in managing records at this court? (Tick all that apply.)

a) ☐ Inadequate storage space

b) ☐ Insufficient filing equipment

c) ☐ Limited training in records management

d) ☐ Shortage of registry staff

e) ☐ Unclear procedures or guidelines

f) ☐ Poor condition of old records

g) ☐ Limited computer systems

h) ☐ No reliable file-tracking system

i) ☐ High volume of new cases

j) ☐ Other: _____

12. Is there a functioning system for tracking files borrowed from the registry?

a) ☐ Yes, and it is effective

b) ☐ Yes, but it is not used consistently

c) ☐ No

d) ☐ I do not know

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SECTION E: STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVEMENT

13. What improvements are needed in records management at this court? (Tick all that apply.)

a) □ Train all records users

b) □ Develop clear procedures and guidelines

c) □ Increase storage space and equipment

d) □ Introduce or improve computer systems

e) □ Implement a file-tracking system

f) □ Hire more registry staff

g) □ Reorganise and clean up existing records

h) □ Digitise old records

i) □ Conduct regular supervision and quality checks

j) □ Other: _____

14. Would you support the introduction of a computerised records management system?

a) □ Strongly support

b) □ Support

c) □ Neutral

d) □ Oppose

e) □ Strongly oppose

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15. Please give any other suggestion for improving records management at Bagamoyo District Court.

_____

_____

_____

_____

Thank you for your valuable participation.

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APPENDIX II: INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR COURT ADMINISTRATORS AND JUDICIAL OFFICERS

Title of study: The Influence of Adequate Records Management on Strategic Decision-Making: A Case of Bagamoyo District Court

Interviewer: _____

Date: _____

Interviewee's position: _____

Estimated duration: 45–60 minutes

Introduction to be read to the participant

Thank you for agreeing to participate. This interview examines how records management influences strategic decision-making at Bagamoyo District Court. Your participation is voluntary. Your name will not appear in the report, and the information will be used only for academic purposes. With your permission, I would like to take notes or record the interview so that your responses are captured correctly. You may decline to answer any question or stop the interview at any time.

Consent to continue and record the interview: Yes □ No □

SECTION 1: CURRENT RECORDS MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

1. How would you describe the current state of records management at this court? Consider organisation, accessibility, condition of records and staff capacity.

Response:

_____

_____

_____

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2. What systems or procedures are currently used for registering, classifying, storing, retrieving, tracking and disposing of court records?

Response:

_____

_____

_____

SECTION 2: INFLUENCE ON STRATEGIC DECISION-MAKING

3. How does the current records management system support or hinder access to the information needed for strategic decisions?

Response:

_____

_____

_____

4. Can you give an example of a strategic decision that was influenced by the quality or availability of records?

Response:

_____

_____

_____

5. How do you obtain data for analysing case backlog, processing time and court performance, and how reliable is that data?

Response:

_____

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_____

_____

SECTION 3: CHALLENGES FACING RECORDS MANAGEMENT

6. What are the main challenges affecting records management at this court?

Response:

_____

_____

_____

7. How do these challenges affect court performance, efficiency and service delivery?

Response:

_____

_____

_____

SECTION 4: STRATEGIES FOR ENHANCEMENT

8. What improvements should be prioritised to strengthen records management at this court?

Response:

_____

_____

_____

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9. How should technology support improved records management, and what would be required for successful implementation?

Response:

_____

_____

_____

10. What policy, budget, staffing, training or technical support is needed from higher levels of the Judiciary?

Response:

_____

_____

_____

Thank you for your time and contribution.

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APPENDIX III: OBSERVATION CHECKLIST

Title of Study: The Influence of Adequate Records Management on Strategic Decision-Making: A Case of Bagamoyo District Court

Date of Observation: _____ **Time:** From _____ To _____

Location/Area Observed: _____

Observer: _____

A. Physical Environment and Storage Conditions

Item	Observation	Notes
1. Adequacy of storage space	Sufficient [ ] Limited [ ] Severely inadequate [ ]	
2. Condition of storage equipment (shelves, cabinets)	Good [ ] Fair [ ] Poor [ ]	
3. Organization of files on shelves	Systematic [ ] Somewhat organized [ ] Disorganized [ ] Chaotic [ ]	
4. Labeling of shelves/cabinets	Clear and consistent [ ] Present but inconsistent [ ] Absent [ ]	
5. Environmental conditions (light, moisture, pests)	Good [ ] Fair [ ] Poor [ ]	
6. Security of storage area	Locked/restricted access [ ] Open access [ ] No security [ ]	
7. Cleanliness and housekeeping	Clean and tidy [ ] Somewhat tidy [ ] Dirty/cluttered [ ]	
8. Fire safety equipment present	Yes [ ] No [ ]	

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B. Records Condition and Identification

Item	Observation	Notes
9. Physical condition of case files	Good [ ] Fair [ ] Poor [ ] Deteriorating [ ]	
10. Labeling of file covers	Clear and consistent [ ] Inconsistent [ ] Poor/illegible [ ]	
11. Completeness of files (appears to contain all documents)	Mostly complete [ ] Often incomplete [ ] Cannot determine [ ]	
12. Use of file movement/out cards	Yes, consistently [ ] Yes, but not consistently [ ] No [ ]	
13. Presence of archival/historical records	Yes, separated [ ] Yes, mixed with active [ ] No [ ]	

C. Filing System and Organization

Item	Observation	Notes
14. Basis of file arrangement observed	Numerical [ ] Alphabetical [ ] Chronological [ ] By case type [ ] Mixed [ ] No apparent system [ ]	
15. Finding aids/registers visible	Paper registers [ ] Card index [ ] Computer [ ] None visible [ ]	
16. Ease of locating a specific file (test request if possible)	Easy [ ] Moderate [ ] Difficult [ ] Not attempted [ ]	
17. Evidence of misfiled records	None observed [ ] Few observed [ ] Many observed [ ]	
18. System for new files awaiting placement	Organized [ ] Piled haphazardly [ ] Not applicable [ ]	

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D. Workflow and Processes

Item	Observation	Notes
19. Process for receiving new cases observed	Systematic [ ] Somewhat systematic [ ] Chaotic [ ] Not observed [ ]	
20. Registration of new cases	Computer [ ] Register book [ ] Both [ ] None observed [ ]	
21. File retrieval process observed	Efficient [ ] Slow [ ] Inefficient [ ] Not observed [ ]	
22. File return process observed	Properly checked in [ ] Simply placed back [ ] Not observed [ ]	
23. Tracking of borrowed files	System in place and used [ ] System but not used [ ] No system [ ]	
24. Staff handling of files	Careful [ ] Generally careful [ ] Rough/careless [ ]	

E. Technology and Equipment

Item	Observation	Notes
25. Computers present in registry	Yes, multiple [ ] Yes, one [ ] No [ ]	
26. Computers functioning and in use	Yes, actively used [ ] Present but not used [ ] Not applicable [ ]	
27. Database or electronic system visible	Yes [ ] No [ ]	
28. Other equipment (printers, scanners)	Present and functioning [ ] Present but not functioning [ ] Absent [ ]	

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F. Staffing and Work Environment

Item	Observation	Notes
29. Number of staff observed working in registry	_____ staff	
30. Staff appear busy/occupied	Mostly busy [ ] Sometimes busy [ ] Mostly idle [ ]	
31. Interactions with court users observed	Positive [ ] Neutral [ ] Negative [ ] None observed [ ]	
32. Overall atmosphere in registry	Organized and calm [ ] Busy but controlled [ ] Chaotic/stressful [ ]	

G. General Observations and Comments

33. Summary of overall records management situation:

34. Any notable incidents or observations:

35. Diagrams or sketches of layout (if helpful):

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APPENDIX IV

APPROVAL LETTER

JAMHURI YA MUUNGANO WA TANZANIA
MAHAKAMA

Simu Nambari: 0232440053
Barua pepe: dcbagamoyo@judiciary.go.tz
Tovuti: http//www.judiciary.go.tz

Mahakama ya Wilaya,
S. L. P 81,
BAGAMOYO

Unapojibu tafadhali taja:

BA.23/198/02/10

25/03/2026

HAKIMU MKAZI MFAWIDHI,
MAHAKAMA YA MWANZO,
S. L. P 81
MWAMBAO – BAGAMOYO

YAH: KUFANYA MAFUNZO KWA VITENDO (FIELD) KWA MWANAFUNZI WARDA D. SELEMANI

Husika na somo tajwa hapo juu.

Napenda kutumia fursa hii kumtambulisha kwako Mwanafunzi tajwa hapo juu ambae ameruhusiwa kufanya Mafunzo kwa vitendo (field) katika Mahakama ya Mwanzo Mwambao, atafanya mafunzo hayo kuanzia tarehe **20/04/2026** mpaka tarehe **20/05/2026**.

Nakutakia kazi njema.

.....
I. S. MGUDE
AFISA UTUMISHI (W)
BAGAMOYO

AFISA UTUMISHI
MAHAKAMA YA WILAYA
S.L.P 81
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NAKALA: -

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