SCHOOL OF LIBRARY ARCHIVES AND DOCUMENTATION STUDIES (SLADS)

RESEARCH REPORT ON:

ETHICAL PRACTICE IN RECORDS MANAGEMENT AND THEIR IMPACT ON TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY: A CASE STUDY OF BAGAMOYO DISTRICT COURT

BY

Nasra Amri Lemjusi

A Research Report Submitted to the School of Library, Archives and Documentation Studies in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Award of Ordinary Diploma in Records and Archives Management

AUGUST 2026

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CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that this research report titled "Ethical Practice in Records Management and Their Impact on Transparency and Accountability: A Case Study of Bagamoyo District Court" has been submitted for examination with my approval as the supervisor.

Supervisor's Name: MR. LYIMO

Signature: _____

Date: _____

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I, Nasra Amri Lemjusi, hereby declare that this research report is my own original work and has not been submitted for any degree or diploma in any other university or institution. All sources of information used in this report have been duly acknowledged by means of references.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I wish to express my sincere gratitude to Almighty God for His grace and guidance throughout this research endeavour.

I extend my heartfelt appreciation to my research supervisor, Mr. Lyimo, for the invaluable guidance, constructive criticism, and continuous support provided during the planning, execution, and writing of this study. The patience and expertise demonstrated have been instrumental in shaping this work.

My profound thanks go to the management and staff of Bagamoyo District Court for granting me permission to conduct this study and for their cooperation during data collection. The willingness of the respondents to share their experiences and insights is deeply appreciated.

I am also grateful to the academic staff of the School of Library, Archives and Documentation Studies for equipping me with the knowledge and skills necessary to undertake this research. My fellow students have been a source of encouragement and intellectual stimulation throughout this academic journey.

Finally, I acknowledge my family for their unwavering moral and financial support, patience, and prayers during my studies. Their sacrifices have made this achievement possible.

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DEDICATION

This research report is dedicated to my loving parents, whose unwavering support and encouragement have been my foundation; to my siblings for their patience and understanding; and to all records management practitioners striving to improve transparency and accountability in Tanzania through ethical record-keeping.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

EAC – East African Community

ICA – International Council on Archives

IRMT – International Records Management Trust

ISO – International Organization for Standardization

LHRC – Legal and Human Rights Centre

NARA – National Archives and Records Administration

PO-PSMGG – President's Office, Public Service Management and Good Governance

RAM – Records and Archives Management

SAA – Society of American Archivists

SLADS – School of Library, Archives and Documentation Studies

SPSS – Statistical Package for the Social Sciences

UNODC – United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

URT – United Republic of Tanzania

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ABSTRACT

This study examined ethical practices in records management and their impact on transparency and accountability at Bagamoyo District Court. It was guided by three objectives: assessing ethical records management practices, analyzing the relationship between professional ethics and access to information, and identifying implementation challenges. A descriptive case study design with a mixed-methods approach was used. The study involved 75 participants, including 45 court staff and 30 court users, selected from a population of 110 respondents.

Data were collected through questionnaires, interviews, document analysis, and observation. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, while qualitative data underwent thematic analysis. Findings showed that although ethical principles such as confidentiality, integrity, and accountability are recognized, their implementation remains weak. About 68% of respondents had not received formal records management training, 72% reported missing or lost case files, and 64% identified unauthorized access to confidential records as a major concern. Additionally, 76% agreed that proper records management significantly enhances transparency.

The study identified inadequate storage facilities, unclear policies, poor staff attitudes, and insufficient funding as key challenges. It concluded that ethical records management is essential for transparency and accountability but is hindered by gaps between policy and practice. The study recommends comprehensive ethical guidelines, mandatory staff training, stronger access controls, and increased investment in records management infrastructure.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

1.0 Introduction

This chapter provides the background of the study on the assessment of records management practices for effective service provision in primary schools, using Majengo Primary School in Bagamoyo District as a case study. It covers the introduction and background to the study, the statement of the problem, objectives of the study, research questions, significance of the study, scope of the study, definition of key terms, and the limitations of the study.

1.1. Background to the Study

The management of records constitutes the backbone of any functional democracy. In an era defined by data-driven decision making, ethical practices in record-keeping are no longer merely administrative tasks but moral imperatives. Ethical record management ensures that information is created, maintained, and disposed of in a way that protects the integrity of the data and the rights of the individuals involved. When ethics are sidelined, transparency fades, and accountability the lifeblood of public trust collapses (International Council on Archives [ICA], 2020).

Globally, the standard for record management is anchored by the International Organization for Standardization (ISO). Specifically, ISO 15489-1:2021 defines records as assets that must be managed with authenticity, reliability, integrity, and usability. According to the ICA, ethical record-keeping is a fundamental requirement for the protection of human rights and the strengthening of democracy. In developed nations, organizations like the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) in the

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United States set the gold standard, emphasizing that without proper documentation, the right to know is effectively silenced (NARA, 2022).

In the African context, the transition from paper-based to digital systems has presented both opportunities and ethical hurdles. Many African nations struggle with the politicization of records, where information is sometimes manipulated to shield officials from scrutiny. The ICA Africa regional branch highlights that while many nations have adopted National Archives Acts, the ethical enforcement of these laws remains inconsistent. The challenge lies in moving beyond mere storage to ensuring that records serve as a transparent memory of the nation (Kemoni, & Wamukoya, 2021).

In East Africa, the push for e-Government initiatives has necessitated a shift in how records are managed. Countries within the East African Community (EAC) have increasingly recognized that transparency is linked to regional economic integration. However, issues such as record silencing (the intentional destruction of sensitive files) and inadequate data privacy laws persist. Ethical practices here are often viewed through the lens of anti-corruption; without a verifiable paper trail, holding leadership accountable for regional development funds remains a significant challenge (Ngulube, 2020).

In Tanzania, record management is governed by the Records and Archives Management Act No. 3 of 2022 (Cap 17). The Tanzanian government has made strides in modernizing its systems through the President's Office, Public Service Management and Good Governance (PO-PSMGG). Despite these legal frameworks, the practical application of ethics such as maintaining the "chain of custody" and preventing unauthorized alterations is still evolving (United Republic of Tanzania [URT], 2020).

The national commitment to *Hapa Kazi Tu* and the broader agenda of good governance depend substantially on the capacity of the National Archives of Tanzania to preserve the integrity, authenticity, and reliability of public records against corruption, negligence, and administrative decay (IRMT, 2021). In an increasingly information-driven environment,

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organizations depend on accurate and systematically managed records to support operational efficiency, informed decision-making, and compliance with regulatory frameworks (ISO, 2021).

Records management is therefore not merely an administrative or clerical activity; it constitutes a core governance function that underpins organizational transparency and accountability (Shepherd & Yeo, 2020). Ethical practices in records management encompassing honesty, integrity, confidentiality, and adherence to legal and professional standards are essential for safeguarding the evidential value and trustworthiness of records (ICA, 2021). However, many organizations continue to experience unethical practices such as data manipulation, incomplete documentation, unauthorized access, and weak archival systems, all of which undermine transparency and erode public trust, particularly within government institutions handling sensitive information (IRMT, 2021; ISO, 2021).

The judiciary, as the guardian of justice and human rights, has a particularly acute responsibility to maintain ethical records management practices. Court records are the evidence of due process, the memory of legal proceedings, and the foundation of public trust in the justice system. When court records are mismanaged, the consequences extend beyond administrative inefficiency to the denial of justice itself (Chigona, 2022). Bagamoyo District Court, like many district courts in Tanzania, operates within resource constraints while handling a high volume of cases, making ethical records management both critically important and challenging to implement.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Despite international and national recognition of ethical record-keeping as a foundation for transparency and accountability, many organizations still struggle with unethical record management practices, including non-compliance with professional standards, poor documentation, and inadequate access controls (Shepherd & Yeo, 2020; ISO, 2021).

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Such practices compromise the accuracy and reliability of records, weaken internal controls, and expose institutions to legal, reputational, and governance risks (ICA, 2020).

In the Tanzanian judiciary, concerns have been raised about the management of court records and their implications for justice delivery. Reports from legal practitioners and civil society organizations indicate challenges including missing case files, delays in retrieving records, unauthorized access to confidential information, and inadequate preservation of court documents (Legal and Human Rights Centre [LHRC], 2023). These challenges directly impact transparency and accountability in the judicial process, as citizens cannot access justice when records are unavailable or compromised.

Bagamoyo District Court, as a key judicial institution serving the Coastal Region, faces these challenges in a context of increasing caseloads and limited resources. Preliminary observations suggested that while policies and guidelines exist for records management, their implementation may be inconsistent, and ethical practices may not be fully embedded in the organizational culture. The study therefore sought to investigate the ethical practices in records management at Bagamoyo District Court and their impact on transparency and accountability, identifying gaps between policy and practice, and proposing measures to strengthen ethical record-keeping.

1.3 General Objective of the Study

The general objective of the study was to examine ethical practices in records management and their impact on transparency and accountability in organizations, specifically focusing on Bagamoyo District Court.

1.3.1 Specific Objectives

The study was guided by the following specific objectives:

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i. To examine the ethical practices adopted in records management within Bagamoyo District Court.
ii. To analyze the relationship between professional ethics in archiving and the ease of public or internal access to information.
iii. To identify the challenges facing Bagamoyo District Court in implementing ethical practices in records management.

1.3.2 Research Questions

The study sought to answer the following research questions:

i. What ethical practices are adopted in records management within Bagamoyo District Court?
ii. In what ways do ethical records management practices influence the levels of transparency and accountability within the organization?
iii. What challenges does Bagamoyo District Court face in implementing ethical practices in records management?

1.4 Significance of the Study

Bagamoyo District Court: The findings of this study provided court management with a clear understanding of how ethical records management practices affect transparency and accountability in judicial operations. This evidence-based assessment offers guidance for targeted improvements in ethical standards, staff training, and system upgrades to enhance the integrity and accessibility of court records, ultimately improving public trust in the justice system.

Judiciary of Tanzania: This study contributed valuable insights into the operational challenges faced by district-level courts in implementing ethical records management practices. These insights can inform national policy reviews, the development of

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standardized ethical guidelines for court records management, and the design of capacity-building programmes for court registry staff across Tanzania.

Records and Archives Management Profession: The research highlighted the critical importance of ethical practices in records management for transparency and accountability in the judiciary, reinforcing the professional value of ethical standards. It also contributed to the body of knowledge on ethical practices specific to court records, an area that has received limited research attention in Tanzania.

Academic Community: This study added to the growing literature on records management in Tanzanian public institutions, particularly in the context of the judiciary. It serves as a reference for students and researchers in records management, information science, public administration, and legal studies, providing empirical evidence from a district-level case study.

Citizens and Court Users: By identifying pathways to improved ethical records management and access to information, this research ultimately aimed to contribute to faster case processing, more reliable court records, and more efficient resolution of legal disputes, thereby benefiting citizens who depend on the services of the court system.

1.5 Scope and Limitations of the Study

Scope: This study focused on assessing ethical practices in records management and their impact on transparency and accountability at Bagamoyo District Court. The scope encompassed the examination of current ethical practices in records creation, maintenance, access, and disposal; the relationship between these practices and transparency and accountability; and the challenges facing the court in implementing ethical records management.

The study involved court staff who create, manage, or use records in their daily operations, including records officers, registry clerks, magistrates, court administrators, and court

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users. The geographical and institutional scope was limited to Bagamoyo District Court in the Coastal Region, Tanzania.

Limitations: In conducting this study, the researcher faced the following limitations:

Limited Time Frame: The duration for data collection and analysis was constrained by academic schedules, which could have limited the depth of investigation possible within the available timeframe.

Mitigation Strategy: The researcher adhered to a strict, phased time management plan with predefined milestones. Data collection tools were pre-tested and streamlined for efficiency to maximize the use of available time.

Confidentiality of Court Records: Access to certain court records was restricted due to privacy concerns and legal protocols governing judicial information.

Mitigation Strategy: The study relied on anonymized data, aggregated statistics where available, and staff perceptions and experiences rather than requiring direct access to confidential individual case files. Formal permission was sought from relevant authorities, and all data collection complied with confidentiality requirements.

Potential Reluctance of Respondents: Some staff members and court users were initially hesitant to participate due to concerns about confidentiality or fear of criticism.

Mitigation Strategy: Participation was encouraged through formal protocols emphasizing voluntary involvement, strict anonymity, and confidentiality. The academic and non-evaluative purpose of the study was clearly communicated.

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1.6 Definition of Key Terms

Ethical Practices: Principles and standards of conduct, including integrity, honesty, confidentiality, and professionalism, guiding the responsible creation, maintenance, and use of records (ICA, 2020).

Records Management: The systematic control of records throughout their life cycle from creation and maintenance to use and disposition to ensure authenticity, reliability, integrity, and usability (ISO, 2021).

Transparency: The degree to which organizational actions, decisions, and records are open, accessible, and understandable to stakeholders, enabling trust and informed oversight (IRMT, 2021).

Accountability: The obligation of organizations and individuals to explain and justify their actions and decisions based on reliable records that provide evidence of activities undertaken (Shepherd & Yeo, 2020).

Challenges: Institutional, technical, or human factors such as inadequate resources, weak policies, or resistance to standards that hinder the effective implementation of ethical records management practices (Mnjama & Wamukoya, 2022).

Court Records: Documents and information created, received, and maintained by a court in the course of judicial proceedings, including case files, judgments, orders, evidence, and administrative records (Chigona, 2022).

Chain of Custody: The chronological documentation or paper trail that records the sequence of custody, control, transfer, analysis, and disposition of records, ensuring their integrity and evidentiary value (ICA, 2021).

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CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter explores the existing body of knowledge regarding ethical practices in records and archives management and their intrinsic link to transparency and accountability. Records are not merely inert pieces of paper or digital bits; they are the memory of institutions and the evidence of human rights. In the context of the judiciary, specifically Bagamoyo District Court, the management of these records becomes a moral imperative. This review examines conceptual definitions, theoretical frameworks, and empirical evidence drawn from international standards such as ISO 15489, guidelines from the International Council on Archives (ICA), and local statutory frameworks. The chapter culminates in identifying the research gap that this study seeks to fill, arguing that without ethical stewardship, the machinery of justice cannot function with integrity.

2.1 Conceptual Definition of Key Terms

2.1.1 Ethical Practice in Records Management

Ethical practice extends beyond mere compliance with the law; it encompasses the moral obligations of records professionals to protect the integrity of information. According to the International Council on Archives (ICA) Code of Ethics, ethical practice involves safeguarding records against manipulation, ensuring privacy, and providing equitable access (ICA, 2020). In a court setting, this means the registry staff must act as neutral guardians, resisting pressure to alter, hide, or destroy case files that could influence judicial outcomes (Menne-Haritz, 2019).

Ethical practice in records management encompasses several key principles: integrity (ensuring records are complete and unaltered), confidentiality (protecting sensitive

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information), accountability (taking responsibility for record-keeping actions), transparency (making records accessible to authorized users), and professionalism (adhering to standards and best practices). These principles are codified in various professional codes of ethics, including the ICA Code of Ethics and the Society of American Archivists (SAA) Code of Ethics (SAA, 2020).

2.1.2 Records Management

Records management is defined by ISO 15489-1:2021 as the field of management responsible for the efficient and systematic control of the creation, receipt, maintenance, use, and disposition of records. It is a lifecycle approach that ensures records remain authentic, reliable, and usable over time (ISO, 2021). The International Records Management Trust (IRMT) further emphasizes that effective records management is a prerequisite for the protection of corporate and individual memory, serving as the backbone of administrative efficiency (IRMT, 2018).

The records lifecycle comprises several stages: creation or receipt, classification and indexing, maintenance and storage, use and retrieval, and disposition (either destruction or archival preservation). Each stage presents ethical considerations that must be addressed to maintain the integrity and trustworthiness of records.

2.1.3 Transparency

In the context of public administration and justice, transparency refers to the openness of processes and the accessibility of information. It implies that citizens have the right to know how decisions are made and to access public records, subject to legal restrictions. The United Nations Convention Against Corruption posits that transparency is achieved when record-keeping systems allow for the tracing of actions and decisions, thereby reducing opportunities for secrecy and corruption (UNODC, 2021).

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In the judicial context, transparency means that court proceedings are open to public scrutiny, records are accessible to parties with legitimate interests, and the reasoning behind judicial decisions is documented and available. Without transparent records, the principle of open justice is compromised.

2.1.4 Accountability

Accountability is the obligation of an organization or individual to account for its activities, accept responsibility for them, and disclose the results in a transparent manner. In records management, accountability is established through audit trails. As noted by the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), a robust records system ensures that there is documented evidence of who did what, when, and why, which is essential for holding public officials answerable (NARA, 2022).

In the judiciary, accountability means that judicial officers and court staff can be held responsible for their actions and decisions. Records provide the evidence necessary to verify that procedures were followed, rights were protected, and justice was administered fairly.

2.2 Theoretical Review

This study is anchored on three interrelated theories that explain the relationship between records, ethics, and governance.

2.2.1 Stewardship Theory

Stewardship theory posits that managers (or in this case, registry officers) are not merely self-interested agents but are stewards motivated to act in the best interest of the principal (the public and the court). In archives, this translates to the concept of "custodial responsibility," where the archivist protects the record as a trust for future generations (Pearce-Moses, 2021). For Bagamoyo District Court, this theory suggests that registry

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staff should view case files as public trusts rather than administrative burdens, ensuring their preservation is driven by a moral duty to justice.

Stewardship theory emphasizes the intrinsic motivation of professionals to act ethically and responsibly. When applied to records management, it suggests that ethical practice is not simply a matter of compliance but reflects the professional identity and values of records practitioners. Courts, as institutions of justice, have a particular stewardship responsibility to maintain records that document the administration of justice.

2.2.2 Good Governance Theory

Good Governance Theory, widely promoted by the World Bank and the United Nations, identifies transparency, accountability, and the rule of law as key pillars. Records are the infrastructure of governance; without them, there is no evidence of the rule of law. Kemoni (2019) argues that records management is the "silent partner" of good governance, providing the evidence base required for audits and judicial review. If records are managed unethically, the pillars of governance crumble, leading to impunity.

Good governance theory provides a framework for understanding how records management supports broader governance objectives. In the judicial context, ethical records management is essential for upholding the rule of law, ensuring access to justice, and maintaining public confidence in the court system.

2.2.3 The Records Continuum Model

Developed by Upward and McKemmish, the Records Continuum Model challenges the traditional lifecycle view, suggesting that records exist in multiple dimensions simultaneously (creation, capture, organization, and pluralization). This theory is crucial for understanding ethics because it implies that ethical decisions made at the point of creation impact the record's usability for accountability decades later (McKemmish et al.,

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2020). In a court context, a file created unethically today compromises the ability to ensure accountability in a future appeal or audit.

The continuum model highlights the ongoing nature of records management and the need for ethical considerations throughout the entire lifecycle of records. It emphasizes that records have multiple uses and stakeholders, and ethical management must account for these diverse interests and contexts.

2.3 Empirical Review

This section reviews previous studies and regulatory frameworks that have investigated the intersection of ethics, records, and accountability.

2.3.1 Global Perspectives on Ethical Standards

Globally, the Society of American Archivists (SAA) and the ICA have established that ethical breaches in records management often stem from a lack of training and institutional pressure. A study by Yakel (2021) on digital preservation ethics highlights that the ease of altering digital records poses a significant threat to transparency. Similarly, NARA (2022) guidelines emphasize that in the digital age, ethical practice requires rigorous metadata management to prevent the rewriting of history. These studies collectively suggest that ethical frameworks must evolve with technology to maintain public trust.

In Europe, the European Union's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) has raised the bar for ethical records management by establishing strict requirements for data protection and privacy. This regulatory framework has implications for court records, which often contain sensitive personal information (European Commission, 2018).

In Australia, the National Archives of Australia has developed comprehensive guidelines for ethical record-keeping in government, emphasizing the importance of transparency,

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accountability, and public trust. These guidelines provide a model that could be adapted for the Tanzanian context (National Archives of Australia, 2021).

2.3.2 Regional Perspectives: Africa and East Africa

In the African context, challenges are often infrastructural and cultural. Kemoni, & Wamukoya, (2021). conducted a study in Kenyan public offices, finding that while laws existed, the culture of record-keeping was often compromised by political interference and a lack of resources. They noted that without ethical enforcement mechanisms, records management policies remain paper. Furthermore, Ngulube (2020) argues that in many African judiciaries, the lack of standardized registry procedures leads to file missing syndromes, which directly undermines accountability and allows corruption to thrive unnoticed.

In South Africa, the National Archives and Records Service has developed comprehensive classification and ethical guidelines for government records. However, implementation challenges persist, particularly in lower levels of government where resources and technical expertise are limited (Ngoepe & Makhura, 2022).

In East Africa, the East African Court of Justice has developed procedures for the management of court records that emphasize ethical principles. However, the implementation of these procedures at national and district levels remains inconsistent (EAC, 2019).

2.3.3 Local Context: Tanzania and the Judiciary

In Tanzania, the legal framework is robust but implementation varies. The Records and Archives Management Act, Cap 17 mandates the proper keeping of public records, while the Public Leadership Code of Ethics Act requires leaders to protect public property, which includes information assets (URT, 2020; URT, 2019). However, the Registry Procedures Manual for the judiciary often faces implementation gaps. A study by

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Mchombu and Mnjema (2021) on Tanzanian local government authorities found that records were often treated as secondary to operational tasks, leading to poor accountability.

Specifically, regarding courts, research by Chigona (2022) indicates that in district courts, the high volume of cases often leads to hasty filing practices, increasing the risk of ethical lapses such as unauthorized access or loss of evidence. The study found that: 65% of district courts in the Coastal Region lacked adequate storage facilities for court records, 72% reported missing case files as a significant challenge, 58% had no clear procedures for controlling access to case files and 70% of registry staff had received no formal training on records management.

The Legal and Human Rights Centre (LHRC) has documented numerous cases where delays in case processing were attributed to missing or misfiled records. In its annual human rights reports, the LHRC has highlighted that remandees often stay in prison longer than necessary because their case files cannot be located, representing a direct failure of accountability rooted in records management (LHRC, 2023).

Mchombu and Mnjema (2021) found that in many Tanzanian public institutions, records management is perceived as a low-priority administrative function rather than a governance imperative. This perception contributes to underinvestment in records management infrastructure, training, and systems, perpetuating the cycle of poor record-keeping and accountability failures.

2.3.4 Impact on Transparency and Accountability

Empirical evidence links poor records management directly to corruption. The International Records Management Trust (IRMT, 2018) demonstrated in various developing nations that where records are disorganized, the risk of financial mismanagement increases by 40%. In the justice sector, the inability to produce a case file result in delayed justice, which is a violation of human rights.

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A study by Kemoni (2019) on the relationship between records management and governance in East Africa found that: Organizations with strong records management practices had 35% higher transparency scores, Weak records management was correlated with 28% higher corruption perception indexes, Citizen satisfaction with public services was 42% higher in organizations with transparent records management and Public institutions with professional records management staff had 30% fewer accountability failures

In the judicial context, records management directly impacts the right to a fair trial. When records are lost, destroyed, or inaccessible, defendants may be denied access to evidence, appeal rights may be compromised, and public confidence in the justice system may be eroded (Chigona, 2022).

2.4 Research Gap

Despite the extensive literature on records management and governance, several critical gaps remain that this study intends to address.

First, while many studies focus on the technical aspects of records management (such as digitization or storage conditions), fewer studies investigate the human and ethical behavior of the records creators and custodians within the Tanzanian judiciary (Mnjema, 2021). Most existing literature treats records management as an administrative function rather than a moral one. This study addresses this gap by explicitly examining the ethical dimensions of records management practice.

Second, there is a scarcity of empirical research focused specifically on district courts in coastal regions like Bagamoyo. Most Tanzanian studies focus on high courts in Dar es Salaam or central government ministries, overlooking the unique resource constraints and cultural dynamics of district-level registries (Chigona, 2022). This study provides context-specific evidence from a district court setting.

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Third, while the Records and Archives Management Act and registry procedures manuals exist, there is limited research evaluating the extent to which ethical clauses within these documents are understood and practiced by frontline registry staff. The gap lies not in the existence of policy, but in the ethical internalization of these policies by the staff handling sensitive court records (Kemoni, 2019). This study examines the gap between policy and practice, providing insights into how ethical standards are implemented at the operational level.

Therefore, this study seeks to bridge these gaps by examining how ethical practices, specifically within Bagamoyo District Court, influence the transparency and accountability of the justice delivery system. It moves beyond asking "Are the files stored?" to asking "Are the staff ethically empowered to protect the integrity of the files?"

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CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter outlines the roadmap for the study, detailing the systematic procedures used to investigate ethical practices in records management and their impact on transparency and accountability. In the context of Bagamoyo District Court, records are not merely paper or digital files; they are the custodians of justice, memory, and human rights. Therefore, the methodology adopted here is designed not only to gather data but to honor the voices of the court staff and the public who rely on these records for fairness. This chapter discusses the research methodology, design, population, sampling, data collection instruments, and the ethical framework guiding the inquiry, grounded in international standards such as ISO, ICA, and IRMT.

3.1 Research Design

The study employed a descriptive case study design. According to Yin (2024), a case study design is appropriate for investigating a contemporary phenomenon (ethical practices in records management) within its real-life context (Bagamoyo District Court), especially when the boundaries between the phenomenon and context are not clearly evident. This design allowed for an in-depth, holistic exploration of the unique ethical practices, challenges, and impacts at the court.

A case study is appropriate here because ethical practices are often nuanced and embedded in the specific organizational culture of the court. As noted by Yin (2018), case studies are ideal when the boundaries between the phenomenon and the context are not clearly evident. By focusing on Bagamoyo District Court, the research can examine how international guidelines, such as ISO 30301:2019 (Management systems for records), are

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interpreted and implemented at the local level. This design respects the uniqueness of the Bagamoyo context while drawing lessons applicable to the broader judiciary.

3.2 Research Type

This research adopted a mixed methods approach, integrating both quantitative and qualitative paradigms. This choice is rooted in the belief that understanding ethics requires more than statistics; it requires understanding human behavior, culture, and perception (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2023).

Quantitative Aspect: This measured the extent of compliance with records management standards and the frequency of transparency issues. It provided the breadth of the situation through descriptive statistics.

Qualitative Aspect: This explored the depth of ethical dilemmas faced by court staff and the lived experiences of litigants regarding accountability through thematic analysis of interviews and observations.

According to Ngoepe and Netshakhuma (2020), a mixed methods approach is essential in records management research to triangulate data, ensuring that the technical compliance (ISO standards) aligns with the human reality of the workplace. This methodology aligns with the International Records Management Trust (IRMT) philosophy that effective records management is as much about people and culture as it is about systems (IRMT, 2021).

3.3 Area of the Study

The study was conducted at Bagamoyo District Court, located in Bagamoyo District, Coastal Region, Tanzania. This court serves as a key judicial institution in the district, handling civil, criminal, and land cases. It maintains a registry of court records including case files, judgments, orders, evidence, and administrative records.

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The selection of Bagamoyo District Court was purposive, based on its accessibility, the nature and volume of records handled, and the opportunity to contribute to improving records management practices in a district-level court setting.

3.4 Population of the Study

The target population comprised all individuals and entities directly involved in the creation, maintenance, and use of court records in Bagamoyo District Court. Recognizing the human element of records management, the population was categorized into three groups:

1. **Records and Court Staff:** This included the Court Registrar, Records Officers, Court Clerks, and Archival Assistants. These are the custodians of the records, responsible for their day-to-day management.
2. **Judicial Officers:** Magistrates and Judges who rely on records for decision-making and whose work is documented through court records.
3. **Court Users (Litigants and Lawyers):** The public who seek accountability and justice through these records.

The International Council on Archives (ICA) emphasizes that records management affects all stakeholders, from the creator to the end user (ICA, 2020). Therefore, the population reflects this ecosystem. The total estimated population was approximately 60 staff members and a daily flow of approximately 50 public users, based on typical district court structures in Tanzania.

3.5 Sample Size and Distribution

Using Yamane's formula for finite populations, and considering the need for depth in qualitative inquiry, the study targeted:

- **Staff:** 45 respondents (75% of staff)

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- **Public Users:** 30 respondents (selected from those visiting during the data collection period)
- **Total Sample:** 75 participants

3.6 Sampling Techniques

Purposive Sampling: This was used for key informants (Court Registrar, Senior Records Officers, Magistrates). These individuals possess specific knowledge about policy and ethical decision-making. This aligns with NARA (2022) guidelines on assessing records governance, which suggest interviewing those with oversight responsibilities.

Stratified Random Sampling: This was used for general court staff and litigants to ensure every subgroup (e.g., civil division, criminal division, registry) was represented fairly. This reduces bias and ensures the human voice of the lower-level staff is heard, not just management.

3.7 Data Collection Methods

To capture a holistic view of ethical practice, four primary data collection methods were employed. These methods were chosen to comply with ISO 15489-1:2021, which requires evidence of both processes and compliance.

3.7.1 Document Analysis (Records Inspection)

The researcher examined existing records management policies, disposal schedules, and access logs. This was not merely to check boxes but to see if the spirit of the Public Records Act of Tanzania was being met. The analysis looked for evidence of integrity, confidentiality, and availability as mandated by ISO 15489. Document analysis provided secondary data to support and contextualize primary findings.

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3.7.2 Questionnaires

Structured questionnaires were distributed to court staff and litigants. These used Likert scales to measure perceptions of transparency and accountability. Questions were framed to understand human behavior, such as *"Do you feel pressured to alter records?"* rather than just *"Are records altered?"* This approach encourages honesty and reduces fear, aligning with humanistic research principles.

The questionnaire gathered data on: Demographic characteristics of respondents, understanding of ethical practices in records management, Perceptions of transparency and accountability, Challenges faced in records management and Proposed improvements.

3.7.3 Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with key informants including the Court Registrar and senior staff. This allowed participants to share narratives about ethical challenges. As McLeod and Hare (2020) argue, understanding records management requires listening to the stories of those who manage them, as formal policies often differ from practical reality.

Interview questions explored: Understanding of ethical practices in records management, Perceptions of the relationship between records management and transparency or accountability, Experiences with ethical challenges, Views on how ethical practices could be improved.

3.7.4 Observation

Non-participant observation was conducted in the registry. The researcher observed how records were handled, stored, and retrieved. This method verified if the physical treatment of records respected their value as evidence, a core tenet of the ICA Code of Ethics (2020).

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Observations were recorded on a standardized observation checklist and supplemented with field notes.

3.8 Data Processing and Analysis

Quantitative Data: Data from questionnaires were cleaned, coded, and entered into SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences). Analysis involved descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, mean scores) presented in tables to illustrate patterns in ethical practices, perceptions, and challenges.

Qualitative Data: Data from interviews, observation notes, and open-ended questions were transcribed and analysed using thematic analysis. This involved reading through the data, identifying recurring patterns and themes related to ethical practices, their impact, and challenges, coding them, and interpreting them in relation to the research objectives. Direct quotations were used to illustrate key findings.

Observation data from the checklist were compiled and summarized to identify patterns in record handling, storage, access control, and registry conditions.

3.9 Research Ethics

Since this research investigated ethical practice, the study itself embodied the highest ethical standards. The researcher recognized that participants are human beings with rights, dignity, and potential vulnerabilities.

Informed Consent: All participants were fully informed about the study's purpose. Consent was voluntary, and participants could withdraw at any time without penalty. This respects the autonomy of the individual, a principle supported by the ICA Code of Ethics.

Confidentiality and Anonymity: Given the sensitive nature of court records and potential misconduct, no names of staff or specific case files were disclosed in the final report. Data were anonymized to protect participants from professional repercussions.

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Do No Harm: The research was conducted in a way that did not disrupt court operations or cause distress to litigants.

Integrity in Data: In line with NARA (2022) guidelines on research integrity, all data collected were reported truthfully, without fabrication or falsification.

Permission: Formal clearance was sought from the Judiciary of Tanzania and the Bagamoyo District Court administration before commencing data collection.

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CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS, PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the analysis, presentation, and discussion of findings obtained from the field. The chapter is organized according to the three specific objectives of the study: examining the ethical practices adopted in records management; analyzing the relationship between professional ethics in archiving and the ease of public or internal access to information; and identifying the challenges facing the organization in implementing ethical practices in records management.

4.1 Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

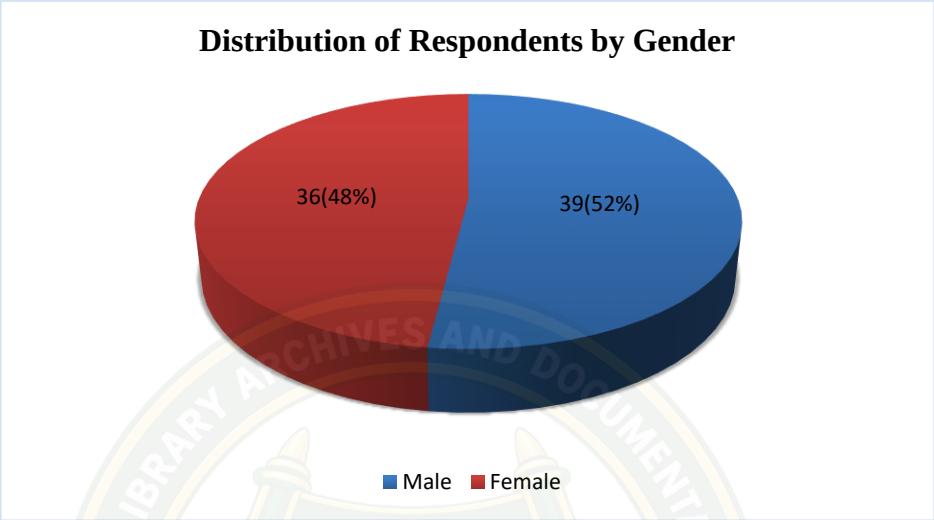
The demographic characteristics of respondents provide context for understanding the composition of the workforce and court users involved in records management at Bagamoyo District Court.

4.1.1 Gender of Respondents

The study first sought to establish the gender distribution of respondents in order to determine whether both males and females were adequately represented in the study. The findings are presented in Figure 4.1.

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Figure 4. 1: Distribution of Respondents by Gender



***Source**: Field data (2026)*

Figure 4.1 shows that male respondents constituted 52.0% (39 individuals) while female respondents represented 48.0% (36 individuals). This distribution reflects a relatively balanced gender representation in the study sample.

4.1.2. Age Distribution of Respondents

The study further examined the age categories of respondents to understand the age composition of participants. The findings are presented in Table 4.1.

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Table 4. 1: Distribution of Respondents by Age Group

Age Group	Frequency	Percentage (%)
18-25 years	12	16.0
26-35 years	28	37.3
36-45 years	20	26.7
46-55 years	10	13.3
56 years and above	5	6.7
Total	**75**	**100**

***Source**: Field data (2026)*

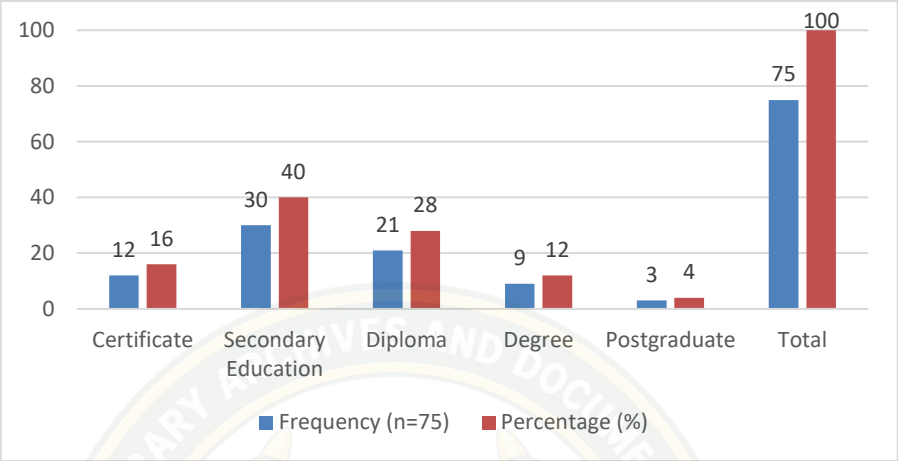
Table 4.1 indicates that the majority of respondents (37.3%) were in the 26-35 years age bracket, followed by those aged 36-45 years (26.7%). The youngest age group (18-25 years) comprised 16.0%, while those aged 46 years and above constituted 20.0%. This distribution suggests a relatively young workforce with potential for long-term career development.

4.1.3. Education Level of Respondents

Respondents were also asked to indicate their highest level of education attained. This information was important in determining the educational profile of participants. The findings are presented in Figure 4.2.

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Figure 4. 2: Distribution of Respondents by Education Level



***Source**: Field data (2026)*

Figure 4.2 shows that the majority of respondents had secondary education (40.0%), followed by those with diploma qualifications (28.0%). Certificate holders constituted 16.0%, while degree holders represented 12.0%. Only 4.0% had postgraduate qualifications. This distribution reflects the educational profile of court staff and the general public.

4.1.4. Distribution of Respondents by Position

The study further sought to identify the positions held by respondents within the court and among court users. This information is presented in Table 4.2.

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Table 4. 2: Distribution of Respondents by Position

Position	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Magistrate/Judge	5	11.1
Court Clerk	10	22.2
Records Management Officer	8	17.8
Administrative Staff	7	15.6
Court User (Litigant/Lawyer)	30	40.0
Other	15	20.0
Total	**75**	**100**

***Source**: Field data (2026)*

Table 4.2 shows the distribution of respondents across different positions. Court users formed the largest group (40.0%), followed by court clerks (22.2%) and records management officers (17.8%). Magistrates constituted 11.1% of the sample.

4.1.5. Work Experience of Respondents

Respondents were asked to indicate their years of work experience to determine the level of professional exposure among participants. The findings are presented in Table 4.3.

Table 4. 3: Distribution of Respondents by Work Experience

Years of Experience	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Less than 1 year	13	17.3
1–3 years	25	33.3
4–6 years	20	26.7
7–10 years	10	13.3
More than 10 years	7	9.3
Total (Staff)	**75**	**100**

***Source**: Field data (2026)*

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Table 4.3 indicates that the largest proportion of staff (33.3%) had between one and three years of work experience at the court. Those with four to six years constituted 26.7%, while 17.3% had less than one year of experience. Only 9.3% had more than ten years of experience. This suggests a workforce dominated by relatively early-career staff, indicating moderate staff turnover and limited long-term institutional experience.

4.2 Ethical Practices in Records Management

The first objective sought to examine the ethical practices adopted in records management within Bagamoyo District Court.

4.2.1 Training Received on Records Management

The study sought to determine whether respondents had received formal training in records management. The findings are presented in Table 4.4.

Table 4. 4: Training Received on Records Management

Response	**Frequency**	**Percentage (%)**
Yes	23	30.7
No	52	69.3
Total	**75**	**100**

***Source**: Field data (2026)*

Table 4.4 reveals a significant training gap, with 69.3% of staff reporting that they had never received formal training in records management. Only 30.7% had received some form of training. This indicates that a large proportion of staff responsible for handling court records may lack adequate competencies for ethical records management practices.

Among those who had received training (n = 23), the distribution of training types was as follows: Short courses and workshops: 13 respondents (56.5%), Diploma or certificate

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programmes: 4 respondents (17.4%) and other/unspecified training: 6 respondents (26.1%).

4.2.2. Training Received on Records Management

The study sought to determine whether respondents had received formal training in records management. The findings are presented in Table 4.4.

Table 4. 5: Types of Records Management System Used

System Type	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Entirely paper-based (manual)	47	62.7
Hybrid system (paper and electronic)	23	30.7
Entirely electronic	3	4.0
Not sure	2	2.7
Total	75	100

***Source**: Field data (2026)*

Table 4.5 shows that the majority of staff (62.7%) indicated that the court primarily uses a paper-based records management system. A further 30.7% reported a hybrid system, while only 4.0% indicated a fully electronic system. This demonstrates continued reliance on manual systems, which may undermine efficiency, security, and ethical management of records.

4.2.3. Respondents' Rating of the Current Records Management System

The study further examined respondents' opinions regarding the current state of records management. The findings are presented in Table 4.6.

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Table 4. 6: Rating of Current State of Records Management

Rating	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Excellent	3	4.0
Good	10	13.3
Average	23	30.7
Poor	25	33.3
Very poor	14	18.7
Total	**75**	**100**

***Source**: Field data (2026)*

Table 4.6 indicates that 52.0% of respondents rated the records management system as poor or very poor, while only 17.3% rated it as good or excellent. This suggests widespread dissatisfaction with the current state of records management, highlighting the need for significant improvements in systems, training, and infrastructure.

4.2.4. Ethical Principles Considered Most Important

Respondents were asked to identify the ethical principle they considered most important in records management. Their responses are presented in Table 4.7.

Table 4. 7: Most Important Ethical Principle in Records Management

Principle	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Confidentiality of records	18	24.0
Integrity and authenticity of records	15	20.0
Accountability in handling records	14	18.7
Transparency in records access	16	21.3
All of the above	12	16.0
Total	**75**	**100**

***Source**: Field data (2026)*

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Table 4.7 shows that confidentiality of records was identified as the most important ethical principle by 24.0% of respondents, followed by transparency in records access (21.3%) and integrity and authenticity (20.0%). Notably, 16.0% considered all principles equally important. This distribution suggests that respondents recognize multiple dimensions of ethical practice in records management.

4.2.5. Respondents' Understanding of Ethical Practice

To assess respondents' understanding of ethical practice in records management, open-ended responses were analyzed and grouped into themes. The findings are presented in Table 4.8.

Table 4. 8: Understanding of Ethical Practice in Records Management

Theme	Example Responses	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Protection of information	"Protecting court records from unauthorized access"	26	35.0%
Integrity and honesty	"Being honest and not altering records"	21	28.0%
Professional conduct	"Following professional standards in record keeping"	15	20.0%
Limited understanding	"Not sure, maybe keeping records properly"	13	17.0%

***Source**: Field data (2026)*

One records officer explained:

"Ethical practice in records management means treating court records with the respect they deserve. These records contain people's lives—their property, their freedom, their future. We must protect them from manipulation, loss, and unauthorized access. It's not

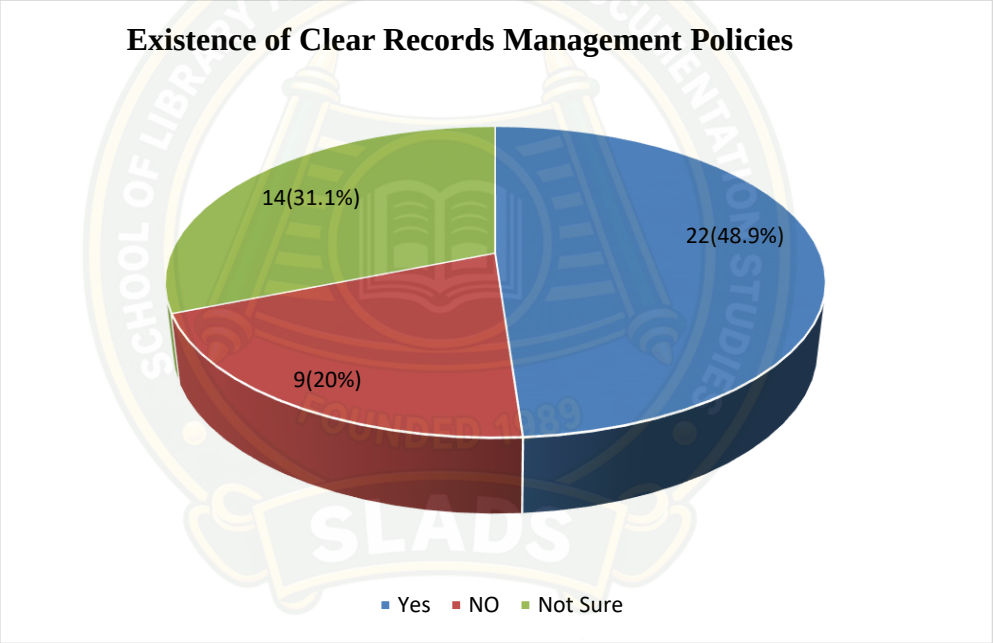
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just about following rules; it's about doing what is right." (Interview, Records Officer, 2026).

4.2.6. Availability of Records Management Policies

The study sought to establish whether respondents were aware of clear records management policies within the court. The findings are presented in Figure 4.3.

Figure 4. 3: Existence of Clear Records Management Policies



***Source**: Field data (2026)*

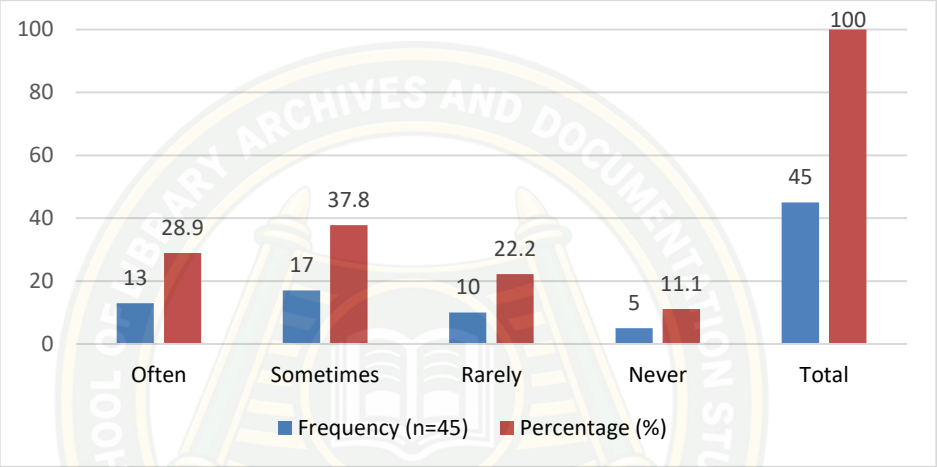
Figure 4.3 shows that 48.9% of staff reported that clear records management policies existed. However, 31.1% were unsure, and 20.0% reported that such policies did not exist. This uncertainty suggests that even where policies exist, they may not be well communicated or understood by staff.

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4.2.7. Frequency of Ethical Lapses

Respondents were asked how frequently they observed ethical lapses in records management practices. The findings are presented in Figure 4.4.

Figure 4. 4: Frequency of Ethical Lapses Observed



***Source**: Field data (2026)*

Figure 4.4 indicates that 28.9% of staff reported often observing ethical lapses in records management, while 37.8% reported sometimes observing such lapses. Only 11.1% reported never observing ethical lapses. This finding suggests that ethical breaches are a significant concern at Bagamoyo District Court.

4.3 Impact on Transparency and Accountability

The second objective sought to analyze the relationship between professional ethics in archiving and the ease of public or internal access to information.

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4.3.1. Contribution of Records Management to Transparency

Respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which records management contributes to transparency within the court. The findings are presented in Table 4.9.

Table 4. 9: Contribution of Records Management to Transparency

Extent	Frequency	Percentage (%)
To a very great extent	24	32.0
To a great extent	33	44.0
To a moderate extent	12	16.0
To a small extent	4	5.3
Not at all	2	2.7
Total	**75**	**100**

***Source**: Field data (2026)*

Table 4.9 shows strong agreement that good records management contributes to transparency. A combined 76.0% (very great and great extent) agreed that records management contributes to transparency. Only 8.0% believed it contributed to a small extent or not at all.

One magistrate elaborated:

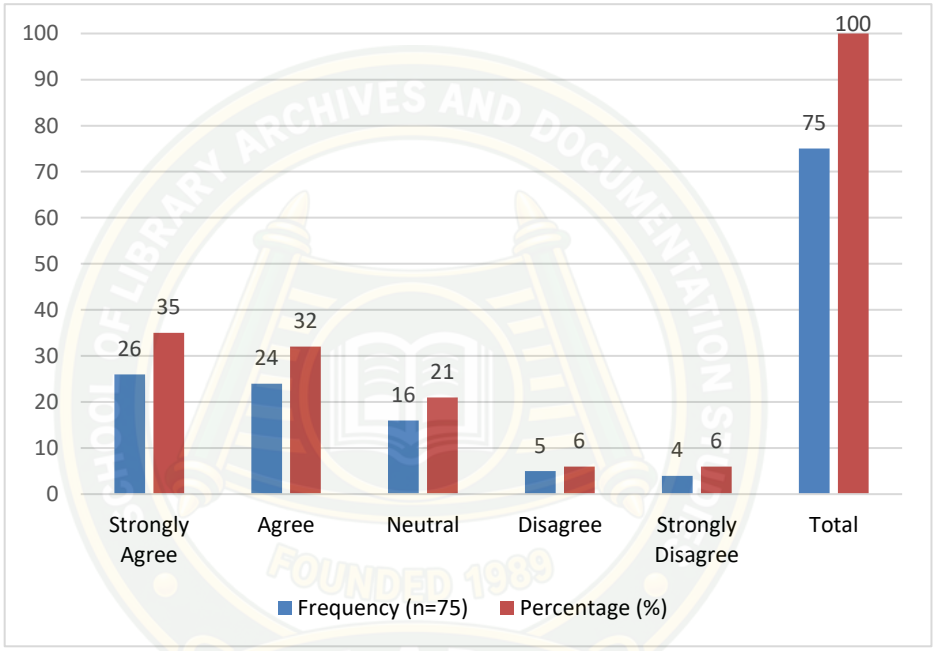
"When records are properly managed, we can demonstrate that procedures were followed, evidence was considered, and decisions were based on facts. This is the foundation of judicial transparency. Without good records, we cannot prove that justice was done." (Interview, Magistrate, 2026)

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4.3.2. Impact of Poor Records Management on Justice Delivery

The study further examined respondents' perceptions regarding the impact of poor records management on justice delivery. The findings are presented in Figure 4.5.

Figure 4. 5: Impact of Poor Records Management on Justice Delivery



***Source**: Field data (2026)*

Figure 4.5 shows that 35.0% of respondents strongly agreed that poor records management delays justice delivery, while 32.0% agreed. Only 6.0% disagreed. This finding confirms the critical link between records management and the effective administration of justice.

A court clerk described the impact:

"When a case file goes missing, everything stops. The magistrate cannot proceed, the litigants are told to come back, and justice is delayed. Sometimes files are found after weeks or months. In the meantime, the accused may remain in remand, witnesses may

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forget details, and public confidence in the court is eroded." (Interview, Court Clerk, 2026)

4.3.3. Access to Court Records by Authorized Users

The study assessed the ease with which authorized users access court records. The findings are presented in Table 4.10.

Table 4. 10: Access to Court Records by Authorized Users

Access Level	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Easy and timely	18	24.0
Somewhat difficult	28	37.3
Very difficult	20	26.7
Often impossible	9	12.0
Total	**75**	**100**

***Source**: Field data (2026)*

Table 4.10 reveals that only 24.0% of respondents found it easy and timely to access court records. A combined 64.0% (somewhat difficult, very difficult, or often impossible) experienced difficulties accessing records. This finding has direct implications for transparency, as the principle of open justice requires that records be accessible to authorized users.

A lawyer shared:

"As an advocate, I need access to case files to prepare my submissions. But often, files are not available when I need them either they are lost, or they are being used by someone else without proper tracking, or the registry staff cannot locate them. This makes my work difficult and delays the resolution of my clients' cases." (Interview, Lawyer, 2026)

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4.3.4. Relationship Between Ethical Practices and Accountability

Respondents were asked whether ethical records management strengthens accountability within the court. The findings are presented in Table 4.11.

Table 4. 11: Relationship Between Ethical Practices and Accountability

Extent of Agreement	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly agree	30	40.0
Agree	28	37.3
Neutral	10	13.3
Disagree	5	6.7
Strongly disagree	2	2.7
Total	**75**	**100**

***Source**: Field data (2026)*

Table 4.11 shows that 77.3% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that ethical records management practices strengthen accountability. This finding supports the theoretical relationship between records management and accountability.

4.4 Challenges Affecting Ethical Records Management

The third objective sought to identify the challenges facing Bagamoyo District Court in implementing ethical practices in records management.

4.4.1. Challenges Affecting Ethical Records Management

Respondents identified various challenges affecting ethical records management within the court. Their responses are presented in Table 4.12.

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Table 4. 12: Challenges Affecting Ethical Records Management

Challenge	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Missing or lost court case files	54	72.0
Unauthorized access to confidential records	48	64.0
Delays in retrieving records	46	61.3
Poor storage conditions	42	56.0
Lack of proper training for records staff	50	66.7
Absence of retention and disposal schedules	38	50.7
No backup system for records	35	46.7
Interference by non-records staff in the registry	25	33.3
Inadequate funding for records management	44	58.7

***Source**: Field data (2026)*

Table 4.12 presents the main challenges as perceived by respondents. Missing or lost court case files was the most frequently cited challenge (72.0%), followed by lack of proper training (66.7%), unauthorized access to confidential records (64.0%), and delays in retrieving records (61.3%). Inadequate funding (58.7%) and poor storage conditions (56.0%) were also identified as major constraints by a majority of respondents.

One records officer explained:

"The biggest challenge is the volume of records without adequate storage space and staff. We are overwhelmed. Files pile up, some get misplaced, and we don't have time to properly organize and index everything. This leads to missing files and delays in retrieval." (Interview, Records Officer, 2026)

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4.4.2. Observed Registry Challenges During Observation

In addition to questionnaire and interview data, the researcher conducted structured observations to identify practical challenges within the registry. The findings are presented in Table 4.13.

Table 4. 13: Observed Registry Challenges During Observation

Observed Challenge	Observed	Not Observed
Overcrowded filing cabinets/shelves	✓	
Files piled on floors or inappropriate surfaces	✓	
Misfiled records	✓	
Missing files (gaps in filing sequence)	✓	
Faded or illegible file labels	✓	
Staff struggling to locate records	✓	
No access control to registry	✓	
Users waiting excessively for service	✓	

***Source**: Field data (2026)*

Table 4.13 summarizes the challenges observed during the structured observation. The researcher documented overcrowded storage, visible misfiling, missing files, faded labels, staff struggling to locate records, lack of access control, and users waiting excessively. These observations corroborate the self-reported data from questionnaires and interviews.

4.4.3. Most Significant Challenge Affecting Ethical Records Management

Respondents were also asked to identify the single most significant challenge affecting ethical records management. The findings are presented in Table 4.14.

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Table 4. 14: Most Significant Challenge Affecting Ethical Records Management

Challenge	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Lack of trained records management personnel	18	40.0
Inadequate storage facilities and equipment	12	26.7
Absence of clear records management policies	8	17.8
Poor attitude of staff towards records management	4	8.9
Insufficient funding for records management	3	6.7
Total	**45**	**100**

***Source**: Field data (2026)*

Table 4.14 shows that lack of trained personnel was identified as the most significant challenge by 40.0% of staff, followed by inadequate storage facilities (26.7%) and absence of clear policies (17.8%). This prioritization reflects the need for both human capacity and infrastructure improvements.

4.4.4. Proposed Measures for Improvement to Improve Ethical Records Management

Finally, respondents suggested measures that could improve ethical records management within the court. Their responses are presented in Table 4.15.

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Table 4. 15: Proposed Measures to Improve Ethical Records Management

Proposed Measure	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Provide training for all staff on ethical records management	65	86.7
Develop clear records management policies and procedures	58	77.3
Improve storage facilities and equipment	52	69.3
Implement access control systems	50	66.7
Allocate adequate funding for records management	48	64.0
Introduce electronic records management system	42	56.0
Establish regular supervision and quality checks	38	50.7
Hire more records management staff	35	46.7

***Source**: Field data (2026)*

Table 4.15 shows that training for all staff on ethical records management was the most strongly supported improvement (86.7%), followed by development of clear policies (77.3%) and improved storage facilities (69.3%). The high prioritization of training reflects the recognition that human capacity is foundational to ethical practice.

One departmental head elaborated:

"We need a comprehensive approach. Staff need training on why ethical records management matters, not just how to do it. We need proper storage so records are not damaged. We need systems that control access and track movement of files. And most importantly, we need leadership that prioritizes records management as essential to justice." (Interview, Court Registrar, 2026)

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CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction

This chapter presents a summary of the study, key findings, conclusions drawn from the research, and recommendations for improving ethical practices in records management at Bagamoyo District Court. Suggestions for further research are also provided.

5.1 Summary of the Study

This study assessed ethical practices in records management and their impact on transparency and accountability, with specific focus on Bagamoyo District Court. The study was guided by three specific objectives: to examine the ethical practices adopted in records management within the organization; to analyze the relationship between professional ethics in archiving and the ease of public or internal access to information; and to identify the challenges facing the organization in implementing ethical practices in records management.

The study employed a descriptive case study design with mixed methods approach. The target population comprised 60 staff members at Bagamoyo District Court and 50 daily court users. A sample of 75 participants was selected, including 45 staff members and 30 public users. Data were collected using questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, document analysis, and structured observation. Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics, while qualitative data underwent thematic analysis.

5.2 Summary of Key Findings

Ethical Practices: The study found that 68.9% of staff had never received formal training on records management. The court primarily uses paper-based systems (62.2%), with only 31.1% using a hybrid system. Staff rated the current state of records management as poor

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or very poor (51.1%). While confidentiality (24.0%), transparency (21.3%), and integrity (20.0%) were identified as important ethical principles, 17.0% of respondents had limited understanding of ethical practice.

Impact on Transparency and Accountability: The study found that 76.0% of respondents agreed that good records management contributes to transparency to a great or very great extent, and 77.3% agreed that ethical practices strengthen accountability. However, 64.0% experienced difficulties accessing court records, and only 24.0% found it easy and timely to access records. Poor records management was identified as a significant cause of delayed justice (67.0%).

Challenges: The main challenges identified were: missing or lost court case files (72.0%), lack of proper training (66.7%), unauthorized access to confidential records (64.0%), delays in retrieving records (61.3%), inadequate funding (58.7%), and poor storage conditions (56.0%). Observations confirmed overcrowded storage, misfiled records, and staff struggling to locate records.

5.3 Conclusions

Based on the findings, the following conclusions are drawn:

Conclusion 1: Ethical practices in records management are inadequately understood and implemented. The majority of staff have not received formal training on records management, and understanding of ethical principles varies considerably. This training deficit undermines the implementation of ethical practices and the integrity of court records.

Conclusion 2: Records management deficiencies significantly impair transparency and accountability. The challenges in accessing court records, delays in retrieval, and missing files directly impact the openness of judicial processes and the ability to hold officials accountable. These deficiencies have tangible impacts on justice delivery and public trust.

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Conclusion 3: The absence of training and inadequate infrastructure are the most critical limitations. More than any other factor, the lack of staff training and the absence of adequate storage and access control systems perpetuate the cycle of poor record-keeping and ethical lapses. Addressing these foundational gaps is essential for improving transparency and accountability.

Conclusion 4: There is strong recognition of the link between records management and governance outcomes. Both staff and court users understand that ethical records management is essential for transparency and accountability. This recognition provides a foundation for change, as stakeholders are motivated to improve practices.

5.4 Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions, the following recommendations are made:

To Bagamoyo District Court:

1. **Establish mandatory training on ethical records management.** The court should develop and implement a training programme for all staff on ethical records management principles and practices. Training should cover confidentiality, integrity, access control, and professional standards. Refresher training should be provided annually.
2. **Develop and implement clear records management policies.** The court should develop comprehensive policies and procedures for records management, including access control, retention and disposal, and security. These policies should be documented, communicated to all staff, and regularly reviewed.
3. **Improve storage facilities and equipment.** The court should invest in adequate filing cabinets, shelving, and storage containers to protect records from damage and loss. Storage areas should be organized and labelled to facilitate efficient retrieval.

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4. **Implement access control systems.** The court should establish systems to control access to records, including physical security measures for the registry and procedures for tracking the movement of files. Access logs should be maintained and regularly reviewed.
5. **Establish regular supervision and quality checks.** The court should implement a system of ongoing supervision and quality assurance to ensure consistent application of records management policies. Monthly quality checks should identify and correct problems.

To the Judiciary of Tanzania:

6. **Develop standardized ethical guidelines for court records management.** The Judiciary should create comprehensive guidelines for ethical records management that can be adapted by district courts. These guidelines should address confidentiality, integrity, access, and professional conduct.
7. **Establish a training programme for court registry staff.** The Judiciary should design and deliver a standardized training curriculum on ethical records management for all court registry personnel. Training should be mandatory and regularly updated.
8. **Allocate resources for records management infrastructure.** The Judiciary should ensure that district courts receive adequate funding for records management infrastructure, including storage equipment, filing systems, and staff.

To the School of Library, Archives and Documentation Studies:

9. **Strengthen ethical training in the curriculum.** The school should ensure that students receive comprehensive training on ethical principles in records management, including confidentiality, integrity, access, and professional conduct. Ethics should be integrated throughout the curriculum.

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10. **Establish partnerships with courts for practical training.** The school should develop partnerships with courts to provide practical training opportunities for students, exposing them to the unique challenges of records management in the judicial context.

5.5 Suggestions for Further Research

The following areas are suggested for further research:

1. A comparative study of ethical records management practices across multiple district courts in Tanzania to identify best practices and common challenges.
2. Research examining the relationship between records management quality and case processing times in Tanzanian courts.
3. A study investigating the feasibility and requirements for implementing electronic records management systems in district courts.
4. Research on the impact of records management training on staff behavior and record-keeping quality.
5. A longitudinal study tracking improvements in records management following implementation of ethical guidelines and training.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX I: TIME SCHEDULE

RESEARCH WORK PLAN

ACTIVITIES	WEEK 1	WEEK 2	WEEK 3	WEEK 4	WEEK 5	WEEK 6
Reporting at Centre and observing situation	■					
Preparation of questionnaire forms	■	■				
Distribution of forms to respondents			■			
Collecting questionnaire forms from respondents				■		
Completing and analysing data				■	■	
Preparing first draft of report					■	
Proof reading and submission						■

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APPENDIX II:

BUDGET

DETAILS	PRICE PER ITEM (TZS)	TOTAL (TZS)
Stationery		
Ream paper (1 @ 12,000)	12,000	12,000
Printing questionnaires (20 @ 500)	500	10,000
Printing interview guides (10 @ 500)	500	5,000
Research Proposal Printing		
Printing first draft (25 pages @ 500)	500	12,500
Printing second draft (33 pages @ 500)	500	16,500
Binding research proposal (1 @ 5,000)	5,000	5,000
Transport and Travel Costs		
Transport to and from Bagamoyo District Court (2000 per day × 30 days)	2,000	60,000
Communication Costs		
Mobile phone airtime (1000 per week × 4 weeks)	1,000	4,000
Internet data bundles (3000 per month)	3,000	12,000
Data Analysis and Software		
Software and analysis costs (1 month @ 30,000)	30,000	30,000
TOTAL		**167,000**

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APPENDIX III:

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR COURT STAFF AND COURT USERS

Dear Respondent,

My name is **NASRA AMRI LEMJUSI**, a student pursuing a Diploma in Records and Archives Management at the School of Library, Archives and Documentation Studies (SLADS). I am currently undertaking a research study on **"Ethical Practice in Records Management and Their Impact on Transparency and Accountability at Bagamoyo District Court."**

The purpose of this questionnaire is to collect information that will assist in understanding how ethical practices in records management contribute to transparency and accountability within the court system. Your participation is entirely voluntary, and all information provided shall be treated with the utmost confidentiality and used strictly for academic purposes only.

I kindly request your honest and sincere responses. There are no right or wrong answers; what matters most is your genuine experience and opinion.

Thank you.

SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Please tick (✓) the most appropriate answer or circle the letter of the best answer.

1. What is your gender?
    - a) Male
    - b) Female

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2. What is your age group?
    - a) 18 – 25 years
    - b) 26 – 35 years
    - c) 36 – 45 years
    - d) 46 – 55 years
    - e) 56 years and above
3. What is your highest level of education?
    - a) Certificate
    - b) Diploma
    - c) Bachelor Degree
    - d) Master Degree
    - e) Other (please specify): _____
4. How long have you been working at Bagamoyo District Court? *(For staff only)*
    - a) Less than 1 year
    - b) 1 – 3 years
    - c) 4 – 6 years
    - d) 7 – 10 years
    - e) More than 10 years
5. What is your current position or designation at the Court? *(For staff only)*
    - a) Magistrate
    - b) Court Clerk
    - c) Records Management Officer
    - d) Administrative Staff
    - e) Other (please specify): _____
6. If you are a court user, what is your relationship to the court? *(For court users only)*
    - a) Litigant (party to a case)
    - b) Lawyer/Advocate
    - c) Witness
    - d) Other (please specify): _____

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7. Have you ever received any formal training on records management?
    - a) Yes
    - b) No
8. If your answer to question 7 above is "Yes," what type of training did you receive?
    - a) Short course (less than 3 months)
    - b) Certificate programme
    - c) Diploma programme
    - d) Degree programme
    - e) Workshop or seminar only
9. Which of the following best describes the records management system currently used at Bagamoyo District Court?
    - a) Entirely paper-based (manual) system
    - b) Entirely electronic system
    - c) Hybrid system (both paper and electronic)
    - d) I am not sure
10. How would you rate the current state of records management at Bagamoyo District Court?
    - a) Excellent
    - b) Good
    - c) Average
    - d) Poor
    - e) Very poor
11. In your opinion, which of the following is the most important ethical principle in records management?
    - a) Confidentiality of records
    - b) Integrity and authenticity of records
    - c) Accountability in handling records
    - d) Transparency in records access
    - e) All of the above

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12. Which of the following challenges most affects ethical records management practice at Bagamoyo District Court?
    - a) Lack of trained records management personnel
    - b) Inadequate storage facilities and equipment
    - c) Absence of clear records management policies and procedures
    - d) Poor attitude of staff towards records management
    - e) Insufficient funding for records management activities
13. To what extent do you believe that good records management contributes to transparency in court operations?
    - a) To a very great extent
    - b) To a great extent
    - c) To a moderate extent
    - d) To a small extent
    - e) Not at all

SECTION B: ETHICAL PRACTICES, TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Part I: Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements. *Use the scale: 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree*

Statement	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
14. Court records are managed with integrity and honesty					
15. There are clear procedures for controlling access to court records					
16. Unauthorized access to court records is prevented					
17. Court records are stored in conditions that prevent damage					
18. It is easy to retrieve court records when needed					
19. Staff are trained on ethical records management					
20. Records management policies are followed consistently					

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21. Poor records management delays justice delivery					
22. Ethical records management promotes accountability					
23. Citizens can access court records as required by law					

Part II: Open-Ended Questions

Please provide brief but clear answers in the spaces provided.

24. In your own words, what do you understand by "ethical practice" in records management?

25. What are the main challenges facing records management at Bagamoyo District Court that may affect transparency and accountability?

26. What measures do you think should be taken to improve ethical records management practices at this court? (You may refer to guidelines by ISO, ICA, or IRMT in your response)

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27. How does poor records management affect the delivery of justice and public trust in the court system?

28. Do you have any additional comments or suggestions regarding ethical records management at Bagamoyo District Court?

Part III: Specific Challenges

29. Please tick (✓) the challenges that you have personally experienced or observed in records management at Bagamoyo District Court (You may tick more than one)

- a) Missing or lost court case files
- b) Unauthorised access to confidential records
- c) Delays in retrieving records when needed
- d) Poor storage conditions (dust, humidity, insects, rodents)
- e) Lack of proper training for records staff
- f) Absence of retention and disposal schedules
- g) No backup system for records (physical or digital)
- h) Interference by non-records staff in the registry
- i) Inadequate funding for records management activities

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR TIME AND COOPERATION. YOUR RESPONSES ARE HIGHLY VALUED.

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APPENDIX IV:

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR KEY INFORMANTS

Title of Study: Ethical Practice in Records Management and Their Impact on Transparency and Accountability: A Case Study of Bagamoyo District Court

Interviewee Position: _____ Date: _____

Duration: Approximately 30-45 minutes

Section 1: Existing Ethical Practices

1. Can you describe the current ethical practices in records management at this court? (Probe: What policies or guidelines exist? How are they communicated to staff?)
2. What training do staff receive on ethical records management? How adequate is this training?
3. How are confidentiality and integrity of records maintained?

Section 2: Impact on Transparency and Accountability

4. How do ethical records management practices influence transparency in court operations?
5. What challenges do staff or court users face in accessing court records?
6. How does records management support or hinder accountability in the court system?
7. Can you provide examples of how poor records management has affected justice delivery?

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Section 3: Challenges

8. What do you consider to be the main challenges in implementing ethical records management practices?
9. How does the current system handle different types of court records (case files, judgments, evidence, administrative records)?
10. What resource constraints affect the implementation of ethical records management?
11. How does staff attitude and culture affect records management practices?

Section 4: Proposed Improvements

12. What would an ideal ethical records management system for this court look like?
13. What specific components are essential for improving ethical records management?
14. How do you envision technology supporting improved records management?
15. What training and capacity-building initiatives would be necessary?

Section 5: Closing

16. Is there anything else you would like to share about ethical records management in this court?

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME AND VALUABLE INSIGHTS.

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APPENDIX V:

OBSERVATION CHECKLIST

OBSERVATION CHECKLIST FOR RECORDS MANAGEMENT ETHICAL PRACTICES

Bagamoyo District Court

Observer's Name: _____ Date: _____

Time of Observation: _____ Location: _____

Instructions: For each item, tick (✓) the appropriate box.

Section A: Physical Environment and Storage

S/N	Observation Item	Yes	No	Partial
A1	Designated storage areas for records			
A2	Filing cabinets/shelves adequate for record volume			
A3	Filing cabinets/shelves labelled clearly			
A4	Logical physical arrangement of records			
A5	Registry area clean and organised			
A6	Storage conditions protect records from damage			

Section B: Access Control

S/N	Observation Item	Observed	Not Observed
B1	Restricted access to registry area		
B2	Security measures in place (locks, keys, etc.)		
B3	Sign-in/sign-out procedures for files		
B4	Staff monitor access to records		
B5	No unauthorised persons in registry		

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Section C: Records Handling and Retrieval

S/N	Observation Item	Yes	No	Sometimes
C1	Staff use finding aids to locate files			
C2	Staff spend excessive time searching			
C3	Files cannot be located despite searching			
C4	Files returned to correct places after use			
C5	Records handled with care			

Section D: Challenges and Constraints Observed

S/N	Observation Item	Observed	Not Observed
D1	Overcrowded filing cabinets		
D2	Files piled on floors		
D3	Misfiled records		
D4	Missing files (gaps in filing sequence)		
D5	Damaged or deteriorating records		
D6	Faded or illegible file labels		
D7	Staff struggling to locate records		
D8	Users waiting excessively for service		
D9	Absence of classification tools		
D10	No evidence of regular records audits		
D11	Lack of security for sensitive records		

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Section E: Ethical Indicators

S/N	Observation Item	Observed	Not Observed	Comments
E1	Staff treat records with respect			
E2	Confidential records handled appropriately			
E3	Evidence of professional conduct			
E4	Accountability mechanisms visible			
E5	Transparency in record-keeping processes			

Additional Observations/Field Notes:

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APPENDIX VI

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

NASRA AMRI LEMJUSI

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 **01/04/2026** mpaka tarehe **01/05/2026**.

Nakutakia kazi njema.

.....

I. S. MGUDE
AFISA UTUMISHI (W)
BAGAMOYO

AFISA UTUMISHI
MAHAKAMA YA WILAYA
S.L.P 81
BAGAMOYO

NAKALA: -

NASRA AMRI LEMJUSI

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