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FACULTY OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

DEPARTMENT OF INFORMATION SCIENCE (IS)

Records Management Practices at University of Livingstonia

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Degree in Library and Information Science**

MZUZU UNIVERSITY

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DECLARATION

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to God who, through His divine intervention, makes all things possible.

I also dedicate this work to my late father, Wilton Chikwengwe Simwaka, who made sure I attained higher education. On his deathbed, he battled with anguish and breathed final blessings on me: “May God bless you.” *May his soul continue resting in eternal peace.*

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Abstract

The purpose of the study was to investigate records management practices at the University of Livingstonia, Malawi. The production of records using technologies has escalated world-over with growing concerns on their proper management. This prompted studies in records management (RM) to unearth global trends in RM practices. From a global perspective, previous studies on RM focused on public institutions. In Malawi, however, empirical studies in RM practices in private higher education are at an infant stage as such few or no documented studies have been explored. The majority of studies available in the context of Malawi focused mainly on records management in the public sector. The dearth of literature in RM practices in private higher education in Malawi, therefore, underscored conceptualisation of RM phenomena in the context of University of Livingstonia (UNILIA). Such an understanding was critical to unearth best RM practices and contribute to policy suggestions and research practice in the private higher education in Malawi and beyond. The following research questions guided the study: a) What are the types of records created or received at UNILIA; b) How are records managed from creation to disposition at UNILIA; and c) What are the factors influencing records management practices at UNILIA. This is a mixed-methods study underpinned by the records continuum model. It targeted seventy-five (75) UNILIA staff members from central office in Mzuzu and the two campuses: Laws Campus and Ekwendeni Campus because of their direct and active involvement in the records life cycle. The sample size for the study population is sixty-three (63), which was arrived at by employing purposive sampling and stratified random techniques. Purposive sampling was used in selecting departments and faculties to be involved in the study. The self-administered questionnaire and semi-structured interview questions were used to solicit data from the staff members. Another set of data was collected using documentary sources. The study found that UNILIA created records such as minutes (88.5%), grades (86.5%), theses (82.7%), mails (80.8%), reports (78.8%) and financial documents (78.8%) among others. It reported that there were uncoordinated records management practices due to, among others, lack of records management policy, retention, and disposal schedules. It further reported a number of factors frustrating the success of records management practices at UNILIA such as lack of management support, poor funding, and lack of ICT infrastructure. The study recommended implementation and centralization of records unit and the development of records management programmes and policies.

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

CD: Cassette Disks

DRM: Digital Records Management

ERM: Electronic Records Management

e-RIM: Electronic Records Information Management

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

HU: Hacettepe University

ISO: International Standard Organisation

IT: Information Technology

MZUNI: Mzuzu University

MZUNIREC: Mzuzu University Research and Ethical Committee

NCHE: National Council for Higher Education

SFU: Simon Fraser University

RCM: Records Continuum Model

TTS: Trinity Theology Seminary

UBS: University of British Columbia

UDS: University of Development Studies

UNILIA: University of Livingstonia

UNIMA: University of Malawi

Chapter One

Introduction and background of the study

1.1 Introduction

In the information sector, records are the epicentre of any business activities. With the ever-increasing production of records, their effective management becomes inevitable in the evolutionary records environment (Chorley, 2017; Moloji & Mutula, 2007; Phiri & Tough, 2017). Hence, the purpose of this study was to investigate records management practices at the University of Livingstonia (UNILIA) and make recommendations for promoting effective and efficient management of records in the university. Records are summarily defined as information created, received, and maintained by an organisation as evidence of pursuance of legal obligations or business transactions (International Standard Organisation (ISO), 15489-1:2016). Tertiary institutions transact several routine activities which lead to the generation of voluminous types of records. The records being created on a daily basis range from admissions, human resources, assessments, financial transactions, memos, and administrative records (Nyanyu, 2016). University records are categorised into three groups, namely: reference records, administrative records, and academic records (Onwudebelu et al., 2013). Examples of reference records are government policies, decisions of the university council, and funding procedures. Administrative records fall into the category of records such as students' enrolment, staff documents, and school events. Academic records are, for instance, curriculum documents, financial documents, student academic records, and official correspondences (Onwudebelu et al., 2013).

Universities, both public and private institutions alike, thrive to be recognised with world-class reputation and impact. This can be realised by harnessing a long-term competitive edge to self-sustain their objectives (Khumaro & Chigaliro, 2017). The competitive edge is encrypted in records and information that universities possess. In this view, records are indispensable assets that inform the university management team to make proper decisions based on evidence. They help the universities to meet operational, legal, and regulatory requirements (Musembe, 2016). They enhance operational efficiency and maintain the institutional memory (Alegbeleye, 2019).

The increase in students' enrolment and additional programmes of study is a recipe for a plethora of records to be created by any institution of higher learning within a short period. This calls for proper records management to protect the institutional records from permanent loss (Khumaro &

Chigaliro, 2017). Records management (RM) is holistically viewed as a “field of management responsible for the efficient and systematic control of the creation, receipt, maintenance, use and disposition of records, including processes for capturing and maintaining evidence of and information about business activities and transactions in the form of records” (Akuffo & Adams, 2016; Beijer & Kooper, 2010; Brooks, 2018; Evans et al., 2019; Moloji & Mutula, 2007; Silic & Back, 2013). In the modern era of the digital age, when such business activities are transacted in electronic formats, it is being referred to as e-records management.

Universities generate a broad range of records on a daily basis. Various departments create and use records for the purpose of documenting their activities. Therefore, universities need robust and meticulous records management practices and systems to successfully manage records throughout their lifecycle (Khumaro & Chigaliro, 2017).

In the 21st Century, the proliferation of computer and information systems has triggered an endless generation of records (Kalusopa, 2016). This has necessitated studies in proper records management practices in both private and public sectors. However, divergent views have emerged amongst information professionals which have spearheaded a substantive debate as to whether e-records are replacing paper-based records or they are just playing a complementary role (Ayatollahi et al., 2009). In light of these two-fold perspectives in the records domain, this study was inspired by the view that paper-based records and e-records are complementary. This was justified by the assertion that there had been an increasingly voluminous creation of paper records since the inception of innovations in computer and information systems (Tagbotor et al., 2015). A similar assertion was echoed by Alegbeleye (2019) that despite ages in using non-paper media storage, paper records continue to escalate. In a university setup, there is a heterogeneous (hybrid) records environment, demanding a multidimensional approach to records management (Alegbeleye & Chilaka, 2019). The prospects of a paperless records environment are pessimistically anticipated. Millar (2009) believed that it is unlikely that a purely electronic records framework would be found anywhere in the world in the near future. The belief was later vindicated by an empirical study conducted by Phiri and Tough (2017) which observed that paper records were still predominant in Malawian institutions of higher learning despite that recordkeeping was increasingly becoming digital. To coordinate the management of both paper

and electronic records in a hybrid environment, there is a need for inclusive records management practices.

The success of records management is practically hinged on its best practices. Records management programme, policies, and legislations are key elements of records management practices (Mosweu, 2019). Different practices necessitate the management of records. The practices are synonymous with records management processes such as records recreation/capture, records classification, records storage, records preservation, records security, and records disposal (Alegbeleye & Chilaka, 2019). In this state of continuous creation of records, records management is envisaged as a hallmark in safeguarding against loss of invaluable institutional records (Wamukoya & Mutula, 2005; Khumaro & Chigaliro, 2017). At a functional level, records management has leapfrogged into the information governance framework in fostering transparency, accountability, and compliance of the business transactions (Asogwa, 2012; Dekopoulou, 2012; De Mingo & Martinez, 2017; McLeod & Childs, 2017).

Such activities and functions of records management are being orchestrated at the helm of records management practices and initiatives such as policy formulation, training of staff members, and setting up of ICT infrastructure (Kalusopa & Ngulube, 2012; Muchaonyerwa & Khayundi, 2014). However, in developing countries, records management is being frustrated by a litany of emerging constraints such as lack of awareness, shortage of funds, and lack of management support (Ismail & Jamaludin, 2009; Kemoni, 2009; Wamukoya & Mutula, 2005). Nevertheless, the prominence of records management practices is not only highlighted in theory. It has spurred success in the corporate world including academic institutions. This motivated the researcher to unpack records management practices at UNILIA, one of the private universities in Malawi. It was expected that the study findings from the lens of records management practices at UNILIA could have practical and policy implications in Malawian universities. A logical flow set out in chapter one includes the introduction and background of the study, problem statement, research objectives, the significance of the study, and scope and limitations.

1.2 Context of the Study

The University of Livingstonia (UNILIA) was established in 2003 by the Synod of Livingstonia as the first private university in Malawi (UNILIA, 2019). It opened its doors to the first group of undergraduates at the then Khondowe or Mumbwe on 23rd August, 2003. At that time there was a serious shortage of secondary school teachers. Consequently, the immediate task of the Synod was to complement the Malawi Government's efforts in training secondary school teachers (UNILIA, 2019).

The College of Education at the then Khondowe later changed to Laws Campus, was not the only main Campus, but also the only College of Livingstonia. The then existing colleges – Livingstonia Technical College, College of Commerce, College of Health Sciences, and College of Theology (all based at Ekwendeni Campus) – were taken on board through some kind of loose agreements. Now, the emphasis is on the two locations accommodating Laws and Ekwendeni Campuses. UNILIA has a total population of at least 2400 students and 250 staff members including administrative, academic and support staff (L. Malongo, phone communication, February 8, 2020).

The mission statement of the university is “To educate and inspire learners, guided by Christian values, to become principled leaders who will transform society through excellence in teaching, research, consultancy, and learning environment for the glory of God” (UNILIA-Strategic Plan, 2012). To date, UNILIA has four faculties, namely: Faculty of Education, Faculty of Applied Sciences, Faculty of Social Sciences, and Faculty of Theology which offer various certificates, diplomas, and undergraduate degree programmes. The academic departments within these faculties include Education Humanities, Education Sciences, University Certificate in Education, Theology and Religious Studies, Human Rights, Social and Development Studies, Food Security and Nutrition, ICTs in Education, and Computer Engineering. Administrative departments include Finance, Registry, Office of the Principal, Secretaries, and Office of the Matron. Technical departments include the Information Technology and Library (UNILIA, 2019).

Just like any other academic institution of higher learning, the University of Livingstonia generates records in the aforementioned departments on a daily basis. For example, academic departments create records through teaching and research.

Over the past five years, UNILIA has embarked on integrating ICTs into its core business functions. Salient examples of such ICT initiatives include implementation of Results

Management systems, Integrated Library management systems, accounting information systems, Payroll management systems, provision of internet services, implementation of computer revolving funds for its staff, operational records, and policies. These initiatives aim at modernising UNILIA to become more competitive and improve its core business operations. This implies that the production of electronic records and information has increased which demands records management best practices (D. Malanga, personal communication, April 16, 2020).

Management of records and the inception of ICTs initiatives explained above require high standard records management practices for systematic coordination of various records and information systems, availability of records over a long period, easy access and retrieval of records, compliance, transparency, and accountability of the business transactions made. However, there has been no study to establish such aspects of records management practices at the University of Livingstonia.

1.3 Problem statement

The production of records using technologies has escalated world-over with growing concerns on their proper management (Kalusopa, 2016). This prompted studies in records management to unearth global trends in records management practices. From a global perspective, previous studies on records management such as Kulcu (2009) in Turkey, Zachi and Peri (2010) in America, Bailey (2011) in the United Kingdom, and Ameyaw and Fore (2021) in Ghana focused on public institutions. The findings highlight both successes and failures of records management practices in institutions of higher learning such as satisfying but, in most cases, weak policy and legislative structures. Literature on records management practices in the African context mainly focuses on challenges facing the implementation of records management best practices in public institutions such as unavailability of records unit, lack of records policy, and lack of qualified staff members (Adams, 2016; Asogwa, 2012; Coetzer, 2012; Galala & Yusof, 2013). In Malawi, however, empirical studies in records management practices in private higher education were at an infant stage such that few or no documented studies had been explored. The majority of studies available focused mainly on records management in the public sector (Chawinga et al., 2016; Malanga & Chawinga, 2017; Msiska, Kunitawa, & Kumwenda, 2017; Phiri & Tough, 2017). Further domestic studies such as Lihoma (2012) 'The impact of administrative change on recordkeeping in Malawi', Chawinga (2019) 'Research data management in public universities in Malawi', and Mweso (2019) 'Where are the records in public sector reform? Advocating for integration of

records management in public sector reforms in Malawi' focused on managing records in the public sector. Consequently, the findings from these studies did not yield sufficient evidence to understand the current state of records management practices in private higher education institutions in Malawi.

The dearth of literature in records management practices in private higher education institutions in Malawi, therefore, underscored conceptualisation of records management phenomena in the context of UNILIA. Such an understanding was critical to unearth best records management practices and contribute to policy suggestions and research practice in the private higher education institutions in Malawi and beyond. Record management is critical for UNILIA to uphold compliance with laws and regulations to survive litigation risks. It also connotes transparency and accountability of business transactions which leads to effective business operations. Therefore, this study sought to investigate records management practices at the UNILIA as one of the private higher education institutions in Malawi.

1.4 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to investigate records management practices at University of Livingstonia.

1.5 Research Objectives

The study sought to address the following three objectives:

1. To identify types of records created or received at UNILIA;
2. To determine how records are created, captured, maintained, and disposed at UNILIA;
3. To ascertain factors influencing records management practices at UNILIA.

1.6 Research Questions

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

1. What are the types of records created or received at UNILIA?
2. How are records managed from creation to disposition or permanent archival at UNILIA?
3. What are the factors influencing records management practices at UNILIA?

1.7 Significance of the study

It is envisaged that this study will contribute to the practice, theory, and policy of RM at UNILIA. Pertaining to practice, the study intends to provide empirical evidence on the importance of managing records in a continuum of care from creation to disposition as a means to the attainment

of effective and efficient management of records and to achieve transparency and accountability. On theoretical contribution, the study seeks to fill the scholarly literature gap in the perspective of records management practices in private institutions of higher learning in Malawi. It was also envisaged that the study findings could aid UNILIA in formulating a records management policy for effective records management. This could further create awareness among top university managers about the need to align records management policies to the overall management of the university. The policy insights could prompt the establishment and implementation of a robust records management programme at UNILIA.

1.8 Scope and Limitations

The scope of the study focused on two aspects, namely: geographical area and unit of analysis. Malawi has nine public universities and 16 accredited private universities (National Council for Higher Education (NCHE), 2020). This study targeted UNILIA only with an assumption that as one of the first private universities in Malawi with diverse programmes of study, the information gathered would have transferable implications on records management practices to other upcoming private universities in Malawi. It was further on the basis that prior studies on records management practices had mainly focused on public universities. In unit of analysis, the study targeted administrators such as college principals, and college registrars, academic staff such as senior lecturers, lecturers, assistant lecturers, and staff associates, librarians, matrons, IT officers, accounts staff, and other action officers. These categories of staff are custodians of records and information. As a limitation, the study was undertaken in one setting. Therefore, the findings would not be fully transferable to other private universities. Further to that, financial and time constraints limited the researcher to broaden the contextual scope to other private universities.

1.10 Summary

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

Chapter Two

Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, the background to the study, problem statement, purpose, and objectives of the study were discussed. In the literature review the researcher extracts and synthesises the main points, issues, findings, and research methods that emerge from a critical review of the readings. The purpose of reviewing the literature is to define the problem within the broad context of existing gaps in research (Creswell, 2014). The four main types of literature review are traditional or narrative, systematic, meta-analysis and meta-synthesis. This study was informed by the narrative literature review. The primary purpose of a narrative literature review is to analyse and summarise a body of literature (O’Gorman & MacIntosh, 2015). This is achieved by presenting a comprehensive background of the literature within the topic of interest to highlight new research streams, identify gaps or recognise inconsistencies. This can help in refining, focussing, and shaping research questions as well as developing theoretical and conceptual frameworks (O’Gorman & MacIntosh, 2015). Sources of the narrative literature review used in this chapter include e-journals, books, web information, conference papers, and dissertations.

This chapter’s focus is in line with the objectives of the study. The following themes were reviewed: types of records created; creation, capture, maintenance, and disposition of records; and factors influencing records management practices.

2.2 Types of records created/received

There are various records and information generated in universities. These could be reports, grades, memos, financial reports, and employee’s files (Phiri & Tough, 2017). Some scholars such as Aitchison (2010), Suber (2012) and Marsh (2015) have highlighted the following types of grey literature that could be available at university and could be considered as records: preprints; working papers; theses and dissertations; research and technical reports; conference proceedings; departmental and research centre newsletters; papers in support of grant applications; status reports to funding agencies; committee reports, memoranda, statistical reports, technical documentation, conference presentation, and surveys. A number of studies and other related literature reviewed provide consistent results about the common types of records generated and managed in universities. For instance, a study by Kulcu (2009) examined records systems of Turkish and Canadian universities. It revealed kinds of records that were both paper and electronic. The

following records were listed: directories, correspondences, emails, forms, reports, retention schedules, and database reports.

From African perspective, several studies have explored on records management practices. In East Africa, a qualitative study conducted by Luyombya and Ndagire (2020) investigated records management procedures and service delivery in Islamic University in Uganda. Just like public universities, the study revealed that this private university generated records in the categories of correspondence, students' grades, policies, minutes of meetings, reports, contracts and equipment documents. A quantitative study undertaken by Unegbu and Adenike (2013) unearthed challenges of records management practices in the Ministry of Information and Strategy in Nigeria found that the commonly created records were letters, directives, mails, reports, policy in procedure manual, financial, legal, general maintenance manual, historical or archival periodicals.

Similar findings were reported in a qualitative study done by Phiri and Tough (2017). Six targeted Sub-Saharan African universities: University of Cape Town, University of the Western Cape, University of Johannesburg, University of Witwatersrand, University of Malawi and Mzuzu University. The study focused on managing university records and documents in the world of governance, audit and risk. The findings revealed that records such as communications within universities, admission records, student assessment records, financial and human resource records were routinely generated by the six aforementioned universities. Precisely, the list of the record type conformed to results reported in a mixed-method study conducted at MZUNI by Chawinga et al. (2016). It found out that the following were the records produced at MZUNI: academic records, programme records, staff records, student records, project records, financial records, meeting minutes, memos, correspondence, student grades, and dissertations.

Further on studies done in Africa, a case study conducted by Musembe (2016) focused on Moi University, one of the public universities in Kenya, to establish how records management can be used to support the business function of the institution. It reported that the records generated by the university are personal records pertaining to employment, staff development, and disciplinary issues; students' records such as population, student welfare, performance, and disciplinary issues; administrative records, financial records such as research funds, grants, budgetary information, salary payments, statements of accounts, fees payments, reports, and expenditure receipts; architectural records such as building plans and maps; internal-external audit reports; committee

records such as minutes; and records collaborations and memorandum of understandings. The study further reported specific records required to carry out business function. For instance, records such as strategic plan, the university act, quality and manual procedures, and terms of services were listed. A case study conducted by Akuffo and Adams (2016) examined records management practices at the Trinity Theological Seminary (TTS) in Ghana. The findings reported records relating to functions performed in the offices. The following record types are listed: memoranda, invitations, general correspondences, personnel records, academic records such transcripts, certificates, and students' progress reports. Other records include policy files, circulation registers, books, letters of attestation, letters of recommendation, and letters of admission, annual reports, minutes of meetings, programme of activity, financial records such as payroll records, banking records, invoices, receipt books, payments vouchers, ledger cards and general ledgers. The various studies reviewed under this theme report include a common profile of records type in academic institutions of higher learning. The difference, however, could be the specific types of records which universities base on to inform critical decisions. Similarly, this study intended to generate an empirical understanding of the types of records that UNILIA uses to support its business transactions on a daily basis, which eventually form administrative and legal basis.

2.4 Creating, capturing, maintaining, and disposing of/archiving records

Paper-based or electronic records should be managed throughout their entire life cycle. This originates from creation or when records are received until their final disposition which entails permanent destruction or preservation of those records (Read & Ginn, 2015). As encapsulated in a study done by Alegbeleye and Chiliaka (2019), the whole concept of records management is embodied in its practices. These practices are records creation, records capture, records classification, records storage, records preservation, records security, records retention, and records disposal. The following empirical studies crystallise the discourse on the processes/practices as discussed in the extant literature.

In the developed world a number of studies reported practices in records management domain. A study undertaken by Zach and Peri (2010) investigated patterns in practices among North American college and university archives and records management programmes regarding their approaches to capturing, storing, organising, and making available institutional electronic records. The study results revealed relatively little change in the development of electronic records management programmes over the past four years. A predominantly quantitative study conducted

by Kulcu (2009) compared recordkeeping processes in a Turkish university with two Canadian universities. It gathered required information about records management practices at Hacettepe University (HU) in Turkey, Simon Fraser University (SFU), and the University of British Columbia in Canada. It reported that records management practices such as records classification, storage, retention, and disposal of records were procedurally evident in the two Canadian universities. The successful implementation of the records best practices was partly alluded to the existing records management programme, records policies, and records retention and disposal schedules that were being used by the Canadian universities. For instance, the study revealed that, in Canada, records were retained based on their lifecycle variations. Conversely, it was revealed that, in Turkey, Hacettepe University had erroneous records management practices. For instance, records were permanently held in departmental units due to a lack of records retention schedules. The challenges mainly arose from the lack of records management programme and its relevant records policies.

In the African context, the following empirical studies form a basis in understanding records management issues as creation, capture maintenance, and disposal of records. A descriptive study undertaken by Abdulrahman (2015) assessed the management of records for effective administration of five universities in North Central Nigeria. The results of the study showed that records creation, records retrieval, records scheduling, and filing were done manually. It also reported that alphabetical and subject filing systems are the two major filing systems used. On storage facilities, the findings indicated that cupboard, wooden shelves/cabinets, steel shelves, drawers for flat file, box file and top of tables were storage facilities available. The aforementioned research findings collaborated with results in the following related study conducted in universities situated in Southern Nigeria. A quantitative study done by Egwunyenga (2017) examined the associated problems and management options of record-keeping among universities in the South Geo-Political Zone of Nigeria. It revealed ineffective means of retrieving records, improper security of records, and lack of retention and disposition schedules.

Similarly, in South Africa, the status of records management practices is suggestive of inefficiency. For instance, a qualitative study done by Netshakhuma (2019) assessed the management of student affairs records at the University of Mpumalanga in South Africa. The

findings of the study reported, among others, show that the University lacks a records centre, records retention, and appraisal schedules.

In Ghana, a couple of studies have informed trends of record management practices in academic institutions. For instance, a case study conducted by Akuffo and Adams (2016) examined records management practices at the Trinity Theological Seminary (TTS) in Ghana. It revealed that within TTS a centralized records management system was non-existent and proper records management procedures/practices were not followed. However, records were created, maintained, used, and disposed of in the offices. After records were created, they were then captured on appropriate media to ensure their support of the TTS' business continuity. Most of the TTS's records were in paper formats while the few records in electronic formats were stored in open drives, compact discs, and computers as backups. On the maintenance of records, it also established that the TTS used the alphabetical classification system but records on the shelves were filed by subject matter. The study findings further reveal that the electronic records were protected and accessed using passwords but they were not properly disposed of due to a lack of policy specifying procedures of retention and disposition. A predominant quantitative study undertaken by Seniwoliba, Mahama and Abilla (2017) in Ghana aimed at creating and enhancing awareness and also sensitising the staff of University of Development Studies (UDS) of the fundamental role played by effective records management in fulfilling the institution's mandate. It revealed that records management at UDS was decentralised and is managed manually through filing of hard copies in folders and kept in metal cabinets based on individual ability and knowledge at the various departments, sections, units, and faculties. It also reported that the academic affairs and finance departments developed software to store and retrieve records.

Similar findings are replicated in academic institutions in Kenya and Uganda. A case study conducted by Musembe (2016) focused on Moi University, one of the public universities in Kenya to establish how records management can be used to support the business function of the institution. The results of the study reported that the following records management practices were evident at the University: receiving and dispatch of mails; receipt, classification, and filing of records into their staff or subject files; opening of files and data entry; storage and retrieval of files; receipt, capture, and creation of records; maintenance of records by ensuring that files are in good shape and the storage conditions in the registry are conducive; and ensuring security and

confidentiality of records by restricting access to authorised staff. However, it was further reported that these records management practices were not effective and properly followed due to a lack of relevant records policies to guide their operationalisation.

Additionally, another study in East Africa highlighted similar findings on records management practices. A qualitative study conducted by Luyombya and Ndagire (2020) investigated records management procedures and service delivery in Islamic University in Uganda. Underpinned by lifecycle model, the study enquired whether the following records management procedures were followed or not: creation and receipt of records; distribution of records to internal and external users; use of records; maintenance and disposal of records. It revealed that the staff members at the University were not conversant with the records management procedures/practices. For instance, the records management procedures that act as benchmarks for the maintenance and use of records were non-existent.

Over a few recent years, a domestic study conducted by Phiri and Tough (2017) provided an empirical overview of the status of records management in the Sub-Saharan universities including the two public universities in Malawi: The University of Malawi (UNIMA) and Mzuzu University (MZUNI). It reported that the universities were generating and managing records both in digital and paper formats. It was further revealed, however, that there were no central records management units both at UNIMA and MZUNI. To this development, academic staff managed departmental records using their own devised or discretionary records management practices. This was exacerbated by a lack of records management policy. It also indicated that the use of classification schemes necessitated and facilitated records retrieval, retention, and disposition.

The ultimate purpose underlying a broad range of records management practices as expounded above is to ensure their long-term availability and accessibility (Ismail & Jamaludin, 2009). The blueprint that guides these records management practices include appraisal practice, records retention, preservation strategy, and storage management. This underscores the principal requirements of university's fiscal well-being, legal survival, and business continuity (Ismail & Jamaludin, 2009).

The findings of several African studies on records management practices suggest a broad range of unrealised records processes which may be predictive of the records management phenomenon at UNILIA. However, business operations at private universities may demand a paradigm shift in the

compliance of records transactions. Hence, the study intended to establish records management practices such as the creation, capture, maintenance, and disposal of records at UNILIA.

From the emergent literature it is clear that records management practices in African countries are not fully developed, operationalised and formalised in institutions of higher learning. However, the extent of such inadequacy requires further interrogation. Hence, the following research questions help to understand the state of records management practices at UNILIA. For instance, how are records created and captured at UNILIA? What are the records classification systems at UNILIA? and how are records disposed of at UNILIA?

2.5 Factors influencing records management practices

Several factors are key to managing records at any institution. These factors could be policy formulation; management commitment; ICT infrastructure, finances, training, skills, and competencies (Kalusopa & Ngulube, 2012; Muchaonyerwa & Khayundi, 2014). Findings of scholarly studies globally presented underlying harmony in factors that influence records management practices.

A longitudinal study done by Olivier and Foscarini (2015), researchers from the University of Northumbria, investigated the impact of international standards for records management through indirect influence of standards on practice via their use in education and training. It targeted universities on North American, British and Australasian mailing list. The findings showed that international standards such as standards for metadata, records management systems, and records management were extensively taught at the undergraduate and postgraduate levels. However, the uptake and implementation of such standards in records management were largely problematic, hence a contributing factor to their inadequate use and applicability in the offices. Perhaps, the concept of records management is not viewed through the lens of economic gains, hence its ineffective implementation. To unpack this assumption, a qualitative study undertaken by Bailey (2011) measured the impact of records management in the British education sector. It targeted six UK higher education institutions. The findings of the study provided demonstrable proof that investment in improving records management can realise significant and sustained return on investments. This could be one of the major factors records management practices are given significant attention in the universities from the developed world. However, in Turkey records management processes are still far-fetched. A study conducted by Kulcu (2009) assessed the

records systems of a Turkish public university to develop records management programme in Turkish universities. It reported that records management processes in Turkish public universities do not meet legal and administrative requirements. This was mainly attributed to a lack of quality-based administrative structure, ineffective records management systems, erroneous applications, insufficient legal regulations, and unqualified staff.

On skills and competencies, a qualitative study conducted by Buchanan, Stratton and Chaudhary (2017) in USA as part of a broader research paper on ‘research on the work of 21st Century information professions revealed that every task in records management practices requires unique skills and competencies. This necessitates the call for regular skills acquisition through training in records management practices.

In Asia, the factors influencing records management practices are quite familiar and have intensively examined the electronic records domain. Academicians in the Faculty of Information Sciences and Technology from University of Kebangsaan Malaysia in Malaysia collaborated on a qualitative study that explored factors influencing the implementation of Electronic Records and Information Management (e-RIM) in military service in Malaysia. The study enlightened that people, organisations, technology, and processes are the interrelated contexts underlying e-RIM issues which inevitably influence the implementation of e-RIM initiatives. It further indicated that competency and leadership, governance structure, culture and strategic planning, technology development, and record-keeping process are the main factors impacting such efforts, in turn forming potential obstacles for organisations implementing such initiatives (Abdullah, Yusof, & Mokhtar, 2019). Another study carried out by Alkhofan et al. (2019) in Yemen, a developing Arab country, sought to identify significant factors for ensuring the successful implementation of Digital Records Management (DRM) initiatives. It aspired to domestic factors that would facilitate the implementation of DRM initiatives in Yemen. The factors that were extracted from available literature review and ranked by experts were top management support, implementation team and user support, policy and procedures; training, inadequate budget, communication, willingness, ease of use, IT infrastructure, and technical support. In a related study, Mukred and Yusof (2015) argue that universities mostly deal with electronic records as their strategic resource to foster competency, improve and eventually make effective performance evaluations. Their study focused on factors influencing the adoption of electronic records management for decision making process

at institutions of higher learning. It unearthed the significance of management commitment as a critical success factor to electronic records management. It further underlined that limited understanding of Electronic Records Management (ERM) was a recipe for institutions' resistance to implementing ERM initiatives. The literature on factors influencing records management practices is saturated with a distinct revelation that management support or commitment is a major concern in advancing records management issues. Phiri and Tough (2017) specified the concept of management support into four factors that included: provision of specific budget lines for records management activities; effective endorsement of records management projects; funding of specialist records keeping training; and approval of formal policies for records keeping.

In Africa, factors that influence records management practices are, on a large scale, undistinguishable. In West Africa, a study of three federal universities in Nigeria assessed the readiness of universities in managing electronic records. A mixed-method study done by Asogwa (2012) targeted thirty staff of the registry departments, principally found out that the sampled universities in Nigeria are not ready to manage digital records due to weak legislative and organisational structures. Records frameworks such as records policy statement, records legislation, records standards practices, guidelines and manuals; codes of best practices and training, services, and support which guide records management programme were scanty in these Nigerian universities. Similarly, a qualitative study conducted by Adam (2016) examined the possibility of a framework for effective management of e-records in the five universities in the North-Western States of Nigeria. It reported a litany of factors derailing the progress of records management practices in the universities, namely: lack of policy framework for e-records, lack of standardized and harmonized procedure among the staff for the management of e-records, lack of required competencies, and inadequate training and retraining for the staff. Other factors were reported as challenges such as external hackers into the e-records database, power supply, poor management, and administrative commitment.

In South Africa, a glimpse of factors influencing records management practices is reported in a mixed-method study undertaken by Coetzer and Roux (2012) which investigated the status of records management at the University of Zululand. It reported a mixture of factors frustrating the management of records at the University. Among the list were factors such as lack of records

policy, lack of formal records management system, lack of qualified records management practitioners, and lack of proper skills training in records management.

In Libya, the state of records management practices is appreciated in a quantitative study conducted by Galala and Yusof (2013) which determined e-records management in three institutions of higher learning in Al-Joufra. It targeted the College of Arts and Science, Teachers Preparatory College, and College of Economics and Accounting. The findings of the study from 64% of respondents reported that the colleges implemented e-records management without records policy and guidelines. It was further agreed (80% of the respondents) that the colleges faced challenges in managing electronic records.

In Ghana, study findings on factors that influence records management are also prevalent. For instance, a case study by Ameyaw and Fore (2021) was done to ascertain records management practices at the Ghana Communications Technology University. The findings reported challenges facing records management in the admission and records offices as follows: lack of adequate staff, lack of periodic training, lack of policy to guide records management, and the inability of students to furnish the admission office with the needed information. A domestic study undertaken by Chawinga et al (2016) investigated the power of a record at Mzuzu University. It further unearthed challenges clouding prospects of successful records management practices at MZUNI. It highlighted that inadequate and untrained staff to manage records, and lack of records management procedures/guidelines were prominent barriers to sound records management practices at MZUNI. Over the past few years, the National Council of Higher Education in Malawi has intensified calls for quality standards in both public and private universities (NCHE, 2015). This might have compelled institutions of higher learning to look into different systems of education including records management systems to enhance teaching, learning and research. Of particular interest, the study intended to ascertain prevailing factors influencing records management at UNILIA.

From the documented literature reviewed, similar factors derail or spur records management practices in institutions of higher learnings in the African context. However, these factors significantly vary from one institution to the other based on the socio-economic and technological factors. Various studies have dispersedly reported factors that influence records management practices in universities, but their in-depth analysis is lacking. Furthermore, these factors may not be extrapolated to Malawian private universities due to their unique prevailing socio-economic

and technological factors. Hence, the need to further interrogate these factors in the context of UNILIA, a private university in Malawi.

The literature reviewed issues, themes and trends in record management practices in institutions of higher learning. The chapter documented records that are mostly produced and received in universities. It was established that most university records are similar across public and private universities world-over. The literature further established various gaps in record management practices such as lack of records management policy, inadequate ICT infrastructure, and lack of electronic records management systems which could facilitate the creation, capturing, organisation, maintenance and disposal of records. These gaps in recordkeeping were largely reported in universities from African countries. Another area of interest under this chapter was on factors that influence records management practices. Both positive and negative factors had significant or substantial bearing on record management in institutions of higher learning.

2.8 Chapter Summary

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

Chapter Three

Theoretical Framework

3.1 Introduction

The theoretical framework is defined as “an interrelated set of constructs or variables formed into propositions, or hypotheses, that specify the relationship among variables in form of a diagram” (Creswell, 2009, p.51). It is also interchangeably used as a model. It guides research, curriculum, evaluation and helps develop strategies (Abraham, 2008). Hence, it is hypothesized that theory-driven research can develop and grow the discipline of study (Abraham, 2008). The theoretical framework aims to underpin or guide thematic areas of a study. Theories or models are considered key tools for conceptualising domains and variables in research. They provide a basis for grasping the dynamics of the theme of the study (Atulomah, 2011). The purpose of this study premised on investigating records management practices at University of Livingstonia which was addressed by the following three specific objectives:

- To identify types of records created or received at UNILIA;
- To determine how records are created, captured, maintained and disposed at UNILIA;
- To ascertain factors influencing records management practices at UNILIA.

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

3.2. Records Life Cycle

The records life cycle theory was developed by North West American archivists and records managers. Its originality and formation can be backdated to 1960’s (Luyombya & Ndagire, 2020). Figure 3.1 below illustrates the records life cycle.

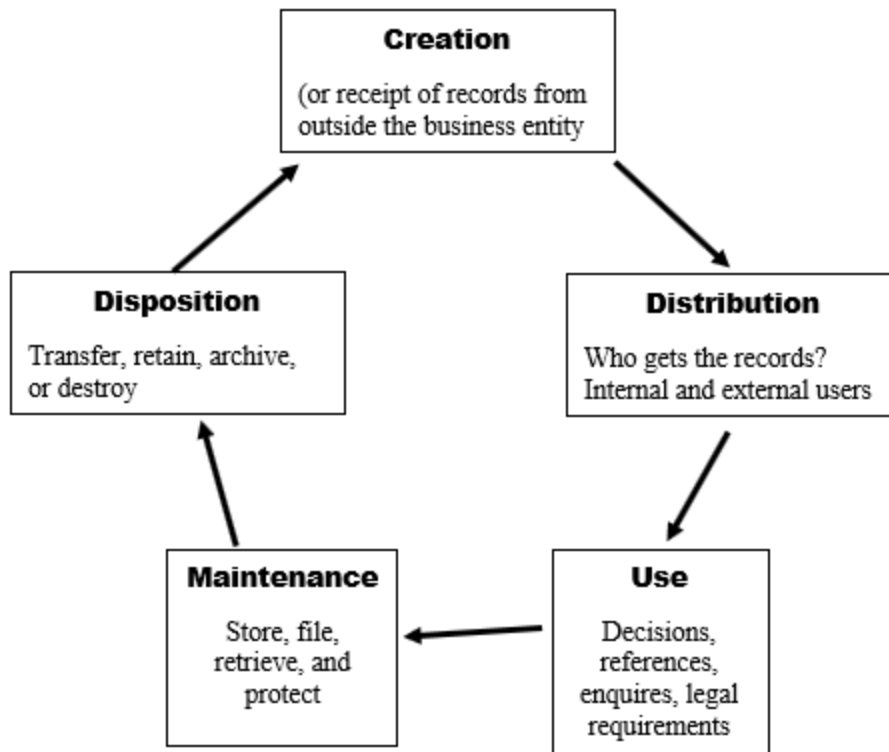


Fig 3.1. Records Life Cycle Source: (Luyombya & Ndagire, 2020)

It demonstrates five distinct elements which represent the key stages in records management. The life cycle starts at the time the records are created or received, through distribution, use, maintenance, until they are finally destroyed or permanently archived (Luyombya & Ndagire, 2020). The theory informed most global studies in the records management domain until the 21st Century following the emergence and adoption of the records continuum model. Nevertheless, its relevance has not been fully replaced or eclipsed (Matlala & Maphoto, 2020). The theory is based on the understanding that records have a life akin to that of a biological organism, in that it is born, it lives, and it dies (Azameti & Adjei, 2013). It depicts that the records which have a vital role for an institution must be managed properly, and therefore efficient systems and procedures for the creation, organization, and disposition of records must be upheld. Hence, there must be appropriate records policies to guide the appraisal and evaluation for system continuity and development (Kulcu, 2009). The theory was therefore not adopted for this study because it does not provide clear guidelines in the hybrid records environment.

As a traditional theory in the records management discipline, its strengths are biased towards paper records. The concepts of the records life cycle fit successfully into paper-based records management, mainly because its fundamental assumptions underpinned the paper record environment (Matlala & Maphoto, 2020). It also exhibits weaknesses potentially rendering the theory obsolete. It is inefficient and inadequate when applied to electronic records (Matlala & Maphoto, 2020). It only perceives the records linearly as active, semi-active and inactive whereas in the digital environment records are unlikely to reach the inactive stage (Azameti & Adjei, 2013; Luyombya & Ndagire, 2020; Matlala & Maphoto, 2020). The records life cycle has informed a number of studies in records management practices in academic institutions of higher learning. Such studies include the following: Akuffo and Adams (2016) 'Records management practices in ecumenical tertiary institutions: Trinity Theological Seminary in focus', Chinyemba and Ngulube (2005) 'Managing records at higher education institutions: a case study of the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg Campus', and Luyombya and Ndagire (2020) 'Records management procedures and service delivery in Islamic University in Uganda.'

3.3 Records Continuum Model

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

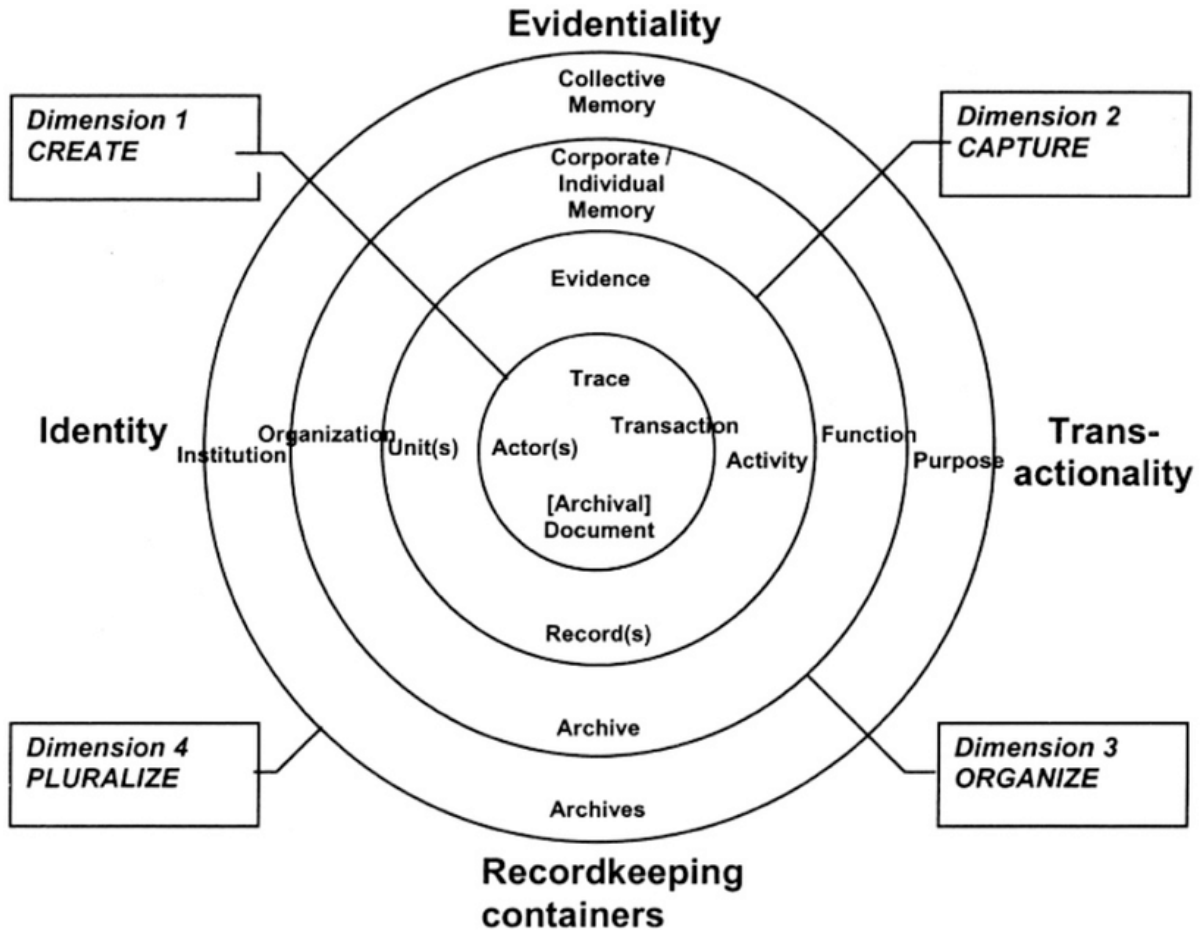


Fig 3.2: The Records Continuum Model

Source: (Musembe, 2016)

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

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

Duffus (2017) explains the dimensions of the RCM as follows: The first dimension, that is creation, involves actor/actors who are creators of the record. The transaction takes place in the creation process. The second dimension is capture. It involves the work unit in which the actors are associated with. The activity involves the context in which transactions take place; it encompasses the created document together with information about its context. The third dimension is the organisation of corporate and personal memory. The organisation is linked to its functions and activities which constitute those functions. The fourth dimension is pluralisation of collective memory. It represents the placement of records and archives in a society. The plural archives are set in the context of collective (or societal) memory. Frings-Hassami (2022) adds that pluralisation of records is not just about sharing in the future. In order for records to be shareable in the future, they need to be well managed and embedded in their societal context from the time of their creation. They need metadata that relate them to their context.

The term institution is meant to reflect the broader social recognition of organisations, while the purpose equates to functions viewed from a broader societal perspective. The dimensions of the records continuum demonstrate the distinct processes/practices of records management. Sound records management practices at any institution should reflect the variables defined in this framework (Duffus, 2017). Likewise, records management practices at UNILIA should have benchmarks from the records continuum. This is elaborated in the discussion chapter.

The strength of this model is that it perceives each stage in the records management processes as multidimensional. It further suggests that the management of records is not time based or sequential. It also views the actions on the records management as seamless and simultaneous

(Azameti & Adjei, 2013; Seniwoliba et al., 2017). In other words, the model is an extension of Life Cycle Model (Seniwoliba et al., 2017). Finally, the Record Continuum can be operationalised in both paper based and e-records environment (Azameti & Adjei, 2013). As a weakness, the literature only specifies that the model proves efficient only when there is a high level of collaboration between records managers and records archivists. Otherwise, records may get lost in the subsystems due to lack of records management and archival knowledge on the part of corporate information systems designers (Seniwoliba et al., 2017). The records continuum model informed several studies in the records and archival domain such as studies by Seniwoliba, Mahama and Abilla (2017), 'Challenges of records management in higher Education in Ghana: The case of University for Development Studies', Azameti and Adjei (2013), 'Challenges in academic records management in Tertiary Institutions in Ghana', and Erima and Wamukoya (2012), 'Aligning records management and risk management with business processes: a case study of Moi University', Matangira et al. (2013), 'Establishing a university records management programme: a case study of the University of Namibia', and Frings-Hessami (2022), 'Continuum, continuity, continuum actions: reflection on the meaning of a continuum perspective and on its compatibility with a life cycle framework'

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

Table 3.1: Mapping Research Questions with variables of the Theoretical Model

Research questions	Theoretical Model	Key variables addressed
1. What are the types of records created or received at UNILIA?	Records Continuum	Create, evidentiality, activity, transactionality
2. How are records managed from creation to disposition or permanent archival at UNILIA?	Records Continuum	Create, capture, organisation, pluralization, storage, retention, preservation, security, disposition
3. What are the factors influencing records management practices at UNILIA?	Records Continuum	Recordkeeping containers, benefits, management commitment, ICT infrastructure, policy and legislations, resources, challenges, identity, actors, knowledge, skills, competencies

3.4 Summary

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

Chapter Four

Research Methodology

4.1 Introduction

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

4.2 Research paradigms

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

4.2.1 Positivism

It takes the view that there is a single reality that can be measured and known, and it uses quantitative method to measure the reality (Rehman & Alharthi, 2016). It claims that the social world can be understood objectively. In this research philosophy, the researcher is an objective analyst (Zukauskas et al., 2018). Positivism entails working with an observable social reality to produce law-like generalisations. It promises unambiguous and accurate knowledge. The focus is on the strictly scientific empiricist method designed to yield pure data and facts uninfluenced by

human interpretation or bias (Saunders, 2009). The study did not adopt positivism as a research paradigm because it does not adequately underpin the mixed method design.

4.2.2 Interpretivism

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

4.2.4 Pragmatism

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

Following theoretical and empirical studies reviewed by Doyle et al. (2009) in research methodology, their shared views on pragmatism posit that purists' view of the dichotomy between positivist and non-positivist philosophies are prevalent. However, mixed methods allow researchers to overcome this false dichotomy. The philosophical underpinning of pragmatism allows and guides mixed methods which help researchers use a variety of approaches in answering research questions that cannot be addressed using a singular method. The study adopted

pragmatism as a philosophical lens that underpinned the research design. This research paradigm enables the researcher to understand concepts of records management practices from a pluralistic point of view in the perspectives of quantitative and qualitative approaches.

4.3 Research Site

The study was conducted at University of Livingstonia: Laws, Ekwendeni campuses and Central office in Mzuzu.

4.4 Research Design

According to Henn et al. (2009), research design refers to the plan or strategy of shaping the research. It constitutes a blueprint for the collection, measurement, and analysis of the data (Kothari, 2004). General research designs in social science research include descriptive, correlational, and review designs (Mishra & Alok, 2017). Under descriptive design, there is a case study, naturalist observation and survey designs. The correlational design comprises case-control study and observational study. The review design basically falls under the scope of literature review and systematic review (Mishra & Alok, 2017). A case study is popular in qualitative research while survey design is common in quantitative studies. On the other hand, there are a number of mixed methods (MM) designs, namely: explanatory sequential design; exploratory sequential design; embedded design; and convergent parallel design (Creswell, 2012). For clarity, Creswell (2012) summaries these MM designs as follows: the explanatory sequential design demands the researcher to start by collecting and analysing quantitative data in the first phase, then collect and analyse qualitative data as follow-up in the second phase. Exploratory sequential design is a way of starting with collecting qualitative data first, then following up with the collection of quantitative data. The embedded design means collecting and analysing quantitative and qualitative data within quantitative research and qualitative research designs.

The convergent parallel design allows for concurrent collection of quantitative and qualitative data (Creswell, 2014). It further postulates that the two independent strands of data can be analysed at the same time and the results should be mixed during the overall interpretation (Creswell, 2014).

Since the study adopted pragmatism, it engaged embedded design with the view that the study was based on predominant quantitative data which was supplemented by less dominant qualitative data. The collective purpose of mixed methods design draws on the research aspirations; it helps to

obtain a more complete understanding from two data sets. It collaborates results from two different methods. It also compares multiple levels within a study analysis (Creswell, 2012).

4.5 Research Methods

There are three main research approaches for conducting empirical research, namely: quantitative, qualitative, and mixed-method approaches. The quantitative approach relates to numbers, measurement, and quantity which can be subjected to statistical analysis (Kumar, 2011). This approach is regarded as deductive towards research with the assumption that realities can be understood better by subdividing them into smaller and manageable pieces (Almalki, 2016). Almalki (2016) further contends that it is within these smaller subdivisions that observations can be made and that hypotheses can be tested and reproduced with regard to the relationships among variables. Creswell (2012) provides examples of data collection methodology befitting quantitative approach, namely: performance tests, personality measures, questionnaires, and content analysis. The quantitative data is synonymously known as hard data (Creswell, 2012). Quantitative data was solicited on the types of records created at UNILIA; the records processes involved in the creation, capture, maintenance, and disposal of records at UNILIA; and on the knowledge and skills of staff that routinely handled records at UNILIA.

On the other hand, the qualitative approach focuses on collecting rich data which encompasses opinions, feelings, suggestions, and ideas (Creswell, 2013). The researchers rely on the views of the participants. They normally ask broad and multidimensional questions. It involves collecting data consisting largely of words or texts from participants. They describe and analyse data based on themes. The inquiry is subjective and biased towards the researcher's interpretation (Creswell, 2012). The approach is usually described as inductive, with the underlying assumptions being that reality is a social construct, that variables are difficult to measure, complex and interwoven, that there is a primacy of subject matter and that the data collected will consist of participant's viewpoint (Almalki, 2016). The qualitative input consolidated in informing the status of records management practices at UNILIA. The combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches is referred to as mixed method. The study used mixed methods to thoroughly understand the scope of records management practices at UNILIA.

4.5.1 Mixed Methods

Mixed methods may be defined as research in which the investigator collects and analyses data, integrates the findings, and draws inferences using both qualitative and quantitative approaches in a single study (Tashakkori & Creswell, 2007). The approach accords researchers with insightful perspectives of the research findings. The following aspects of this research approach as advanced by Doyle et al. (2009) have an edge over qualitative and quantitative approaches independently because it has the following features:

Triangulation: Mixed method allows for greater validity in a study by seeking collaboration between qualitative and quantitative data. In this case, methodological triangulation was the yardstick to ascertain validity of data instruments (Creswell, 2013).

Completeness: Mixed method provides a complete and comprehensive picture of the study phenomenon by combining the research approaches. Offsetting weaknesses and providing stronger inferences. Utilising mixed methods approach allows for the limitations of each approach to be neutralised while strengths are built upon thereby providing stronger and more accurate inferences (Doyle et al., 2009).

Answering different research questions: Mixed methods research helps answer the research questions that cannot be answered by quantitative or qualitative methods alone and provides a greater repertoire of tools to meet the aims and objectives of a study. The method leverages upon the strengths drawn from integrating both quantitative and qualitative approaches in a single study (Creswell, 2014). Creators, users, and managers of records at UNILIA such as lecturers, librarians, IT officers, accounts personnel, and Management staff provided quantitative and qualitative information on records management practices in satisfying requirements of the mixed-method approach.

4.6 Target Population

Langkos (2014) defines a population study as a group of individuals taken from the general population who share a common characteristic. From the total staff population of two hundred and fifty (250), the study targeted a population of seventy-five (75) staff members whose departments were directly and actively involved in all critical stages of records, i.e creation to disposition/archiving: fifty (40) at Laws Campus, thirty-one (31) at Ekwendeni Campus, four (4) Central Office. Junior support staff and ground labourers were excluded from the study. However,

secretaries were included in the study because they are actively involved in the recordkeeping process.

The members of staff constitute departments and faculties such as Administration, Finance, Library, and Information Technology (IT). The administration comprises the Vice Chancellor, Deputy Vice Chancellor, University Registrar, College Principals, College Registrars, Deans, Secretaries (Administrative Clerks), and Matrons. The finance department comprises the University Finance Officer, College Finance Officers, and Accountants. The library department comprises University Librarian and Assistant Librarians. Faculties constitute the following: Education, Applied Sciences, Social Sciences, and Theology where all are lecturers have a minimum qualification of Bachelor’s Degree. The aforementioned staff members were targeted because they are involved in the process of records creation/receipt to final disposition. Hence, they were in an informed position to provide data on records management practices at UNILIA. The strata of the study population by departments and faculty are presented in Table 4.1 below.

Table 4.1: Target population of staff at UNILIA (n=75)

Department/Faculty	Laws Campus	Ekwendeni Campus	Central Office
	No:	No:	No:
Finance	3	3	1
Library	2	2	1
Administration	8	7	1
Social Sciences	0	12	0
Education	14	0	0
Applied Sciences	11	0	0
Theology	0	5	0
IT	1	2	1
Total	40	31	4

Source: UNILIA registry office (2019)

4.7 Sampling Strategy

Sampling is the process or technique of selecting a suitable representative part of a population to determine characteristics of the whole population or generalise the findings to the whole population (Bhardwaj, 2019). Probability and non-probability sampling techniques are the two main sampling strategies employed in research (Creswell, 2009). Probability sampling accords each element an equal chance of being included in the study (Taherdoost, 2016).

4.7.1 Probability Sampling

Popular sampling techniques under probability sampling are simple random sampling; systematic sampling, stratified sampling, stratified random sampling; multistage random sampling; and cluster sampling (Kumar, 2011). For instance, simple random sampling is where each item has an equal chance of inclusion in the sample. Systematic sampling entails choosing a specific number or name in the population. It could be every 5th number in the population (Kumar, 2011). In stratified sampling, the researcher divides the population into separate groups, called strata. Hence, stratification is the process of dividing members of the population into homogeneous subgroups before sampling (Mishra & Alok, 2017). In this technique, the population is divided into a number of non-overlapping subpopulations or strata, and sample elements are selected from each stratum. If the item selected from each stratum is based on a simple random sampling technique in the complete process of sampling, it means that the first activity is stratification and then simple random sampling. This type of sampling is known as stratified random sampling (Mishra & Alok, 2017).

4.7.2 Non-probability Sampling

In non-probability sampling, the researcher uses judgement to select members to participate in the study (Cohen et al., 2011). This technique uses a subjective method of selecting units from a universe and is generally easy, quick, and economical (Mishra & Alok, 2017). Well-known sampling methods under non-probability sampling techniques are judgemental sampling or purposive sampling, quota sampling, convenience sampling, extensive sampling, and snowball sampling (Taherdoost, 2016). For instance, in judgemental sampling, a sample is chosen based on the tuition, or the criterion deemed self-evident. This technique is somewhat similar to purposive

sampling where the sample is selected by some arbitrary method because it is considered as a representative of the whole population (Pandey & Pandey, 2015).

The study used purposive sampling to select faculties, departments, and key informants who were in a better position to inform the research questions. In this case, the departments were purposely selected. The researcher purposively selected key informants who were UNILIA senior management staff such as university finance officer, university librarian, college principals and college registrars to illuminate policy and technical issues as regards records management practices.

In probability sampling, since the target population was divided into strata of lecturers, librarians, accounts officers, IT officers, and administrators, it was therefore appropriate to engage stratified random sampling. From each stratum, simple random sampling was proportionally applied to draw a sample size. This sampling mechanism ensures members of a heterogeneous population are represented.

4.7.1 Sample Size

A sample in research is referred to as a subset that is a true reflection and representative of the study population (Etikan & Babatope, 2019). It is through the sample that conclusions are generalised across the target population. The sample should be based on a systematic method to avoid sampling errors and bias. It ought to be relative to the complexity of the population and reflects the aims of the researcher as well as statistical calculations to be used in data analysis (Taherdoost, 2016).

The researcher adopted a formula for calculating sample size in social science research as developed by Yamane (1976, cited in Israel, 2015).

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

The formula states that: **n**=sample size; **N**=population size; and **e**=level of precision. With the confidence level at 95%, the precision level= $\pm 5\%$.

Therefore, the sample size calculation will be: $75/1+75(0.05)^2=75/1+75(0.0025)=$

$$75/1+0.1875=75/1.1875=63.1578947368.$$

To the nearest whole number, the sample size is **63** members of staff.

For the sample size in each stratum, the researcher adopts the Stratified Sample Size formula of Israel (2015). The formula is as follows: Sample size of the strata= **(Size of the Entire Sample ÷ Population Size) × Population Size of the Strata**. This can be illustrated as: **n-strata= (n/N) × N-strata**. For example, the administration stratum would be calculated as below:

$$(63/75) \times 16= 13.44=13$$

Table 4.2: Sample size of staff

(n=63)

Department/Faculty	Sample Frame (N)	Sample Size (S)
Administration	16	13
Finance	7	6
Library	5	4
Social Sciences	12	10
Education	14	12
Applied Sciences	12	10
Theology	5	4
IT	4	4
Total	75	63

4.8 Data Collection Instruments

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

4.8.1 Survey Questionnaire

It is a document containing questions designed to solicit information for analysis and is mostly expected to be filled in and completed by the respondent (Babbie, 2004). Questionnaires are widely used instruments for collecting survey information, providing structured, numerical data to be administered with or without the presence of the researcher (Blaxter et al., 2006). This data instrument is preferred because of its merits such as it is economical and saves time. It is suitable

in a big sample; it also gives room for the respondent to reflect on the question and revisit it for further reflection. However, it is demerited on the premises that the questionnaire demands limited responses; there is a lack of personal contact and there is a likelihood of wrong feedback (Pandey & Pandey, 2015). The study used a survey questionnaire to address the research questions that prompted the undertaking of this study.

Section A of the questionnaire covered the preliminary questions that solicited demographic information, namely: gender, age group, academic qualification, and job position. Section B covered the first study objective: types of records created or received at UNILIA. It targeted staff members such as lecturers, librarians, finance officers, and IT officers. Section C covered the second study objective: creating, capturing, maintaining, and disposing of/archiving records. It targeted all research participants including senior management staff. Section D covered the third study objective: factors influencing records management practices at the University of Livingstonia. It targeted all research participants including senior management staff.

The survey questionnaire design was premised on the variables of the Records Continuum Model. The study questionnaire was designed to look into or address variables such as creation, capture, organisation and pluralisation of records at UNILIA. The questionnaire items were derived from studies such as ‘Management procedures and service delivery in Islamic University in Uganda’ undertaken by Luyombya and Ndagire (2020) and ‘Readiness of universities in managing electronic records’ by Asogwa (2012).

4.8.2 Interview Guide

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

that it offers more clarification of the questions asked. However, it can be affected by the interviewer's prejudices (Pandey & Pandey, 2015).

The study used semi-structured questions where participants responded to open-ended questions. This provided the researcher an opportunity to thoroughly understand attitudes, opinions, and beliefs of lecturers and support staff regarding records management practices at UNILIA. Section A covered the first study objective: types of records created or received at UNILIA. It targeted senior UNILIA management staff. Section B covered the second study objective: creating, capturing, maintaining, and disposing of/archiving records. It targeted senior UNILIA management staff. Section C covered the third study objective: factors influencing records management practices at University of Livingstonia. It targeted senior UNILIA management staff.

4.8.3 Document Review

It is a systematic procedure for reviewing or evaluating both printed and electronic documents (Bowen, 2009; Bretschneider et al., 2017). Likewise, it requires that data be examined and interpreted to elicit meaning, gain understanding, and develop empirical knowledge. It includes documents such as reports, policies, legislations, brochures, and records (Bowen, 2009). The researcher analysed different records such as donations, timetables, scholarships, adverts, and press releases, among others, available at UNILIA to ascertain convergence and collaboration of respondents' responses. It was therefore a means of data triangulation. The data collection instruments used in mixed-method research should inform the research questions under the topic of study. Therefore, the following Table 4.3 matches research questions with data sources, respondents, and data analysis strategies.

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

Research questions	Respondents	Data sources	Data analysis strategies
What are the types of records created or received at UNILIA?	College Principals, University Librarian, College Registrars, Assistant Librarians College Finance Officers, Accountants, Lecturers, Matrons, Secretaries	Appendix 1, questionnaire. Appendix 2, Interview guide. Appendix 3, documentary sources.	Quantitative analysis, IBM SPSS statistics- descriptively for quantitative data; thematic analysis for qualitative data. Document analysis
How are records managed from creation to disposition or permanent archival at UNILIA?	College Principals, University Librarian, College Registrars, Assistant Librarians College Finance Officers, Accountants, Lecturers, Secretaries Matrons, IT officers	Appendix 1, questionnaire, Appendix 2, interview guide, Appendix 3, documentary sources.	IBM SPSS statistics- descriptively for quantitative data; thematic analysis for qualitative data. Document analysis
What are the factors influencing records management practices at UNILIA?	College Principals, University Librarian, College Registrars, Assistant Librarians College Finance Officers, Accountants, Lecturers, Matrons, IT officers, Secretaries	Appendix 1, Questionnaire; Appendix 2, Interview guide	IBM SPSS statistics- descriptively for quantitative data; thematic analysis for qualitative data

<p>What is the level of skills and knowledge for staff in managing records at UNILIA?</p>	<p>College Principals, University Librarian, College Registrars, Assistant Librarians College Finance officers, Accountants, Lecturers, Matrons, IT officers, Secretaries</p>	<p>Appendix 1, Questionnaire; Appendix 2, interview guide</p>	<p>IBM SPSS statistics- descriptively for quantitative data; thematic analysis for qualitative data</p>
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4.9 Validity and Reliability of the Data Collection Instruments

Validity and reliability are concepts used to evaluate the quality of research. They indicate how well a method, technique, or test measures research variables (Middleton, 2020). Key elements of validity in research are trustworthiness, authenticity, and credibility (Creswell, 2014). Reliability entails the consistency of results over a given period (Golafshani, 2003). The reliability and validity of study results depend on creating a strong research design, choosing appropriate methods and samples, and conducting the research carefully and consistently.

4.9.1 Reliability and validity of the questionnaire

In ensuring the reliability of a questionnaire, the researcher may use appropriate sampling methods, a standardised questionnaire, or questionnaire based on established theories or findings of previous studies (Middleton, 2020). The researcher designed the survey questionnaire based on findings from prior studies to align the themes in the questionnaire with consistent trends within the topic of study. Further, a theoretical model was considered a key tool for conceptualising variables which provide a basis for understanding the dynamics of the theme of the study. Therefore, the questionnaire was based on the variables of the records continuum model.

4.9.2 Reliability and validity of the interview guide and document review

For the validity of the interview guide and document review, the researcher derived the questions from variables of the Records Continuum Model, namely: creation, capture, organisation and pluralisation of records. Further, the study employed methodological triangulation in which a mixed-method design integrated survey and case study designs (Doyle et al., 2009). From this methodological choice, data instrument triangulation was used to cross-check the accuracy and truthfulness of the findings. It achieves that by counterchecking the truthfulness of both groups of participants' responses to the questions raised.

4.10 Pre-testing the data collection instruments

Pretesting is an exercise that involves the use of a population similar to the target population under study to test data collection instruments (Ary, et al., 2014). The authors further assert that this helps to assess the appropriateness of the instruments and make changes where necessary. Therefore, it was initially anticipated that the researcher would pretest the questionnaires at MZUNI. That was in line with an understanding that MZUNI as a public university would be a yardstick to gauge the appropriateness of the instruments. However, with the outbreak of Covid-19 pandemic, travelling and contacting with staff were consequently restricted. Most staff stayed away from work as a precautionary measure to prevent catching the deadly disease. In view of this, the pretesting plan was unfortunately aborted. Instead, the data collection instruments were subjected to expert review to validate their contents.

4.11 Data Collection Procedure

From the sample size of 63 members of staff, 55 were targeted for quantitative data collection. Hence, fifty-five (55) survey questionnaires were sent to the following categories of staff members: college registrars (2), college finance officers (2), lecturers (36), assistant librarians (3), accountants (4), matrons (2), secretaries (3), and IT officers (3) from Laws Campus, Ekwendeni Campus and the Central Office. The aforementioned staff had a prominent role in the creation, capture, organisation, storage, preservation, retention, and disposition of records at UNILIA. The researcher self-administered thirty-one (31) questionnaires at Laws Campus to ensure that the target respondents were reached. The hard copies of questionnaires were distributed by hand to the following staff members: lecturers (22), college registrar (1), IT officer (1), assistant librarian (1), college finance officer (1), accountants (2) matron (1) and secretaries (2). The consent letter

seeking voluntary participation was attached as cover letters on questionnaires. The data collection exercise at Laws Campus took a solid period of two weeks from 17th to 29th January, 2021. It coincided with the examination period as the staff members were faced with a busy academic schedule such as administration, invigilation, and marking of examinations manuscripts. As a result, the researcher spent relatively more time hunting for lecturers at their free time. Few staff members returned questionnaires without being reminded. A majority of the staff worked on the questionnaires after follow-up reminders. At Ekwendeni Campus, a colleague from the same campus was assigned to help in administering the questionnaires to staff members in the designated departments. Hard copies of questionnaires were distributed by hand to twenty-four (24) staff members from Ekwendeni Campus, namely: lecturers (14), college registrar (1), assistant librarians (2), college finance officer (1), accountants (2), IT officers (2) matron (1), and secretary (1).

Throughout the data collection process, Covid-19 preventive protocols such as social distancing, handwashing, masking up, and hand sanitising were strictly adhered to. The data collection exercise took more than three weeks from 17th January to mid-February 2021 due to a vacation period that disrupted the exercise. From the fifty-five (55) dispatched data instruments, fifty-two (52) were returned.

Qualitative data was solicited from six (6) senior management staff members who were deemed as key informants, namely: University Finance Officer (1); the Office of the Principal (2); and College Registrars (2) from Laws Campus, Ekwendeni Campus and the Central Office in Mzuzu. Initially, it was expected that interviews would be conducted with eight (8) senior management staff. However, it did not work to the script because two (2) senior management staff members were frequently engaged in management meetings. Consent letters were written a week before the data collection exercise to provide ample time for their attention. The researcher booked appointments with the sampled participants because they are busy managers. Permission was granted through follow-up phone calls. Due to Covid-19 preventive requirements, the interviews were done through recorded phone calls with staff members at Ekwendeni and Central Office. The interviews at Laws Campus were done on a face-to-face mode of communication with a supplementary recording gadget. The participants were allocated anonymous tags, namely: participant 1; participant 2, up to participant 6. This was ascribed to ethical requirements which

unequivocally and strictly advocate for the anonymity of research participants. The interviews took place during the last week of February 2021 soon after quantitative data was collected.

A document review was done on records produced at UNILIA. It analysed types of records and documents available, their formats, the context in which they were presented, their organisation and safety.

4.12 Data Analysis

Data analysis refers to systematic organisation, integration, and examination of data while searching for patterns and relationships among the specific details (Neuman, 2011). Since the study employed a mixed-method approach, it means both quantitative and qualitative data were collected. Quantitative was analysed descriptively using International Business Machines [IBM] SPSS version 20. For smart presentation and customisation of charts and tables, Microsoft Excel was used. The quantitative data analysis was limited to descriptive statistics only. To quantify the respondents' ideas, meanings and practices, it presented the data in frequencies and percentages. On the other hand, qualitative data was analysed thematically based on the objectives of the study. Finally, document analysis was done based on the content of the available documentary sources such as records.

4.13 Ethical Considerations

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

4.14 **Summary**

This chapter laid out the blueprint for paradigm choice (as pragmatism), research design, research approach, sampling techniques, data instruments, validity and reliability, data collection procedure, data analysis, and ethical issues. The strength of the research methodology rallied on maximizing the theoretical implications of the research methods. The aspirations of both quantitative and qualitative approaches validated the findings of the study. The chapter also indicated that the time-frame for data collection was extended following social challenges caused by the Covid-19 outbreak. This remedied possibility of a low response rate to the questionnaires. In adhering to data collection etiquette, the researcher commissioned a supplementary task force to help in administering research instruments at Ekwendeni Campus. The next chapter covers the findings of the study.

Chapter Five

Data Presentation and Analysis

5.1 Introduction

The previous chapter outlined the research methodology that underpinned this study. In this chapter, data collected from survey questionnaires was descriptively analysed using IBM SPSS statistical editor version 22, 2020. The findings are predominantly quantitative presented in charts and tables and are interpreted to create research value. Since the study employed an explanatory sequential mixed method design, qualitative results are presented immediately after the quantitative findings. Data extracted from the interviews is presented, in most cases, verbatim and analysed based on related content and themes. The analysis of the results is meant to satisfy the purpose of the study which was to investigate records management practices at the University of Livingstonia. The purpose of the study was achieved by the following specific objectives: to identify types of records created or received at UNILIA; to determine how records are created, captured, maintained, and disposed at UNILIA; and finally, to ascertain factors influencing records management at UNILIA.

5.2 Response Rates of the Survey Questionnaires

For the quantitative data, the response rate of the respondents is cross-tabulated by gender and department/faculty in Table 5.1 as presented below:

Table 5.1: Response rate of the survey questionnaires (n=52)

Characteristics	Number of questionnaires distributed	Number of questionnaires returned
Gender		
Female	14	14
Male	41	38
Total	55	52
Department/Faculty	Number of questionnaires distributed	Number of questionnaires returned
Administration	7	7
Finance	7	5
Library	3	3
Social Sciences	12	12
Education	13	13
Applied Sciences	11	11
IT	2	1
Total	55	52

Guided by stratified random sampling technique which was employed to gain quantitative data patterns, fifty-five (55) questionnaires were distributed to UNILIA staff members in the following departments and faculties as shown in Table 5.1 above: Administration, Finance, Library, Social Sciences, education, Applied Sciences and IT. From the total 55 questionnaires, 52 (94.5%) were successfully completed and returned. The three (3) questionnaires were unsuccessfully returned following a leave of absence from three staff members from Finance (2) and IT (1). The high response rate might be attributed to the efforts made by the researcher to keep tracking up the

questionnaire filling exercise. Secondly, there was notable cooperation by staff members to willingly contribute to the study in their capacity as data informants.

5.3 Response Rates of Interviews

For qualitative data, the response rate is cross-tabulated by gender and departments as shown in Table 5.2 below:

Table 5.2: Response rate of interviews (n=6)

Characteristics	Participants targeted for interviews	Participants Interviewed
Gender		
Female	0	0
Male	8	6
Total	8	6
Departments	Participants targeted for interviews	Participants Interviewed
Administration	6	4
Finance	1	1
Library	1	1
Totals	8	6

The study targeted eight UNILIA senior management staff who were considered key informants. However, interviews, within the scope of records management practices, were successfully conducted with six UNILIA senior management staff representing a 75% response rate. The other two (2) UNILIA senior management staff from the Office of the Principal at Ekwendeni Campus were reportedly busy throughout data collection time-frame. Factoring in the response rates from the questionnaires and interviews, it was clear, therefore, that the sample downsized from initial 63 to 58 respondents.

5.4 Section A: Demographic Profile of the Respondents

The preliminary questions from the questionnaire and interview guide intended to generate data on gender, age, and academic qualifications of all respondents for quantitative and qualitative data as cross-tabulated in Table 5.3.

Table 5.3 Demographic information of the respondents (n= 58)

Biographical information	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Female	14	24
	Male	44	76
	Totals	58	100
Age Range	20 – 30	11	19.0
	31 – 40	24	41.4
	41 – 50	18	31.0
	51 – 60	5	8.6
	Totals	58	100.0
Academic Qualification	Certificate	3	5.2
	Diploma	4	6.9
	Bachelors	17	29.3
	Masters	32	55.2
	PhD	2	3.4
	Totals	58	100.0

Findings obtained from the questionnaires and interview guides indicate the gender of the respondents as 44 (76%) males and 14 (24%) females. The study was dominated by the male gender because UNILIA has employed more male staff members than female staff members. The

gender representation in the present study is in agreement with a mixed method study undertaken by Chawinga and Zozie (2016) which established that Malawian universities employ more males than females. The findings further revealed that a majority of 24 (41.4%) respondents were in the age group of 31 to 40 years, followed by 18 (31%) respondents in the age group of 41 to 50 years and five (8.6%) were in the age range of 51 to 60 years as the least represented age group. The findings indicate that most staff were relatively young suggesting ample time for the learning curve in records management. On academic qualifications, the findings indicate a majority of 32 (55.2%) respondents had a master's degree followed by 17 (29.3%) respondents with a bachelor's degree, four (6.9%) respondents with a diploma, three (5.2%) respondents with a certificate and two (3.4%) respondents with a PhD. The reason for a majority of staff having a master's degree could be attributed to the recommendation by National Council for Higher Education that minimum qualification for a lecturer is a master's degree whereas the reason for the low number of staff members with a PhD would be speculated as low salary structures in the private academic sector in Malawi.

5.5 Section B: Types of Records Created or received at University of Livingstonia

Objective one of the study and question numbers five and six in Section B of the questionnaire targeted faculty members and senior non-academic staff to gather quantitative data. Question number five of section B of the interview guide solicited qualitative data from UNILIA administrative staff and bullet one of the document review collected data from documentary sources available at UNILIA. The objective intended to ascertain the types of records created by staff at UNILIA. The study further sought to identify formats of records the University creates or receives to make critical and managerial decisions following its day-to-day business transactions. Question five from the survey questionnaire sought to solicit multiple responses from the respondents on various records created in the University on a daily basis. The respondents were required to tick in the appropriate boxes for their responses. The results for quantitative data are presented in Figure 5.1 below.

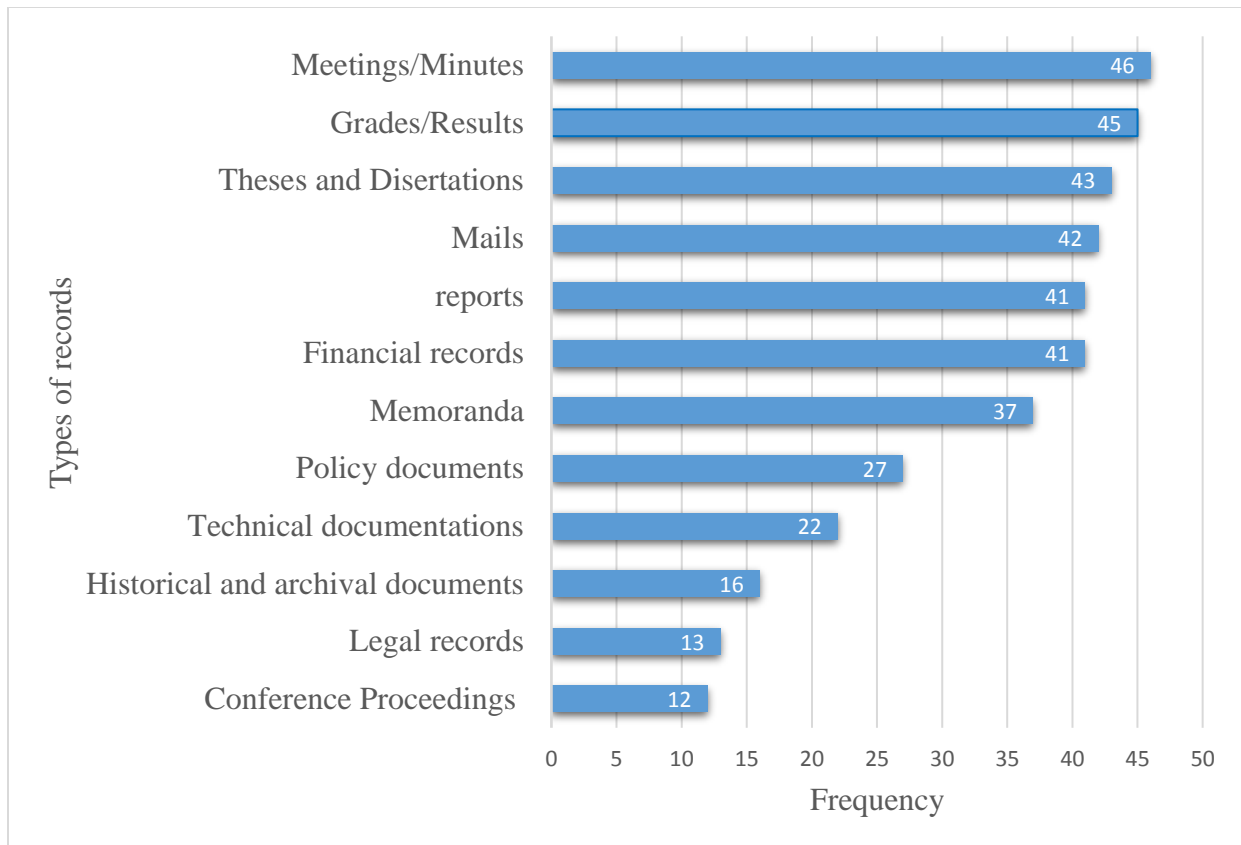


Fig 5.1: Types of records created or received at UNILIA (n=52)

Quantitative results solicited from faculty members and senior non-academic staff presented in figure 5.1 show that meetings/minutes 46 (88.5%) were the most common type of records created in the University, followed by grades/results 45 (86.5%), theses and dissertations 43 (82.7%), mails 42 (80.8%), reports 41 (78.8%), and financial records 41 (78.8%). Other records were memos 37 (71.1%), policy documents 27 (51.9%), technical documents 22 (42.3%), historical and archival documents 16 (30.8%), legal records 13 (25.0%), and conference proceedings 12 (23.1%). From this quantitative data, it is crystal clear that meetings/minutes, grades/results, theses and dissertations, mails, reports, and financial records were highly produced or transacted as compared to least transacted records such as conference proceedings and legal records.

A follow-up question on the survey questionnaire intended to find out the formats of the records created at UNILIA. Question number six provided three options from which the respondents had to choose only one option. The results are presented in Table 5.4 below.

Table 5.4: Formats of records at UNILIA

(n=52)

Records' formats	Frequency	Percentage
Electronic format only	0	0.0
Print/paper format only	6	11.5
Hybrid formats	46	88.5
Total	52	100.0

The results from Table 5.4 show that 46 (88.5%) indicated hybrid format, 6 (11.5%) indicated paper format only, and there are were 0 (0%) responses on electronic format only. This shows the University predominantly uses a hybrid format.

Question number five of the interview guide solicited similar data on the types of records created or received at UNILIA. The qualitative data was gathered from UNILIA administrative staff as follows:

Participant 2: *Most records in the University are reports, mails, results, list of students, grades, financial documents, and many more.*

Participant 3: *Our records as you can see range from salaries, cheques, contracts, budgets, loans, donations to purchases.*

Participant 4: *We as a University have various internal and external records such as mails, admissions, recruitments, applications, scholarships, grades, and reports.*

A follow-up of data collection with a document review bullet number one revealed more types of records were generated and transacted at UNILIA. These included records on scholarships, donations, salaries, central office correspondences, files of adjunct lecturers, student admissions, examinations, annual leaves, job adverts, resource allocations, procurements, disciplinary cases, accreditation, loan applications, time tables, projects, and transports. Most records identified in the qualitative data such as grades, policies, reports, memos, and financial documents are similar to those record types captured in the quantitative data. From the document review and interviews

with participants 3 and 4, it was revealed that most records were paper based. The responses from the participants are indicated below:

Participant 3: *Usually our records are in paper format as you can see all those files on the shelves. Few records are kept on my computer.*

Participant 4: *We still depend on paper records. However, my work files are here on my laptop. I can even work from home.*

5.6 Section C: Creation, capturing, maintenance, and disposal/archival of records at University of Livingstonia

Objective two of the study intended to find out processes of records management at UNILIA, namely: creation, maintenance, and disposal of records. This was captured in questions numbers seven to eleven in Section C of the questionnaire targeting faculty members and senior support staff. Question numbers six to nine in Section C of the interview guide targeted senior management staff. The document review bullet number two focused on the classification of records. The results of this inquiry are presented in subsections 5.6.1 to 5.6.6 below:

5.6.1 Records Creation

This subsection indented to find out the process of records creation in UNILIA. Question number seven of the questionnaire provided options for multiple responses which respondents had to choose from. It targeted faculty members and senior non-academic staff. The results are presented in Figure 5.2 below.

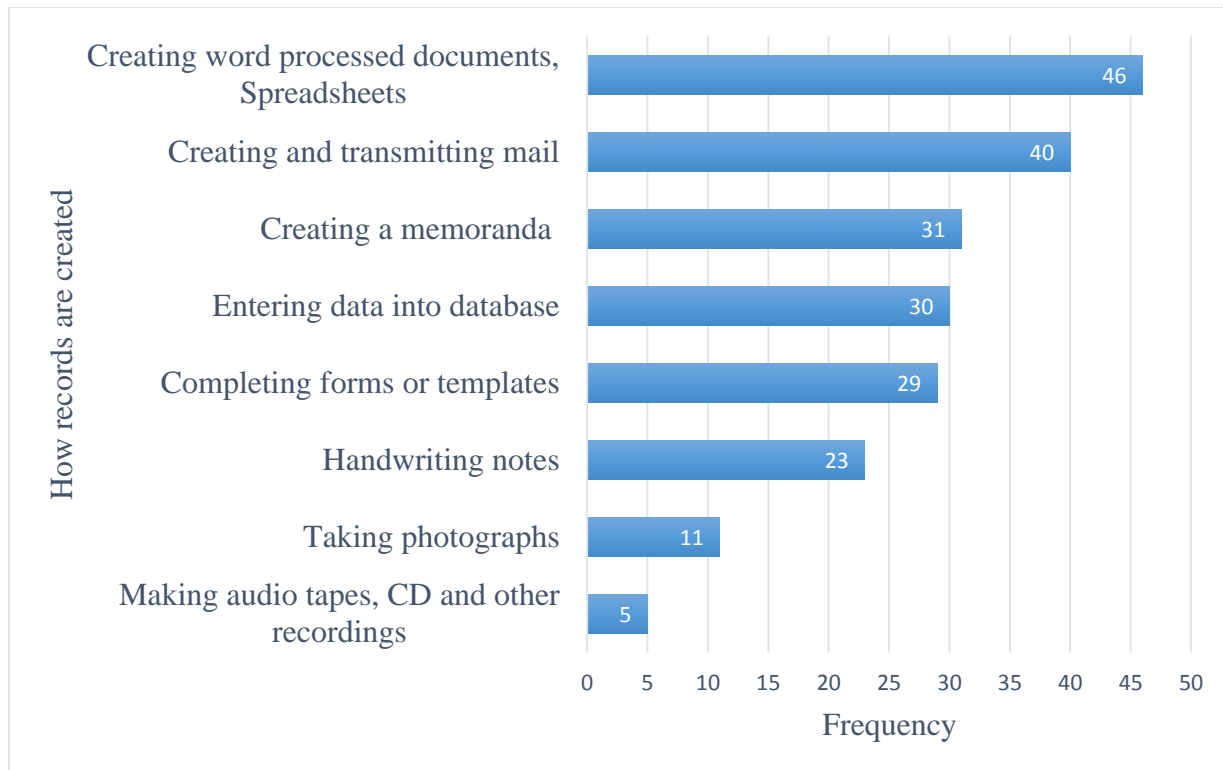


Fig 5.2: Records creation at UNILIA (n=52)

The responses indicate that most records were created through creating word-processed documents and spreadsheets 46 (88.5%); creating and transmitting emails 40 (76.9%); creating memoranda 31 (59.6%); entering data into databases 30 (57.7%); creating forms or templates 29 (55.8%). Fewer records were acknowledged to have been created through handwriting 23 (44.2%). The least responses indicated that records were created through taking photographs 11 (21.1%), and making audiotapes, CDs, and other recordings 5 (9.6%). Most records are created in word and spreadsheets mainly because of the nature of grades/results, minutes, timetables, theses, and dissertations that were indicated as common records available at UNILIA.

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

Participant 1: *I normally use Microsoft packages, namely: Word, Excel, and PowerPoint to record office work.*

Participant 3: *Usually, the Word is the most common tool for creating or generating records that the University uses for its day-to-day decisions.*

Participant 6: *Memos, reports, meetings, and mails are generated on Words and HTML platforms embedded in Internet applications such as Firefox.*

It is evident from the collected qualitative data that records were mostly captured by basic Microsoft office packages.

5.6.2 Records Capture

Records capture is a second prominent phase in records management. The researcher targeted senior management staff of UNILIA to collect data on records capture. This question was captured in Section C and question six of the interview guide. It intended to solicit qualitative data on record capturing. It targeted the senior management staff of UNILIA. The participants revealed that records are captured by saving in word documents and other related Microsoft packages. Some of the responses of the participants are recorded as follows:

Participant 4: *External documents are scanned or printed and kept in our information systems.*

Participant 3: *Most records are captured at the moment they are being created and saved as a word document or in any other formats*

Participant 5: *We have so much information coming from external sources. However, we do not have even an email management policy to guide who should access what. Everyone is doing what seems best to them.*

5.6.3 Records Maintenance

Records maintenance mainly involves storage, classification, security, and retention of records. Section C of the survey questionnaire and question numbers eight to eleven aimed at gathering data on storage and classification of records. Section C of the interview guide, questions three and four, sought to collect data on storage, security, and retention of records. The document review focused on the classification of records. Results on records maintenance processes are presented in subsections 5.6.3.1 to 5.6.3.4 below.

5.6.3.1 Records Storage

Another distinct record management practice is records storage. This follow-up question sought to find out how records were being kept and stored at UNILIA. Question number eight of the survey

questionnaire provided multiple options from which respondents had to choose. It targeted faculty members and senior non-academic staff. The results of this question are presented in Figure 5.3 below:

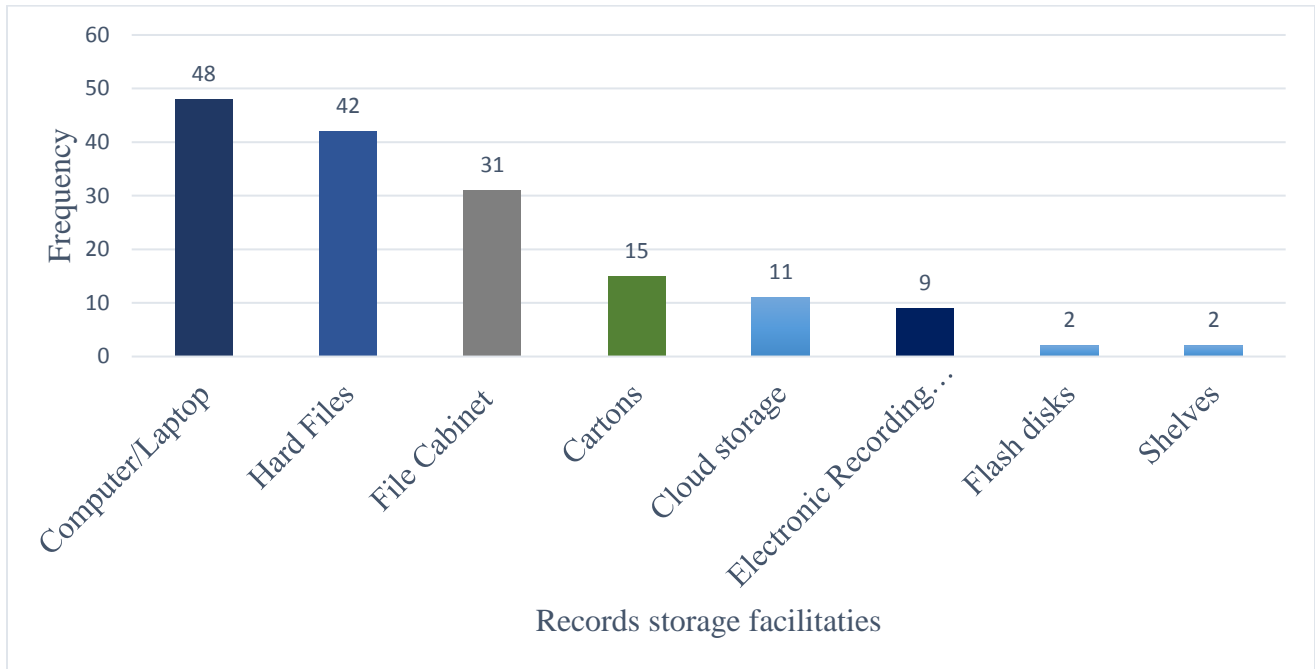


Fig 5.3: Records storage facilities at UNILIA (n=52)

Results presented in Figure 5.3 above show that respondents indicated various facilities for storing records as follows: desktop computers or laptops 48 (92.3%), “hard files” 42 (80.7%) and “file cabinet” 31 (59.6%) in that order. Other storage facilities indicated by respondents are cartons 15 (28.8%) and cloud storage 11 (21.1%) as alternative options. The least acknowledged options (equipment) for storing records at UNILIA were “hard containers” 9 (17.3%) and “electronic recording delivery systems” 9 (17.3%). The highest responses for computers and hard files, as storage facilities, confirm that both electronic and paper records were being produced at UNILIA. Besides the options given, two respondents specified that they stored their records in flash disks and shelves representing 3.8%.

The findings from the interviews suggested most records were kept on the shelves. This contradicted the responses from the questionnaires. The reason for this contradiction could be that

the majority of staff who participated in the survey questionnaires operated from offices which did not have shelves.

Another follow-up question on storage facilities intended to establish the awareness of the availability of a storage unit at UNILIA. The records centre is key for the success of records management. The question intended to establish the awareness of the availability of a records unit for organising and storing records. Question number nine of the survey questionnaire provided three options: affirmative option, the “No” option, and the “Not sure” options. The results of this question are presented in Table 5.5.

Table 5.5: Awareness of the availability of records centre or registry (n=52)

Records Centre/Records registry	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	25	48.1
No	23	44.2
Not sure	4	7.7
Totals	52	100.0

Results in Table 5.5 show that 25 (48.1%) of the respondents indicated ‘yes’, followed by 23 (44.2%) who indicated ‘no’, and 4 (7.7%) who indicated ‘not sure’. The findings clearly indicate that respondents have varied views about the availability of a records centre. Qualitative data was also sought from administrative staff regarding the availability of a records centre. The responses were presented as follows:

Participant 1: *There is no records centre. I have never heard of it on any of our campuses. Even the central office does not have records which are at high demand.*

Participant 6: *We do not take matters of records seriously as we should have been doing. I don't think we have any records centre as it is with well-known universities outside Malawi.*

The responses from the interviewees revealed that there was no records centre. There was only the registrar's office where most records were being kept. This vindicated the discrepancy in the responses from the quantitative data.

5.6.3.2 *Security of records*

In ensuring maintenance of records from loss, damage, theft, and unscrupulous tampering, the records systems and storage facilities must be secured. Section C of the interview guide and question number seven sought to establish the security of the storage facilities from internal and external interferences. This question targeted administrative staff. The responses from the four respondents show a huge concern in securing records at UNILIA. The responses are reported verbatim as follows:

Participant 2: *That is a huge issue. We do not have a disaster recovery plan. If fire catches these records we are gone.*

Participant 4: *We only have a central hard drive where we back up our information resources. However, the hard drive is within the office of the principal. It may also get damaged when the building catches fire.*

Participant 5: *For electronic records we use passwords. The only challenge is that these passwords are so personalised that when an individual leaves the institution, other staff have problems accessing the systems and records. For example, I log into institutional email address using personal password. When I leave who should access my email address? Most times those records are no longer accessible. We need to look into that.*

Participant 6: *Usually we lock our paper records into drawers, cabinets but records on shelves are not safe. We are still behind on enforcing security measures in our information systems.*

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

5.6.3.3 *Records Classification Systems*

Classifying records is part of maintaining their availability over time. Section C and question number ten of the questionnaire intended to understand the classification systems at UNILIA. It needed the respondents to indicate the classification system they were conversant with at UNILIA or in their respective departments. It targeted faculty members and senior non-academic staff. The following options guided the respondents: general to specific; alphabetical; numbering; subject-specific; and none of the above. The results presented in Figure 5.4 below show that most respondents 28 (53.8%) indicated “subject-specific”, followed by 16 (30.8%) “general to specific”;

and 15 (28.8%) numbering. Few 9 (17.3%) respondents in the science department indicated alphabetisation as a classification system. The least 8 (15.3%) respondents indicated “none of the above”. This meant staff members were just mixing up records, or they were using other unknown (unpopular) classification systems.

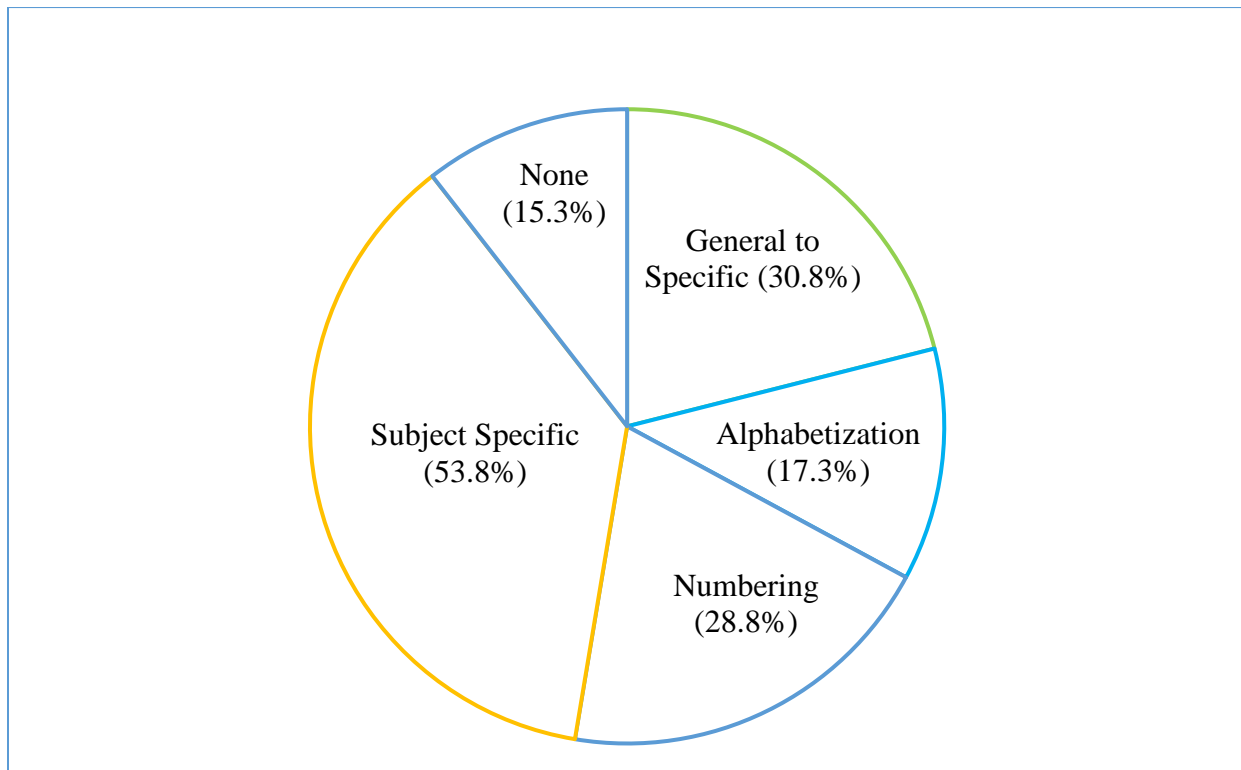


Fig 5.4: Records classification systems at UNILIA (n=52)

A document review on records classification systems in the offices of the registrar and finance officer at Laws Campus shows that records were classified based on alphabetisation and subject specification. Other participant responded that they used QuickBooks which have embedded classification systems different from other specific information management systems such as those available for libraries.

The researcher further inquired on access and retrieval average time. The survey questionnaire was used to gather quantitative data from faculty members and senior non-academic staff. Apparently, quick access and retrieval of records are mainly attributed to proper organisation and classification

of the records. Question number eleven primarily sought to assess the access and retrieval of the records within the storage domain. The results are presented in Table 5.6 below.

Table 5.6: Average duration for accessing and retrieving records n=52

Average time for retrieving records (minutes)	Frequency	Percentage
0 - 5	12	22.6
6 - 10	9	17.0
11 - 20	8	15.1
21 - 30	9	17.0
More than 30	15	28.3
Totals	52	100.0

The results show that 15 (28.3%) respondents retrieved records on an average of over half an hour, 9 (17.0%) respondents retrieved records on an average of 21-30 minutes, another 9 (17.0%) respondents retrieved records on an average of 6-10 (minutes), 8 (15.1%) respondents retrieved records on an average of 11-20 (minutes). On the other hand, 12 (22.6%) respondents retrieved records time within five minutes. This clearly shows an unsound classified recordkeeping system, especially the paper-based one because well-organised records must be readily available and retrieved within the shortest possible time.

5.6.3.4 *Records Retention*

Records retention is a fundamental records management process that ensures that vital and active records are being maintained. Section C, question number eight of the interview guide further intended to establish the records retention schedule/guidelines being used at UNILIA. The study specifically intended to find out which records were kept for a long time before final disposal. The respondents lamented the lack of coordination on records retention processes. The following were some of the verbatim responses:

Participant 1: *We use the academic cycle framework to decide the periods we should keep our students' records. Usually, students' records stay for a period of at least four years. We do not have other guidelines for other records. The university does not have a records retention policy.*

Participant 2: *It is difficult to tell. But financial policy mandates us to keep records for the period of 7 to 10 years. After that, we send them to the Central Office in Mzuzu for storage and archival.*

Participant 3: *For students, it could be four years. For staff members such as lecturers, it could be six years. However, this is not done in an orderly manner in the library setup because we still use manual systems.*

5.6.4 Records Disposal

Disposal of records is an equally vital practice in records management that the study sought to investigate at UNLIA. Section C and question number nine of the interview guide intended to solicit specific tasks for disposing of records at UNLIA, and whether those activities followed properly guided procedures or not. It targeted administrative staff. The following were some of the verbatim responses from the research participants:

Participant 4: *We send outdated records to the central office but up to now they have not been disposed of or cleared. But there is no clear guideline for the disposal of records.*

Participant 5: *Disposal is done at our discretion. We just delete out of use electronic documents to create space in our laptops. We also send unimportant papers to the bin for burning.*

Participant 6: *Some records that are semi-active are sent to the office of the secretary for space purposes. There are so many records there.*

The responses indicate UNLIA had no guidelines in disposing of records. Decisions for disposing of records were at the discretion of staff members.

5.7 Section D: Factors influencing records management practices at University of Livingstonia

Various factors influence records management practices in different institutions. To address study objective number three, question numbers twelve and thirteen in Section D of the questionnaire targeted faculty members and senior non-academic staff for quantitative data. Question numbers ten to eleven in Section D of the interview guide targeted administrative staff for qualitative data. The objective intended to find out factors affecting records management practices at University of Livingstonia. As for the survey questionnaire, multiple options were provided from which

respondents had to choose. Question twelve provided multiple responses where applicable. The results of this are presented in Figure 5.5.

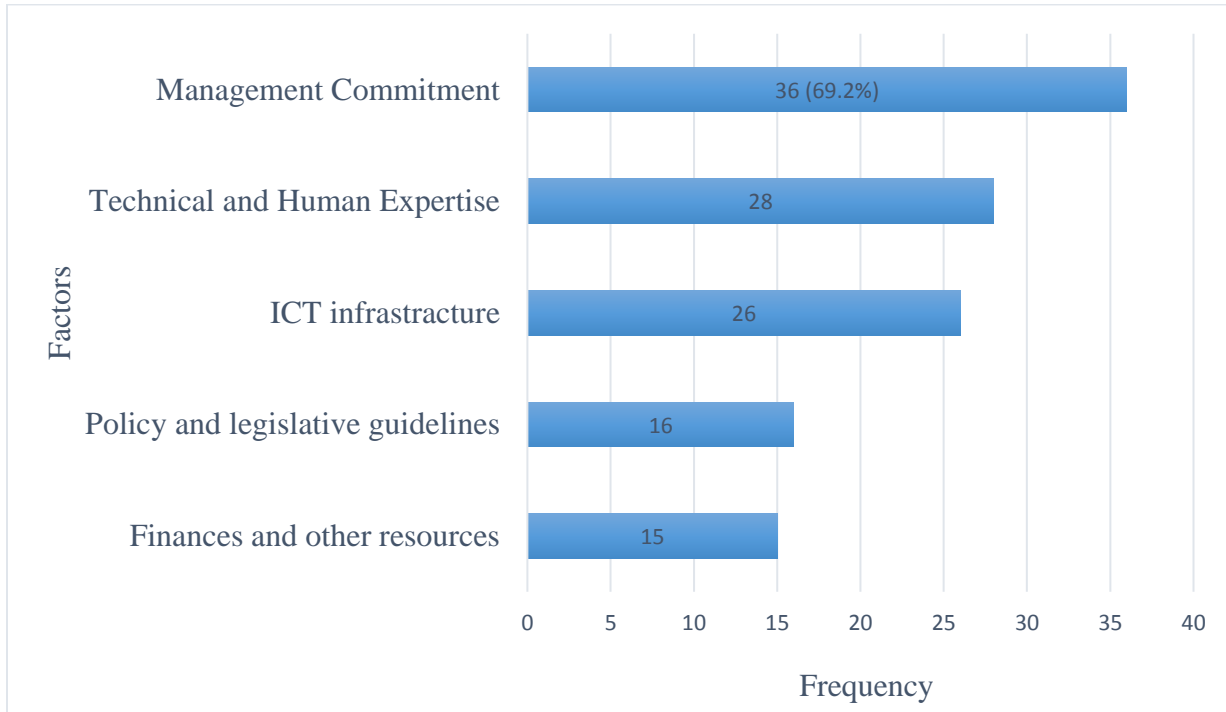


Fig 5.5: Factors influencing records management practices at University of Livingstonia (n=52)

The findings show that 36 (69.2%) of the respondents indicated that “management commitment” was the major factor influencing records management practices at UNILIA, followed by 28 (53.8%) “technical and human expertise”, and 26 (50.0%) “ICT infrastructure”. The results further show other underlying factors such as 16 (30.8%) policy and legislative guidelines, and 15 (28.8%) finances and other resources. These are positive factors that influence records management practices. Respondents were asked to specify further any other factors they think would influence records management at UNILIA. There was no specific response to that option.

The senior management staff of UNILIA were interviewed to provide data on records management policy. This was captured in question ten of the interview guide. Responses from the respondents unanimously agreed that there was no records management policy at UNILIA.

Respondent 5: *There is no unified records management policy here. Everything is done on a departmental basis. There is no such policy that is supposed to govern UNILIA as a unit*

organisation. In one of the meetings, we suggested we should have a records management unit or a registry unit but up to date nothing has happened.

Participant 6: Honestly, there is no records management policy here. And even no business continuity plan. Maybe others who were there before me can know better. It is a really worrisome situation.

Participant 2: We only use a financial policy that guides us in how we manage our records, but we do not have a records management policy.

From the results presented above it is evident that UNILIA lacks the policy framework to inform and guide records management activities and practices at the institution. A follow-up question from the interview guide solicited qualitative data on the factors militating against records management practices at University of Livingstonia. On this part, qualitative data was gathered from UNILIA senior management staff. Section D and question number eleven of the interview guide intended to understand challenges militating against records management at UNILIA. Most responses culminated into a revelation that the unavailability of records management policy and other related guidelines was a major concern. Some of the responses were as follows:

Participant 3: We entrust the management of records with secretaries who are unqualified for the job. There is no training for records management, or it is done haphazardly. A times management support is the genesis of everything. No commitment on their part.

Participant 4: There are a number of issues that act as challenges for now: lack of records legislative guidelines, lack of policy documents as well as lack of goodwill from Management.

Participant 6: Lack of resources to roll out the problem and sometimes we think we may do without this important aspect of information organisation.

5.7.1 Benefits of records management at University of Livingstonia

The aforementioned positive factors influencing records management practices would draw some key benefits for UNILIA. The understanding of such benefits would act as a catalyst or eye-opener in the operationalisation of records management activities. Hence, the researcher needed the respondents to identify some notable benefits of proper records management practices. In Section D, question thirteen of the questionnaire intended to establish the benefits of records management practices at UNILIA. It targeted faculty members and senior non-academic staff. It ideally directed

the respondents to pick out multiple responses where applicable. The results are presented in Figure 5.6 below.

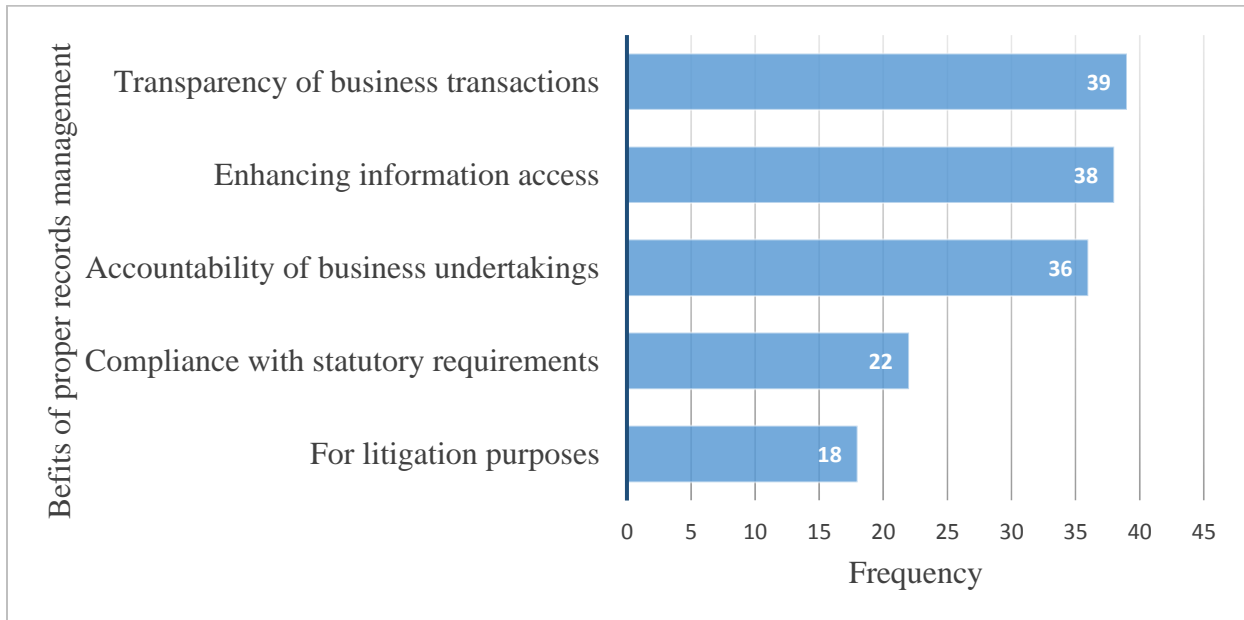


Fig 5.6: Benefits of records management at UNILIA (n=52)

Results presented in Figure 5.7 show that respondents indicated the following key benefits: 39 (75.0%) “transparency of business transactions”; 38 (73.1%) “enhancing information access”; and 36 (69.2%) respondents indicated “accountability of business undertakings”. Other 22 (42.3%) respondents indicated “compliance of statutory requirements” and fewer 18 (34.6%) respondents indicated “for litigation purposes”. It was also revealed that respondents had problems in understanding technical concepts such as litigation and compliance with statutory requirements, hence the low response rates.

5.8 Section E: Skills and competencies of staff in managing records at University of Livingstonia

Section E of the questionnaire targeted faculty members and senior non-academic staff. Likewise, Section E of the interview guide targeted senior management staff. Both the questionnaire and the interview guide intended to address issues of skills, competencies and training in records management as they are the hallmarks of effectiveness of records management practices. This was captured in question numbers fourteen to eighteen of the questionnaire and question twelve of the interview guide as presented in subsections 5.8.1, 5.8.1.1, 5.8.1.2, 5.8.1.3, and 5.8.2 below.

5.8.1 Responsibility for managing records at University of Livingstonia

The results on responsibility for managing records at UNILA are presented in Table 5.7 below.

Table 5.7: Responsibility for managing university records (n=52)

Personnel responsible for records management	Frequency	Percentage
Registrar	32	60.4
Librarian	13	24.5
Documentarist	2	3.8
Records Clerk	2	3.8
None of the above	3	5.7
Totals	52	100.0

Results from Table 5.7 above show that the responsibility for managing records in the two campuses of Livingstonia lay in the college registrar 32 (60.4%); the librarian 13 (24.5%); None of the above 3 (5.7%); Documentarist 2 (3.8%); and Records Clerk 2 (3.8%). Perhaps, the role of a librarian is more assimilated to the role of a records manager in managing the information. The responses that departed from the majority's viewpoint suggest misconceptions about the role of a records manager in the university set-up.

5.8.1.1 Relevant technical knowledge in records management practices

Question number fifteen of the questionnaire intended to find out staffs' relevant technical knowledge in managing records such as knowledge in capturing, storing, classifying, and retention of records. The findings show that 39 (75%) of the respondents indicated that they had relevant knowledge in managing their records. On the other hand, 13 (25%) of the respondents indicated not having any technical knowledge in managing records. The findings imply that the staff members considered records management as an interdisciplinary concept with practical significance.

5.8.1.2 Skill proficiency in records management practices

Question number sixteen of the questionnaire intended to assess the level of skills and competencies of staff in managing records. These include skills and competencies for creating, capturing, maintaining, and disposing of records. The results are presented in Table 5.8.

Table 5.8: Level of skills and competencies in records management by the staff of UNILIA (n=52)

Rate of skill proficiency	Frequency	Percentage
Basic skills	21	40.4
Medium skills	20	38.5
Advanced skills	2	3.8
None	9	17.3
Totals	52	100.0

Results presented in Table 5.8 show that a majority of respondents, that is, 21 out of 52 (40.4%), rated their level of skill proficiency as basic, closely followed by 20 (38.5%) of the respondents who rated their skill proficiency as 'medium'. Only 2 (3.8%) of the total number of respondents rated their records management skills as advanced. A few more 9 (17.3%) respondents did not think they possessed skills for managing records.

The fact that the majority of the respondents exhibited basic and medium skills implies that the staff members could not effectively execute complex and demanding records management practices such as classification and security implementation.

5.8.1.3 Skills and competencies to the work output in records management practices

Question seventeen of the questionnaire was meant to establish the relationship of staff' skills and competencies to the work output in records management practices in their respective departments. The results are presented in Figure 5.7.

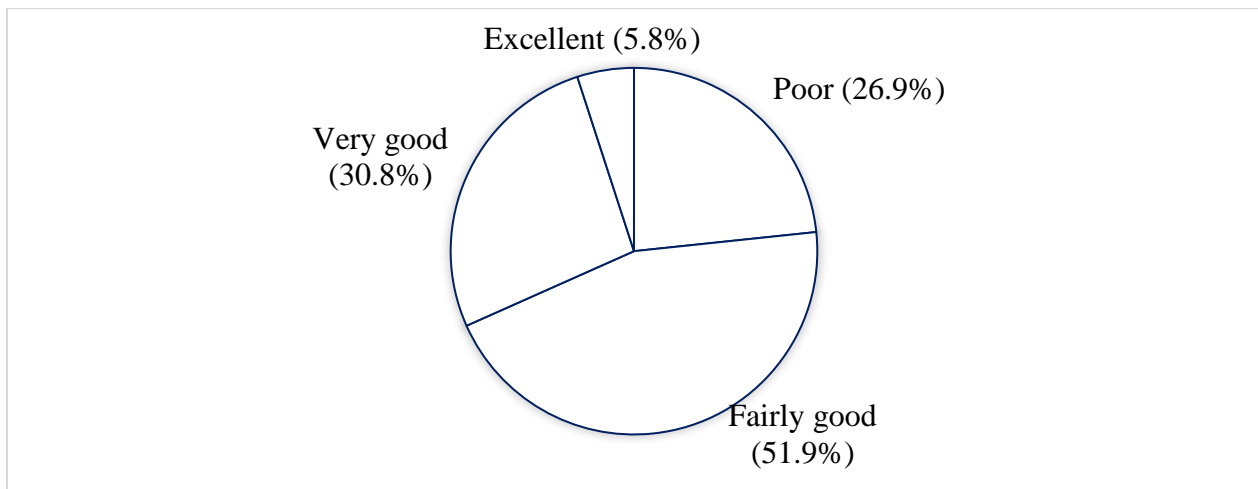


Fig 5.7: Skills and competencies to the output of records management practices (n=52)

Results in Figure 5.7 exhibits the relationship of skills and competencies to work output. The figure shows that a majority of the respondents, that is, 27 of the total number of the 52 who participated in the study, representing 51.9%, indicated “fairly good”, followed by 16 (30.8%) respondents who indicated “very good”, and 14 (26.9%) respondents who indicated “poor”. Only 3 (5.8%) respondents were highly satisfied with their work output and indicated it as “excellent”.

Question number twelve of the interview guide solicited qualitative data from administrative staff on their competencies to managing records at UNILIA. The verbatim responses are as follows:

Participant 3: *Staff members should be able to create, capture, organize, classify, store and dispose of the records. We just know little of these technical abilities in managing records.*

Participant 4: *Those handling records should be able to follow everything that should be done in managing records. But the challenge is that some of us do not practice recordkeeping, hence it is difficult to master the records processes.*

Participant 5: *Everyone should have the skillset and knowledge for managing records. However, due to lack of training, staff members cannot adequately practice recordkeeping.*

Based on the findings, it can be concluded that competencies in records management require knowledge and skillset to carry out all activities and tasks in records management practices.

5.8.2 Training in records management for University of Livingstonia staff members

Question eighteen of the questionnaire intended to find out from respondents whether there is any on-job training or continuous professional development in records management practices for the staff. This question targeted faculty members and senior non-academic staff. To keep abreast with drastic changes in records creation and management systems, capturing techniques, storage equipment, security features, and disposal measures, there should be continuous training in records management. The responses are shown in Table 5.9 below.

Table 5.9: Training periods in records management for UNILIA staff members (n=52)

Period for continuous on-job training in RM practices	Frequency	Percentage
Every six month	4	7.7
Every one year	0	0
Every two years	0	0
Once in a while	9	17.3
Never	39	75.0
Totals	52	100.0

Results in Table 5.9 revealed that 39 (75.0%) of the respondents have never attended any training in records management practices; nine (17.3%) respondents had attended training once in a while, and four (7.7%) respondents attended training every six months. The findings pose a huge

drawback for UNILIA staff in catching up with relevant emerging aspects in the records management space as most staff had no formal training in records management.

5.9 Chapter Summary

The foregoing chapter presented the findings of the study on records management practices conducted at UNILIA. The quantitative data was presented in tables and charts to illustrate and quantify responses from lecturers, deans, heads of academic departments, matrons, assistant librarians, accounts assistants, and secretaries. The qualitative data was presented in their raw themes and quoted words. The findings showed that miscellaneous records were created at UNILIA just like any other universities. It indicated that some records were uniquely produced and were available at the institution. The findings further indicated that both paper and electronic records were being generated at Laws and Ekwendeni Campuses, and the Central Office. Such records were kept in traditional records storage facilities like cabinets, shelves, files, and cartons. Modern storage equipment such as computers, cloud space, and flash disks kept electronic records produced at the institution. The chapter typified globally practised records management, and it aligned records management practices, namely: records creation, capture, classification, storage, retention, and disposal of records. It also investigated underlying factors influencing records management practices. It revealed that management support/commitment was a major challenge besides other setbacks such as lack of adequate skills and training in records management practices. Generally, the chapter established that there were serious gaps in records-keeping processes and procedures at UNILIA. The next chapter discusses the study findings, presents the key findings and recommendations.

Chapter Six

Discussion, Recommendations, and Conclusion

6.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss key findings of the study based on quantitative and qualitative data collected from the questionnaires, interviews, and documentary sources to align and determine the research value in relation to the global context of the previous studies on records management practices. The chapter also concludes the main findings and provides recommendations based on the discussion of the study findings. Machimbidza (2014) points out that discussion of the findings involves the interpretation of the results of the study in the context of previous studies and provides implications for policy, theory, and practice of the findings of the current study. The purpose of the study was to investigate records management practices at University of Livingstonia (UNILIA). The discussion was in line with demographic information of respondents and thematic concepts of the study objectives as follows:

- Types of records created or received.
- Records creation, capture, maintenance, and disposal and
- Factors influencing records management practices.

6.2 Demographic information of the respondents

This was not part of the study objectives. However, the profile of the respondents has a direct connection to the subsequent discussion of the study objectives. The findings of the study show that there were more male respondents than females, probably because UNILIA has employed more male staff members than female staff members. This imbalance may prejudice the discussion of the findings towards males on the study topic.

The findings further revealed that the majority of the respondents were in the age group of 31 to 40 years, followed by respondents in the age group of 41 to 50 years, and lastly in the age range of 51 to 60 years as the least represented age group. The findings indicate that most staff were relatively younger suggesting ample time for their learning curve in records management. Considering the age profile of UNILIA staff members, it could be stated that they are in a better position to learn the existing and emerging digital technologies to manage prolific electronic records. Advancements in office technologies require a generation of staff members that are

computer literate enough to manage records that are born or made digital. Hence, UNILIA is largely staffed with the human capital that can be categorised as digital citizens in the 21st Century.

On academic qualifications, the findings indicate that the majority of respondents had a master's degree followed by respondents with a bachelor's degree. A few respondents had a diploma, a certificate and a PhD. The reason for the majority of staff having a master's degree could be attributed to the recommendation by National Council for Higher Education (NCHE) that minimum qualification for a lecturer is a master's degree.

6.3 Types of records created or received at University of Livingstonia

This objective of the study intended to ascertain the types of records created by staff at UNILIA. The study further sought to identify which records the University bases on to make critical and managerial decisions following its day-to-day business transactions.

The study found that different records were being created and received in academic, administrative, and financial departments at UNILIA. The most produced or transacted records were minutes of meetings, grades/results, theses and dissertations, mails, and reports. Documentary sources revealed that the University was managing numerous records and some were uniquely produced at UNILIA; for instance, correspondence with the Synod of Livingstonia was very unique. The records created or received at UNILIA are within the broad function of conveying knowledge, conferring credentials, fostering socialisation, conducting research, sustaining the institution, and providing public services as described by Chinyemba and Ngulube (2005).

Well organised records are sources of information that must reliably inform UNILIA's strategic decision making. Management decisions based on available and accessible information trends may provide a competitive edge over other institutions of higher learning in the private sector. Without proper records over a reasonable period, it would be difficult to adopt business models which align with the institution's business objectives. Furthermore, sustainable efforts must be put in place to collect various sorts of records from all the departments and populate them in an institutional repository for centralised management.

The findings of the current study are similar to those of a mixed-method study by Kulcu (2009) in Turkey and Canada on 'Records management practices in universities' which found that records being generated included directories, correspondences, emails, forms, reports, retention schedules,

and database reports. The findings of the current study also relate to findings of studies conducted in the African context. For instance, a case study by Musembe (2016) on ‘Strategies for improvement of records management in enhancing quality of services in institutions of higher learning’ found that the records generated by the university are personal records pertaining to employment, staff development, and disciplinary issues; students’ records such population, student welfare, performance, and disciplinary issues; administrative records; financial records such as research funds, grants, budgetary information, salary payments, statements of accounts, fees payments, reports, and expenditure receipts; architectural records such as building plans and maps; internal-external audit reports; committee records such as minutes; and records collaborations and memorandum of understanding. Similarly, a case study by Akuffo and Adams (2016) which examined records management practices at the Trinity Theological Seminary (TTS) in Ghana found that different types of records that were being produced such as: memoranda, invitations, general correspondences, personnel records, academic records such transcripts, certificates, students’ progress reports.

In related findings, a qualitative study by Dano and Ibrahim (2021) investigated management of students’ academic records in tertiary institutions in North-East Nigeria and found the following record types: application for admission, exam scores, acceptance letter, letter of recommendation, personal and enrolment information, disciplinary cases, grades and final transcripts.

Further, similar findings were established in a mixed-method study by Chawinga et al (2016) in Malawi. The study investigated thriving on the power of records in the perspective of Mzuzu University as a public university and found that the following records were being produced: academic records, programme records, staff records, student records, project records, financial records, meeting minutes, memos, correspondence, student grades, and dissertations. The similarities of the cited studies and the current study are based on the fact that most universities share similar academic functions and goals such as teaching, learning and research (NCHE, 2015).

The findings of the study established that the University of Livingstonia generates records in hybrid formats, that is, both electronic and paper records. Due to the increased use of ICTs, the proliferation of digital records and paper records is largely evident in busy institutions such as universities. The findings of the present study correspond with the findings of a case study by Luyombya and Ndagire (2020) who investigated records management procedures and service

delivery in Islamic University in Uganda. The study established that records were generated in hybrid formats but most of the records were kept in paper formats. The findings also revealed that the major reason for the prevalence of paper records at Islamic University was due to lack of an Enterprise Resource Planning System to harmonise and consolidate electronic resources. This is a true reflection of UNILIA as the study revealed a lack of electronic management system. A case study by Akuffo and Adams (2016) which examined records management practices at the Trinity Theological Seminary (TTS) in Ghana shares similar findings in that most of the TTS's records were in paper formats. The similarity of predominant paper records in the findings of the cited studies and current study could be attributed to the lack of proper electronic management systems in academic institutions. A bigger picture of forms of records in Malawian institutions of higher learning is mirrored in a qualitative study by Phiri and Tough (2017). It investigated the management of university records in the world of governance and established that paper records were predominant in the University of Malawi and Mzuzu University.

As regards the types of records, the prolific generation of the records could be directly linked to the University's expansion of its campuses and programmes of study. The first dimension of the Records Continuum Model (2016), is the creation of records and it is from this dimension that the types and forms of records are understood (Musembe, 2016). It demands that evidence of the business transaction, and that the originality of the records should be easily traced. The records that were analysed from the documentary sources had the metadata that depicted the context and originality of the records. Furthermore, the nature or types of records determine actions to be taken in the subsequent dimensions of the Records Continuum Model (2016). For instance, various records require different approaches as regards records retention and disposal schedules.

Since the creation of records is the first stage of the Records Continuum Model, deliberate measures must be put in place to ensure that all generated records are organised for further actions. This is discussed in the second objective of the study.

6.4 Creating, capturing, maintenance, and disposal/archival of records at University of Livingstonia

This objective intended to find out the processes of records management at UNILIA, namely: creation, capturing, maintenance, and disposal of records. It was addressed by data collected from survey questionnaires, interviews, and documentary sources. Records management practices are

the determinants of robust records management at the institution. Records management processes/practices institutionalize efficient and effective recordkeeping systems.

Pertaining to records creation, the current study found that most records were created through word-processed documents and spreadsheets, and also through creating and transmitting emails, creating memoranda, and, entering data into databases. Mostly, the creation of records is fast-tracked and proliferated with the use of computers or laptops. Likewise, the ever-increasing role of ICTs in academic functions has potentially leapfrogged the rate of records production in universities world-over (Abdulrahman, 2015; Kalusopa, 2016). The findings of the current study relate with those of a mixed-method study by Asogwa (2012) on 'The readiness of universities in managing e-records' in three Federal universities in Nigeria which found that records were created with the aid of computer packages. The study further exposed gaps in the creation of electronic records in the three Federal universities in Nigeria following the absence of Decision Support Systems, Electronic Document Management Systems, and Online Transactional Processing Systems that support the creation of digital records. Similarly, the aforementioned electronic systems for creating or processing e-records were missing at UNILIA, suggesting inadequate technological capacity for records management. The findings of the current study are also in agreement with those of a survey by Ayanda, Oloniruha and Ogungbade (2020) on 'Records management practices in research institutes in South West Nigeria' which found that records were created through computer packages such as Word, Excel, and Emails. The study also established that there were no automated systems for creating records in most of these research institutes in Nigeria. The findings of the current study are also similar to those of a qualitative study by Nasieku, Kemoni and Otike (2011) on 'Management of e-records at Moi University' in Kenya. The study established that the University embraced and used computers as a critical tool for creating records. From these findings, it can be inferred that there is growing consensus that computers are the major tool for creating records at universities.

Creation of records as the initial stage of Records Continuum Model (2016) expects the creators/actors to undertake all the creation processes to meet or satisfy administrative and legal purposes (Duffus, 2017). The creation of records at UNILIA embodied substantial evidence of the records context that underscored the business functions of the University.

As regards records capture, the present study established that records are captured by saving in word documents and other related Microsoft packages for generating information. These findings reveal that UNILIA had basic technologies for capturing data which may complicate the organisation of records because their primary purpose is not records capturing. However, the findings of the current study agree with those of a study by Keapoka (2007) on 'Electronic records management in Botswana' which established that capturing both paper and electronic records was done to support business of the university. On the other hand, the results of the present study are dissimilar to those of a study by Zach and Peri (2010) who investigated patterns in practices among North American college and university archives and records management programmes regarding their approaches to capturing records, among others. The study established that the institutions were guided by electronic records management programmes in capturing records. In addition, the findings of the current study contrast with those of a case study by Luyombya and Ndagire (2020) which investigated records management procedures and service delivery in Islamic University in Uganda. It reported that the creation of records did not follow any procedure for capturing records, hence some files or records were eventually lost.

The second dimension of the Records Continuum Model (2016) is the Records Capture. The Records Continuum Model (2016) considers capturing of records as a remarkable stage of records management process (Matlala & Maphoto, 2020). Capturing of records as enshrined in the second dimension of the Records Continuum Model requires personal and corporate recordkeeping systems, which captures documents in a context that support their capacity to act as evidence of the business activities of the units responsible for the activities (Musembe, 2016). It is exceedingly difficult to trace and manage records that are not captured into the university recordkeeping system. From the findings of the current study, UNILIA used Microsoft packages to capture records as opposed to electronic records management systems discussed in the literature. The implication of the informal capturing of records in academic and other departments at UNILIA is that there would be no evidence and continuity of business activities.

Another key records management practice investigated under this topic of study is records maintenance. It is a broad records management process and it mainly involves storage, classification, security, and retention of records. The findings on records storage showed that most staff members kept their personal and institutional records on their desktop computers or laptops

hard files and file cabinets. In view of this, the disintegrated records storage facilities at UNILIA may contribute to serious challenges in organising, protecting and providing access to records. These findings are similar to the findings of studies by Chawinga et al. (2016) in Malawi which established that Mzuzu University staff used computers, hard files, and file cabinets among others to keep their records. Similarly, a qualitative multi-case study by Phiri and Tough (2017) in South Africa and Malawi on ‘Managing University Records in the World of Governance’ revealed that records were stored in computers, shelves, files, and cabinets. The findings also established that huge files of university records were kept on the shelves of the offices of senior management staff. Further, these findings are in agreement with the findings of a quantitative study by Ayanda et al. (2020) on ‘Records management practices in research institute in South West Nigeria’. The study found that the majority of records storage equipment in eight research institutes were open wooden shelves (54.6%), followed by metal cabinets (28.3%), open metal shelves (11.8%), and others (5.3%). From these study findings, it can be argued that paper records are still relevant and prevalent in institutions of higher learning.

Furthermore, the findings of the current study established that UNILIA had no records storage unit. The records storage unit acts as a central storage facility for recordkeeping and archiving records in the university. The study finding contrasts with the finding of a mixed method study by Momot and King (2019) in South Africa which investigated the Records Management Model for the University of Western Cape (UWC) and found that the UWC had a records storage unit which worked closely with other UWC units. The findings of the present study also differ from the findings of a qualitative study by Netshakhuma (2020) on ‘Preservation strategies for student affairs records at the University of Venda in South Africa’. It found that the University of Venda had established archives or records storage unit within the library but lacked preservation strategies to manage the records in the storage unit. This implies that apart from the records storage unit, there should be other records guidelines as regards records management.

At UNILIA, the absence of a records storage unit or centre compounded challenges of storing university records as evidenced by the use of isolated records storage facilities. Records storage is an integral part of the third dimension of the Records Continuum Model (Kulcu, 2009). Organisation of records and archives as portrayed in the third dimension of the Records Continuum Model (2016) entails proper storage facilities or equipment at UNILIA. It specifies elements of

archives and collective memory (Kulcu, 2009). Lack of a records storage unit and archival holding at UNILIA depicts uncoordinated or poorly managed storage facilities. The availability of wooden shelves, cabinet boxes, and computers provide an enabling platform to organise the records created or received at UNILIA.

Pertaining to the security of records as a records management practice, ensuring maintenance of records from loss, damage, theft, and unscrupulous tampering, the records systems and storage facilities must be secured. The study found that there were security challenges at UNILIA such as the absence of a disaster recovery plan; lack of backup systems for records; lack of proper storage facilities; and use of individualised passwords. The findings also established that passwords were used to secure records on personal storage facilities such as laptops and desktop computers, and locks were used to protect paper records in containers and cabinets. Security as a key aspect in recordkeeping guarantees the longevity of records life span. The absence or inadequacy of strong security measures of records at UNILIA threatens the availability and accessibility of records overtime. The findings of the current study agree with those of Egwunyenga (2017) who examined the associated problems and management options of record-keeping among universities in the South Geo-Political Zone of Nigeria. The study found improper security of records as one of the outstanding challenges that require urgent rectification. The improper security of records includes aspects of unavailability of a disaster recovery plan, lack of records backup systems, and lack of proper storage facilities as reflected in the findings of the present study. The findings of the present study are also akin to those of a study undertaken by Nwaomah (2017) on 'Records management practices at Adventist University of Africa in Kenya'. It established that there is inadequate proper security of records which, consequently, affects the records management practices in the University. The current study exposed the vulnerability in records systems at UNILIA regardless of the fact that some key elements of security features were pointed out in the findings of the current study such as the use of locks to secure paper records, and use of passwords to restrict unauthorised access to electronic records.

The Records Continuum Model (2016) indicates that records should serve as evidence of business transactions and as a collective memory of the institutions (Matlala & Maphoto, 2020). This implies that records should be well safeguarded and protected from any form of harmful and

unauthorised interference. The evidence of any business transactions purported by the records continuum may be only guaranteed when records are not physically or virtually tampered with.

As regards to the classification of records as a records management practice, the current study ascertained that the records are classified according to subject-specific, general to specific, and numbering and alphabetisation. The findings of the study further show that there was no common classification system adopted for paper and electronic records. The findings of the present study correspond with those of a descriptive study by Abdulrahman (2015) who assessed the management of records for effective administration of five universities in North Central Nigeria. The study established that alphabetical and subject filing systems were the two major filing systems being used. Similarly, a qualitative study undertaken by Phiri and Tough (2017) in Universities of the Sub-Saharan Region reported that there was no formal classification system of records. Instead, classification of records was done on a departmental basis. The results of these studies indicate that public and private academic institutions alike in Africa face similar challenges that are recurrent in records management practices.

On the other hand, the findings of the current study revealed that there was no formal file classification system at UNILIA. The findings on records classification systems in the current study are not in tandem with the findings of a descriptive study by Nwaomah (2017) in Kenya which reported about the availability of classification systems to ease retrieval of records at the institution. Furthermore, a study done by Kulcu (2009) who compared records management practices in Canadian and Turkish universities reported the use of formal classification systems in the British University of Colombia and Simon Frazer University in Canada, and Hacettepe University in Turkey. It was established that formal classification of records was available in the three universities referred to in the study.

Lack of a unified records classification system could be a recipe for disorganisation of university records which were in large volumes at UNILIA. This could lead to the inaccessibility and loss of records, eventually. The use of records classification systems helps to prevent the loss of records ensures easy and quick access to records (Aziz, 2013). In this regard, the findings of the current study revealed that UNILIA staff members encountered challenges in accessing and retrieving the records as the majority of them would take beyond half an hour on average searching for a particular record. However, the findings of the current study tally with the findings of a mixed-

method research by Barde et al. (2019) at Ahmadu Bello University in Zaria, Nigeria which revealed that retrieval of students' academic records was slow and time consuming due to poor records organisation. It concluded that the organisation of records was below standard. In light of these study findings, it is evident that there is a consequential link between records classification and retrieval of records which should act as an eye opener to records managers.

Primarily, classification of records is key to proper records organisation as indicated by the third stage of the Records Continuum Model (2016). Records organisation is mainly accomplished by systematic classification of the records. Based on that impression, the implication is that UNILIA has disorganised records following a lack of a unified classification system.

Records retention is another notable records management practice investigated under this topic of study. It is a policy document that provides guidelines on regulations and best practices regarding the retention of university records. It is an essential document because it guides decisions pertaining to records management. It can be used as a guide in any organisation to keep active records based on the criteria that have been established (Aziz, 2013). The study found that UNILIA only used related policy documents such as a financial policy that could not sufficiently address the expectations of the Records Continuum Model (2016). The active, semi-active, and inactive stages of records may not be clearly defined in the financial policy and academic cycle policy adopted by UNILIA. The absence of records retention schedules presupposes unchecked disposition of records that are critical to decision making at UNILIA.

The findings of the current studies are replicated in similar studies by Nengomasha (2013) and Netshakhuma (2019) which established that the universities lacked retention schedules to guide the life cycle of records. For instance, a qualitative study by Nengomasha (2013) on 'The past, present, and future of records and archives management in Sub-Saharan Africa' established that there was the nonexistence of records retention schedules amongst Sub-Saharan African universities. Likewise, a qualitative study done by Netshakhuma (2019) assessed the management of student affairs records at the University of Mpumalanga in South Africa. The findings of the study reported, among others, revealed that the University lacks a records retention and appraisal schedule.

On the other hand, a mixed-methods study by Kulcu (2009) presented a different picture of the developed countries. It showed that the Universities of British Columbia and Simon Fraser in Canada had well-drafted retention schedules as a basis for managing university records.

The provision of records retention schedules is key in maximising operational cost savings and the availability of space within an organisation (Aziz, 2013). The Records Continuum Model (2016) expects that when records are being captured, their functions should be well indicated to determine or project their retention periods (Matlala and Maphoto, 2020). Therefore, the findings of this present study on records retention contradict the Records Continuum Model (2016).

On disposal of records as a records management practice, the records disposal schedule is a policy or document that provides guidelines on best practices for the final disposal of records. The current study found that there are no clear guidelines on the disposal of records because disposal of records is done at the discretion of departments. These findings on disposal of records portray a general trend of records management scenario in African universities. For instance, a study done by Egwunyenga (2017) examined the associated problems and management options of record-keeping among universities in the South Geo-Political Zone of Nigeria. It revealed among others, a lack of retention and disposal schedules. Similarly, a study undertaken by Mohammed, Tetteh and Azumah (2018) investigated challenges associated with records management in Sunyani Technical University in Ghana. It established lack of records disposal schedules/guidelines as a major challenge affecting the institution. Consequently, some valuable e-records risk getting lost through deletion and personal misjudgements. Without archives for preserving records, UNILIA demonstrated serious inabilities to plan for records disposal or reclaim some inactive records to be put in use. Dimension four of the Records Continuum Model (2016) covers the methods in which the archives are brought into encompassing and cultural memory of the institutionalised social purposes and roles of the individuals and corporate bodies (Matlala and Maphoto, 2020). The methods of disposing of records as archives should be well covered in the disposal guidelines or schedules. In addition, the Records Continuum Model (2016) prescribes coordination between records managers and records archivists because records managers may demand inactive records from the archival holding (Azameti & Adjei, 2013). This, therefore, clearly indicates that the findings of the current study on disposal of records contradict the Records Continuum Model (2016).

6.5 Factors influencing records management practices at University of Livingstonia

The study's objective sought to ascertain factors that influence records management practices at UNILIA. These factors may either facilitate or militate against records management practices. The findings of the present study reported key factors such as management commitment, technical and human expertise, ICT infrastructure, legislative guidelines, and finances. Further, the study established the nonexistence of records management policy and lack of qualified records staff.

As regards management commitment or support, the findings of the current study revealed that there was little or no management support to records management undertakings. The study investigated the aspect of management support because it is key to approving funds for records management activities such as the purchase of ICT infrastructure. It also plays a vital role in the approval of recruitment and training of records staff. The findings of the current study are similar to those of a qualitative study done by Phiri and Tough (2017) in Sub-Saharan African countries which established that management support was a huge setback to records management initiatives in six sampled universities. The current study, therefore, provides fresh evidence which strongly suggests that the management teams in African academic institutions do not view records management as a significant tool in efficient operations and business transactions for institutions of higher learning.

On the contrary, the findings of the current study are dissimilar with those of a qualitative study conducted by Bailey (2011) which measured the impact of records management in the British education sector. The study established demonstrable commitment and investment in records management in UK higher education institutions. Investment in records management as reported by this European study presupposes economic gains from proper recordkeeping. This, therefore, requires management commitment to fund recordkeeping activities.

As for ICT infrastructure, the findings of the present study established the existence of ICT infrastructure in form of computers and computer networks at UNILIA. Generally, ICT infrastructure could be software such as record management systems, hardware such as computers, or computer networks. The findings of the current study relate to those of a qualitative study by Masenya (2020) on 'Application of modern technologies in the management of records in public libraries in South Africa'. The study established that libraries used modern technologies such as

blockchain, cloud computing, and the Internet of Things to manage records. It further reported that such technologies can only be utilised on established ICT infrastructures. A prior qualitative study by Mutula and Mostert (2010) on ‘Opportunities of e-government in South Africa’ established that the Government of South Africa put in place ICT infrastructures to enhance service delivery in the digital information sector. A similar mixed-method study by Asogwa (2012) on ‘The readiness of universities in managing e-records’ in Nigeria which targeted the University of Abuja, University of Ife, and University of Nigeria, recommended the provision of sustainable ICT infrastructure to effectively manage e-records in the universities.

On legislative guidelines, the current study found that there is lack of records legislative guidelines to effectively manage records at UNILIA. For instance, pieces of records legislation such as the Records Management Act and Records and Archives Act provide for legal bounds within which records managers should manage records. The findings of the current study relate to a mixed-method study by Kulcu (2009) which assessed the records systems of a Turkish public university to develop a records management programme in Turkish universities. It established that records management processes in Turkish public universities do not meet legal and administrative requirements. This was mainly attributed to lack of quality-based administrative structure, ineffective records management systems, erroneous applications, insufficient legal regulations, and unqualified staff. In view of the Turkish study, it can be stated that records legislation processes should be considered as a key precondition to implementing records management practices.

Regarding finances, the current study established lack of funds to run records management initiatives at UNILIA. Just as in any other business undertakings, funds are viewed as a substantive factor to records management. The findings of the current study correlate with those of a qualitative study by Walters and Skinner (2010) in the USA which examined the emerging field of digital preservation and its economics in different organisations. The study established that finances or funds provide access to a body and network of expertise and technology that is required to carry out preservation of records effectively and efficiently. A case study by Musembe (2016) shares a similar viewpoint from the findings of the current study. It focused on strategies for improving records management in enhancing the quality of services in institutions of higher learning. The

study reported that soliciting and allocating of adequate funds is key to effectively carrying out records management practices in the university.

On records management policy, the study found that there was a lack of records management policy at UNILIA. The records management policy is a document that stipulates guidelines, procedures, standards on records management practices. It also highlights key issues such as staffing, funding, and best records practices. The current study shares similar findings with a case study by Musembe (2016) on 'Records management in institutions of higher learning in Kenya' which exposed policy gaps in records management by establishing that Moi University lacked a clear records management policy. This has a negative bearing on the development and implementation of a records management programme and policies. Other studies across Africa also found a lack of records management policies as a challenge militating against proper records management practices in institutions of higher learning. For instance, a mixed-method study by Coetzer and Roux (2012) which investigated the status of records management at the University of Zululand reported that a lack of records policy frustrates the management of records at the University. A similar study by Galala and Yusof (2013) which was carried out to determine e-records management in three institutions of higher learning in Al-Joufra, Lybia, established that the colleges implemented e-records management without records policy and guidelines. A formal records management programme with clear policies, infrastructure, staffing, guidelines, and clear qualifications for records personnel is recommended for the university to realise the potential of records management (Khumaro & Chigaliro, 2017; Mosweu, 2019).

As regards technical and human expertise, the study established a lack of qualified staff in records management at UNILIA. Recordkeeping expertise is an enabling human factor to competently understand, handle and develop records management practices. The findings of the current study relate to a case study by Mutula (2012) on 'Library automation at University of Botswana'. The study found that the evolution of new technologies and complex electronic resources is a big challenge and requires the staff to upgrade their skills. Similar findings are reported in a descriptive study by Azamet and Adjei (2013) on 'Challenges in academic records management in institutions of higher learning in Ghana'. The study found that public universities and teacher training colleges agreed that there was poor knowledge in computerised records management systems among records-keeping staff.

Generally, the findings of the current study on factors influencing records management are also replicated in other studies. For instance, a quantitative study by Frimpong, Agyekum and Asare (2018) on ‘Challenges in administrative records management in technical universities in Ghana’ targeted five Technical Universities and established that insufficient resources, inadequately trained staff and poor security of records were major factors weighing down the management of records in these universities. Also, a qualitative study by Dano and Ibrahim (2021) on ‘Management of students records in tertiary institutions’ in North West Nigeria established that insufficient funding, inadequate training and retraining of staff, lack of storages devices, and lack of comprehensive records management policy, guidelines and procedures are some of the notable factors affecting records management. In view of the foregoing discussion, the success of records management at UNILIA is not exclusive to the factors highlighted above. Therefore, the implementation of records management practices should be inclusively viewed through the lens of these factors as explored.

On the whole, any activity outlined in the dimensions of the Records Continuum Model (2016) requires an enabling environment or factors such as ICT infrastructure, records management policy, management support, trained staff, and adequate resources for its successful execution. For instance, the creation, capturing and organisation of records as explained in the dimensions of Records Continuum Model (2016) require the use of ICT tools such as computers. ICT tools are part of the ICT infrastructure which has been already discussed as one of the factors influencing records management practices. However, due to a number of factors inhibiting records management at UNILIA, its implementation is a challenge. Therefore, records management practices at UNILIA might not be as holistic as the Records Continuum Model (2016) demands.

6.5.3 Benefits of records management at UNILIA

The study identified some notable benefits of proper records management practices such as transparency of business transactions, followed by enhancing information access; accountability of business undertakings; compliance of statutory requirements and for litigation purposes. Transparency of business transactions entails all decisions and undertakings at UNILIA should be procedurally documented so that they can be easily seen by stakeholders. For instance, the recruitment process at UNILIA should be properly documented for future references. Accountability of business undertakings requires records to act as evidence to justify any

institutional undertaking. For instance, financial records should account for any purchase transactions. Compliance with statutory requirements is when UNILIA meets the requirements of external institutions such as the National Council for Higher Education (NCHE) and Malawi Revenue Authority (MRA) and this should be supported by valid records. Records must also act as evidence in court proceedings in case the institution is sued by students, staff, or any other entity.

The current study shares similar findings on the benefits of proper records management with a qualitative study by Touray (2021) on ‘A review of records management in organisations’ in Gambia. The study established the following benefits: control over the creation and growth of records; reducing operating cost; improve efficiency and productivity; assimilate new records management technologies; ensure regulatory compliance; minimise litigation risk; safeguard vital information; support better management decision making; preserve corporate memory; and foster professionalism in running the business.

On the contrary, the findings of the present diverge from those of a qualitative study by Bentil (2018) on ‘Records management practices and the use of ICT in student records management at the University of Professional Studies (UPS in Ghana’. It established that the University of Professional Studies experienced the following benefits: effective efficient records management, quick decision making, and also being a catalyst for timely and professional delivery of tasks and responsibilities. The findings of the current study are further in sharp contrast with those of a qualitative study by Higgins and Goldman (2012) on ‘Things to consider when managing an institutional repository’. The study conducted in America established some benefits associated with managing electronic records through the institutional repository at San Jose State University in Washington. The accrued benefits are as follows: increase in accessibility and ‘findability’ of e-records; the ability to disseminate records across borders with a few clicks; and the capability of providing long-term preservation and persistent access to records. The disconnect between these study findings on the benefit of records management could be attributed to methodological differences as this theme of the current study was based on a structured questionnaire.

6.6 Skills and competencies of staff in managing records at University of Livingstonia

This section of the study intended to address issues of responsibility for managing records, skills, competencies, and training of staff in records management as they are the hallmarks of the effectiveness of records management practices. The results of the study revealed that the College Registrar and librarians were viewed as records managers. The findings of the present study concur with those of a qualitative study Netshakhuma (2020) on 'Preservation strategies for student affairs records at the University of Venda in South Africa'. It established that despite having a records storage unit set in the library, the responsibility of managing records resided within the office of the registrar. Furthermore, the findings of the current study relate to those of a qualitative study by Luyombya and Ndagire (2020) on 'Records management procedures and service delivery in Islamic University in Uganda'. The study found that there were no professional records managers but responsibility for managing records was assigned to administrative assistants in the office of the registrar. On the other hand, the findings of the current study are dissimilar with those of a mixed-method study by Ismail and Jamaludin (2009) on 'Establishing a framework for managing trusted records in the electronic environment'. It targeted Asia, Australia, Canada, Europe, and the USA and reported that records were managed by records managers who are experts in the fields of records and archives and digital records.

The current study also established that UNILIA staff possessed basic knowledge and skills in records management practices. The findings further revealed that the staff could not execute complex tasks requiring medium or advanced skills. In this regard, the staff members demonstrated limited capacity in records management as the majority of staff conceded that their records management was not impressive. These findings are in agreement with a study done by Melody and Loyce (2014) who examined qualitative record management skills for effective service delivery in Nigeria. It pinpointed that the quality of education has been downscaling due to, among other reasons, poor records management by education managers, administrators, and teachers who did not have the skills and competencies for managing records. Similarly, the findings of the present study are in agreement with those of a descriptive study by Coetzer and Roux (2012) at the University of Zululand in South Africa which found that very few or no staff were equipped with the knowledge, skills, and competencies required to manage records at the University of Zululand. Another study in Botswana by Mosweu (2019) on 'Knowledge and skills requirement

for a records manager in Botswana in the networked environment' established that archives and records management professionals are ill-equipped to manage records. The study recommends capacity building to enable records managers acquire skills and competencies required to manage records in the networked environment.

From this discussion, a general picture suggests that lack of proper skillset and competencies in records management practices seriously hampers the progress of records management practices in Africa. The scenario is compounded by a lack of training in records management practices.

In the same vein, the findings of the present study established that, unfortunately, UNILIA staff members were not privileged with training in records management to grasp emerging and pertinent issues in records management practices. This, in return, greatly compromised the benefits of records management practices at UNILIA. The findings of the present study are similar to a descriptive study by Major and Omenu (2016) on 'Records management in higher educational institutions in Bayelsa State in Nigeria'. In the study, it was reported that records staff do not undergo on-job training such as conferences and workshops to enhance knowledge due to a lack of opportunities for further professional growth in the field of records management.

On the other hand, the findings of the present study contrasted with those of a study conducted by Musembe (2016) in Kenya which reported that training of staff members in records management was prioritised at Moi University in Kenya. The disparity between the current study and the Kenyan study on records training suggests that records management was given considerable attention at Moi University in Kenya unlike at UNILIA in Malawi.

The role of records creators, actors, administrators, and managers is clearly evident and set out in all the four dimensions of the Records Continuum Model (2016), that is, creation, capture, organisation and pluralisation of records (Azameti & Adjei, 2013). The records personnel or any other staff tasked with creating, receiving, and managing records should be competent enough to professionally execute all records-related tasks. However, with lack of adequate training for UNILIA staff, it could be a far-fetched illusion to suggest that records are being well managed at the institution.

6.7 Summary of the key findings

Based on the discussion of the findings, the study made the following key findings:

On types of records created or received at UNILIA, it has been observed that the University of Livingstonia creates various academic records, namely: meetings/minutes, grades/results, theses and dissertations, mails, and reports. These records, in turn, act as the administrative and legal basis. They also support critical decision-making for the University.

On records management practices at UNILIA, the creation of records is evident and voluminous. However, practices such as proper storage, retention, and disposal of records were on a large scale unprocedural or non-existent.

On factors influencing records management at UNILIA, records management was largely frustrated by many factors such as poor management support, lack of proper records policies and guidelines such as retention and disposal schedules. It was also found that UNILIA staff lacked the required knowledge and skillset in managing records. This was compounded by a lack of training and retraining in records management practices.

6.8 Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, there were inadequacies in operationalisation of records management practices. Consequently, records management project was rendered unsustainable and undesirable. UNILIA has a decentralised and fragmented records management system. Therefore, records management practices have disjointed trends in different departments where records were created and captured. The organisation and retention of these records is haphazard and unprocedural and subject to personal judgements. The lack of a records management programme is exacerbating the profound lack of focus and clarity in records management practices. Similarly, the lack of records retention and disposal policy is one of the retrogressive developments seriously hampering the realisation of records management practices. Even though UNILIA has not paid the required attention to records management practices, notable records management practices were records creation, capture, classification, and security. These infinite records management practices need thorough enhancement and reinforcement within the perspectives and aspirations of records management to underscore the ultimate principles of accountability, transparency, and compliance of business transactions. In the long term, efficient

and effective records management practices seek to underpin the institutional collective memory to gain a lasting competitive advantage.

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

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

6.9 Recommendations of the study

Based on the conclusion of the study presented above, the study recommends the following:

- UNILIA management should develop a records management programme that would guide it on staffing, infrastructure, and budgets for records management project.
- UNILIA management should formulate a records management policy that will guide its records management practices.
- UNILIA management should consider having a fully-fledged central records unit that would coordinate all records management activities from records creation to disposal.
- UNILIA should establish a robust ICT infrastructure that can support electronic records management systems.
- UNILIA management should consider recruiting record expert who can design recordkeeping systems, organise and manage records.

- UNILIA management should commit to developing a records management policy and providing funds for records training and development.

6.10 Area for further research

Future researchers may consider assessing the capacity of Malawian private universities in records management.

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Appendix 1: Informed consent form



Mzuzu University Research Ethics Committee (MZUNIREC)

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

Introduction

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

Purpose of the research

This research aims to investigate records management practices at University of Livingstonia.

Type of Research Intervention

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

Participant Selection

You are being invited to take part in this research because you are one of the University of Livingstonia staff member.

Voluntary Participation

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

Duration

The research may take a period of about 25 minutes.

Risks

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

Covid-19: all preventive measures such as social distancing, masking up and hand sanitizing should be followed

Reimbursements

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

Sharing the Results

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

Who to Contact?

If you have any questions, you can ask them now or later. If you wish to ask questions later, you may contact: Mr **Kaitano Simwaka**. (University of Livingstonia, Laws Campus; 0994110722/0888715273)

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

Do you have any questions?

Part II: Certificate of Consent

I have been invited to participate in research about “Records Management Practices at University of Livingstonia”.

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

Print Name of Participant _____

Signature of Participant _____

Date _____

Day/month/year

If illiterate ¹

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

Print name of witness _____

Thumb print of participant

Signature of witness _____

Date _____

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

Day/month/year

Statement by the researcher/person taking consent

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

Signature of Researcher /person taking the consent

Date _____
Day/month/year

Appendix 2: Questionnaire for selected UNILIA staff members

Instructions:

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

SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

1. Please indicate your gender
 - Male []
 - Female []
 2. Please indicate your age group
 - 20 – 30 []
 - 31 – 40 []
 - 41 – 50 []
 - 51 – 60 []
 3. Please indicate the highest academic qualification you currently hold
 - Certificate []
 - Diploma []
 - Bachelor's []
 - Master's []
 - PhD []
 4. Please state the job position you currently hold
-

SECTION B: Types of records created or received at University of Livingstonia

5. Please indicate by ticking in the appropriate box(es) records that are created or received at University of Livingstonia
 - Financial records []
 - Legal papers []
 - Historical and archival documents []
 - Conference proceedings []
 - Mails []
 - Theses and dissertations []
 - Technical documentations []
 - Memoranda []
 - Meetings []
 - Grades/results []
 - Reports []
 - Policy documents []

Others, specify _____

6. Indicate the format(s) in which the records indicated above in question 5 are presented in

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

SECTION C: Creating, capturing, maintaining and disposing/archiving records

7. Please indicate in the appropriate boxes how records are created in your office or department

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

Others, specify _____

8. What is the equipment for keeping the records? Tick where appropriate

- Computer/laptop []
- Hard files []
- Cartons []
- Hard containers []
- Cloud storage []
- Electronic Recording Delivery System (ERDs) []
- File Cabinet []

Others, please specify _____

9. Please indicate if you are aware of a records information centre or records registry at UNILIA?

- Yes []
- No []
- Not Sure []

10. What is the classification system for managing records at UNILIA?

- General to Specific []
- Alphabetization []

- Numbering []
- Subject specific []
- None of the above []

11. Please indicate in the appropriate box the extent to which it takes for a record to be retrieved or accessed from any storage facilities available in your department

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

SECTION D: Factors influencing records management practices at University of Livingstonia

12. What could be the notable factors influencing records management practices

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

Others, please specify

13. What do you think are the benefits of proper records management?

- Transparency of business transactions []
- Accountability of business undertakings []
- Compliance with statutory requirements []
- Enhancing information access []
- For litigation purposes []

SECTION E: Skills and competencies of staff in managing records at University of Livingstonia

14. Who is responsible for managing records at UNILIA?

- Registrar []
- Librarian []
- Documentarist []
- Records Clerk []
- None of the above []

15. Please indicate if you have the relevant technical knowledge in records management practices

- Yes []
- No []

16. Please rate your skill proficiency in records management practices at your department

- Basic skills []
- Medium skills []
- Advanced skills []
- None of the above []

17. How would you relate your skills and competencies to the work output in records management practices in your department?

- Poor []
- Fairly good []
- Very good []
- Excellent []

18. Are you privileged with on job training or continuous professional development to be kept abreast with trending issues in records management practices? Please indicate the period when relevant records trainings are conducted.

- Every 6 months []
- Every 1 year []
- Every 2 years []
- Once in a while []
- Never []

END OF QUESTION

Thank you for your precious time

Appendix 3: Interview guide for key informants

SECTION A: Demographic information

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

SECTION B: Types of records created or received at University of Livingstonia

5. What are the types of records and how are they created in your department?

SECTION C: Creating, capturing, maintaining and disposing/archiving records

6. How are records captured at UNILIA?
7. What are the storage facilities for recordkeeping at UNILIA and how are such storage facilities secure from internal and external interference?
8. Are there any retention guidelines put in place to facilitate recordkeeping at UNILIA?
9. How are records disposed at UNILIA?

SECTION D: Factors influencing records management practices at University of Livingstonia

10. Is there any records management policy at UNILIA?
11. What are the factors militating against records management at UNILIA?

SECTION E: Skills and competencies of staff in managing records at University of Livingstonia

12. What are the skills and competencies of the staff in managing records at UNILIA?

End of questions.

Appendix 4: Document Review

- Verify some of the available records at University of Livingstonia
- Review policy guidelines, standards and procedures for records management practices
- Establish the availability of records storage facilities
- Assess the ICT infrastructure
- Organogram



MZUZU UNIVERSITY

DIRECTORATE OF RESEARCH

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MZUZU UNIVERSITY RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (MZUNIREC)

Ref No: MZUNIREC/DOR/20/15

14th Jan, 2021.

Mr. Kaitano Simwaka,
University of
Livingstonia, Rumphu.
Email: kaitanosimwaka@gmail.com
Dear Mr. Kaitano Simwaka,

RESEARCH ETHICS AND REGULATORY APPROVAL AND PERMIT FOR PROTOCOL REF NO: MZUNIREC/DOR/20/15: RECORDS MANAGEMENT PRACTICES AT THE UNIVERSITY OF LIVINGSTONIA.

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

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

Committee Address:

*Secretariat, Mzuzu University Research Ethics Committee, P/Bag 201, Luwinda, Mzuzu 2;
Email address: mzunirec@mzuni.ac.mw*

Yours Sincerely,

Gift Mbwele

**MZUZU UNIVERSITY RESEARCH ETHICS ADMINISTRATOR
For: CHAIRMAN OF MZUNIREC**