

Management of human resource records to support functions in the Ministry of Health, Kenya

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Abstract

The study aimed to assess the management of human resource records in the Ministry of Health in Kenya. Despite the support provided by human resource records for service delivery in the Ministry, there are still challenges created by reports of missing files and accumulation of files with no space for accommodation. Problems faced by human resource records management include lack of skills and competencies, inadequate human and financial resources, and lack of policy and support by management in providing necessary requirements for the human resource records management unit's (RMU) operation. The paper assesses the management of human resource records and proposes strategies and intervention measures for their effective and efficient management. The study adopted both the records life cycle model and qualitative research method. Stratified random sampling and purposive sampling were used to select respondents. Ten individuals from the sampled staff were selected for the pilot of the research instruments to test validity and reliability. The targeted population for the study was 307 staff from the Ministry of Health headquarters and its affiliate departments. A sample size of 94 members of staff, constituting 30% of the targeted population, was derived. They included top management, records management staff, clerical staff, human resource management staff, finance staff, information and communication technology (ICT) staff, and heads of departments. The findings revealed that despite efforts made to adopt the best practices, there were still challenges in implementing the elements of records management infrastructure, inadequate top management, and sustainable technical support in the implementation of ICT and human resource records management programmes in the ministry. The study recommended implementation of the elements of records management infrastructure, inadequate top management, and sustainable technical support in the implementation of ICT in resolving the challenges in the management of human resource records in the Ministry of Health.

Keywords: Human resource records, competence infrastructure, system strategy, support programme

1. Introduction

According to Alegbeleye, Chilaka and Uzoma (2-2019) on the evaluation of records management practices at the Ministry of Health (MoH), Abia State, Nigeria, records management is the application of the systematic analysis and control of records from their creation through processing, maintenance, and protection, to final disposal. The management of human resource

(HR) records is critical in the management of HR functions, which ensure employees get the needed support to provide effective, efficient, transparent, and equitable service in the organisation. HR records support good HR management, which leads to the best use of available staff in either private or public entities. HR managers must be fully aware of the record-keeping implications of all relevant laws and regulations in the management of HR records as an essential aspect of long-term solutions involving their preservation. The MoH, like any other functional organisation, requires sound and effective HR management for development and sustenance. According to Dewah and Ndlovu (2013), the management of personnel records are necessary for accountability, good governance, and protection of human rights. Individual employee rights are observed in the management of personnel records. Staff records should only be accessed by a selected few individuals even in the human resource section. The information contained in personnel records is critical in determining decision-making that should be informed through a clearly defined approach. Sound management of HR records ensures the protection of reliable evidence as it supports transparency and accountability in an organisation. The records contain employees' sensitive information and help to determine issues affecting them while in the service and afterward. Directorate of Personnel Management (DPM) personal general letter No. 1/2008 of 12 March 2008 provides regulations regarding the preservation and destruction of personnel records (IRMT, 1999; 2009). For proper planning of functionality for an organisation and determination of performance and payment of the staff, HR records are instrumental in providing the required information. Proper records management is critical for their accuracy, completeness, and trustworthiness to both Ministry administration and employees for good judgment in decision-making.

Many organisations have benefited from well-managed HR records to keep and maintain accurate payment to eliminate malpractices in the system through payroll processes. In addition, the produced data are reliable and trusted to give confidence for planning, budgets, and processes that benefit workers. ISO 15489 covers important aspects of a records system, metadata, policies, monitoring of performance, and training for the improvement of service delivery. Effective HR records management ensures that an employer can easily access an individual's performance data for decision-making on the employees' disciplinary measures, thus ensuring improved performance in service delivery. The MoH oversees the formulation and implementation of health policies for the provision of health services. These functions are delivered through directorates, divisions, and units within the ministry. Effective HR records management helps in the sustainability of staff in these levels. To enable the MoH to meet its expanded mandate, there is a need to develop an appropriate structure that aims to maximise efficiency to facilitate a working relationship between various sections. Therefore, the MoH should be well prepared to perform on the job and adapt to changing situations in the workplace at various levels of services being supported by sound HR records management for effective HR management.

1.1 Management of records in support of the ministry's operations

According to a Kenya (2011), the state of records has continued to deteriorate, despite the government's effort to put in place legislation, regulations, and systems to guide and improve the operation of the records management functions in the public service. This has not improved as it was recently reported that a number of ghost workers still exist in government ministries following the outcome of the Capacity Assessment and Rationalization of the Public Service (CARPS), report nationwide exercise (Kenya 2014). The Ministry of Devolution and Planning carried out

this exercise to transform Kenya's public service as envisioned in the National Vision 2030. Despite the support provided by HR records in service delivery, the MoH still experiences challenges involving missing files and accumulation of files, creation, maintenance, storage, control, and disposal of records, with no policies to address these challenges. There are still reports of lack of proper HR records management system; therefore, other malpractices are found in government ministries.

Kemoni (2007) states that the absence of a records management policy can obstruct the role of public service providers. According to ISO 15489, a ministry must have guidelines as to whom and under what circumstances access is permitted. There is no generally established records management policy from which individual government ministries can prepare their own policy; instead, they rely on general circulars and guidelines which are not answerable to individual ministries' work situations. Thurston (2007:190) mentions that most African countries developed and implemented records management policy on an ad hoc basis. Like that of other African countries, Kenya's public sector record-keeping system is facing infrastructure-related challenges. Due to these challenges with a lack of records management infrastructure, the ministry suffers from poorly managed records and sometimes experiences delays in accessing administrative, financial, and legal information to support sound decision-making for the delivery of programmes and services. Respondents interviewed mentioned a number of challenges encountered in the process of executing the ministry's mandate, with improper HR records management, such as inadequate infrastructure for HR records management and lack of well-trained staff for the competency required in the unit. Concerning the overall efficiency of the record-keeping system in the ministry and departments, the secretary in charge of administration (top management) said "*there had been some update but still needed more improvement*". There is inadequate intervention by the top management for effective strategies for the management of HR records. More challenges involve the quality of ICT equipment, level of ICT knowledge, and skills among the staff. The challenges involving the application of information technology (IT) in the ministry include access and usage of facilities, management support by the users, risks, and security issues associated with the adoption of ICT, such as intermittent power and internet. There are barriers to a comprehensive infrastructure for practices, protecting, and preserving digital records that can be exploited. The staff have difficulties to understand the terms related to responsibilities and practices for managing and disposing of electronic records.

The records life cycle was adopted because it views records as passing stages that include the current stage when they are frequently referred to and semi-current although they are not frequently retrieved or accessed for business, and non-current stage, when they are no longer required for business. Without the records life cycle concept, vast quantities of inactive records clog expensive office space and make it virtually impossible to retrieve important administrative, financial, legal information, and HR records. This undermines the accountability of the state and endangers the rights of the citizens and employees of an organisation/ministry, among other benefits.

The literature review focused on key concepts and themes derived from the study objectives. Specific objectives of the study were to investigate how HR records are managed in the ministry, determine best practices and standards applied in the management of the ministry's HR records, determine infrastructure and resources required to efficiently manage the records, and propose strategies to ensure sound management of HR records in the ministry. The relevant literature was sought from processes in managing HR records management of different types of HR records, best

practices and standards applied in the management of HR records in government ministries, infrastructure for HR records in government ministries' resources required to manage HR records

Regarding the literature gap from the literature and empirical studies examined, the researcher observed that various studies have been done on the management of HR records in different countries. This study focused on the following issues:

- The nature of personnel records, managing personnel records in manual (physical) form, and managing personnel records in a mixed paper/electronic environment (Thurston 2007)
- Investigation done to address the management HR records requirements for building integrity in the public sector information. The study aimed to provide real insight into the real managerial and structural changes within selected areas of public service. It was important to provide a firm ground on which public servants, who are faced by the challenge of public service reform, can stand while assessing the options available.
- Public sector reform, electronic governance initiatives, payroll and personnel processes, records and information management, and gaining an understanding the information flow between the HR functions and payroll by an examination of systems and procedures. The study issued reports on personnel records management and the Integrated Personnel and Payroll Database (IPPD) system used in Ghana.

However, the studies above were general studies that did not address issues of managing HR records in a specific domain, such as the Ministry of Health in Kenya. The study of Thurston (2007) focused on and addressed specific issues such as the establishment of a human resource information system (GHRIS), Government of Kenya guidelines and legislation on managing HR records in ministries and departments, reforms and strategies for improvement of HR records management in Kenya, and effects of poor management of HR records leading to poor service delivery. These were different issues from those addressed by this study because this study investigated how HR records were managed in the MoH, staff non-compliance in observing best practices and regulations, and non-commitment by the management in providing adequate support for records management programmes.

The management of all HR records in the ministry and its departments is done in record management units (registries). Security threats in records management stem from malware and data breaches, theft, fire, or flooding, making it essential to incorporate multiple types of security in records management. The records are maintained and kept in storage facilities that ensure their safety and security. The units also maintain effective records control systems, provide dissemination of information, and facilitate and regulate access to HR records to the authorised users for action. The unit processes the retention and disposal of non-current HR records in accordance with the retention and disposal schedule.

According to Kenya (2014), CARPS report government ministries' payrolls are inflated with 'ghost workers', the non-existent employees who receive salaries. Cases of ghost workers in public institutions have been mentioned even in the county (devolved) government's setup. HR records should be used to provide evidence of the existence of a worker, the appropriateness of salary, and any other additional processes for other benefits. In the absence of sound HR records, the ghost workers issue cannot be addressed. Kootshabe and Mnjama (2014) state that preservation of

government records in Botswana provides an essential aspect of a long-term solution for continued access to the required information in any field of business.

The MoH mostly operates with paper-based HR records, which are difficult to access. Improved HR management is therefore critical for good management policy to ensure reduced time in accessing records for decision-making. Transparency and accountability are justifiable in public sector reforms where the necessary data are produced to support transactions when dealing with numbers and details in appointments or engagement involving grades, location, dates, and for accurate task accomplishment. The public-sector reform initiatives of the 1990s coincided with the ICT revolution, especially the internet and the World Wide Web, which are increasingly used in governments to enhance efficiency, accountability, and transparency in the management of public affairs (Wamukoya & Mutula 2005). The MoH is embarking on computerisation to benefit from faster retrieval, tracking, and security of electronic records. This will require the development of adequate capacity to manage electronic records that will help to provide legally verifiable evidence of ownership, agreement obligations, and policies in transaction issues.

1.2 Problem statement

Over the years, the government put much effort into improving service delivery in the public service. The establishment of a GHRIS was a major reform to bring efficiency in accessing, disseminating, and enhancing confidentiality of information. Several attempts have been made to streamline the management of HR records through circulars, legislation, regulations, and systems. Ministries have also been issued with guidelines such as the records management procedures manual for the public service (2010) and the strategy for improvement of records management in the public service.

In spite of these reforms, there are still reports of missing files, accumulation of files with no space for accommodation. The Ministry of Devolution and Planning has reported existence of ghost workers in Government Ministries following the nationwide (Kenya, 2014) exercise which aimed at transforming Kenya Public Service as envisioned in the National Vision 2030.

In view of the seemingly poor human HR management, it becomes increasingly difficult to maintain an accurate payroll, as indicated in the CARPS report, and confidence in HR data for the HR functions. Good HR records management ultimately helps the ministry to improve performance, which ensures improved service delivery. Lack of a proper HR records management system creates a disorganised environment making it very difficult for employees to keep and track customers' information where there is no smooth flow of work. The study assessed HR records management practices to identify the gaps and develop appropriate strategies for effective and efficient service delivery in the MoH (Kenya 2014).

2. Purpose of the study

The purpose of the study was to assess the management of HR records in the MoH with a view to proposing strategies to enhance their efficient and effective management.

3. Objectives of the study

The study was guided by the following objectives:

- To investigate how HR records are managed in the ministry.
- To determine best practices and standards applied in the management of HR records in the ministry.
- To determine infrastructure and resources required to support sound management of HR records in the ministry.
- To identify challenges associated with the management of HR records in the ministry.
- To propose strategies to enhance the management of HR records in the ministry.

4. Literature review

The theoretical framework and literature review on HR records management were used. The life cycle of records model was examined. The literature review themes included National Archives of Australia records management standard, management of HR records, best practices and standards applied in HR records management, infrastructure and resources required to support HR records management in government ministries and proposing strategies to enhance HR records management in government ministries (Kombo & Tromp 2006). Dutch (2007) defines theory as any systematic and coherent collection of ideas that relate to a specific subject. He adds that a theory, in the scientific sense, is an analytic structure designed to explain a set of empirical observations. A scientific theory identifies a set of distinct observations as a class of phenomena and makes assertions about the underlying reality that brings about or affects this class.

4.1 Human resource records management

Classification ensures the systematic organisation of records and facilitates information retrieval (Mokhtar & Yusof 2017). It is a fundamental function in records management that ensures systematic identification and arrangement of records. HR records held in RMUs are classified for easy retrieval. According to State New South Wales (2004), a record management programme encompasses the management framework involving and the system required within an organisation to make full and accurate records over time. This includes the identification and protection of human resource records with longer time value that may be required as archives (Ngoepe 2008) to monitor the use of records and maintain an auditable trail for record-keeping processes, such as access of records by users, the ministry should maintain tracking of records movement.

4.2 Best practices and standards for the management of human resources records

The key activities an organisation should perform to properly manage its records include setting records management policy, assigning responsibilities, establishing and promulgating procedures and guidelines, as well as designing, implementing, and administering record-keeping systems. Well-organised and accurate employee records play a vital role in HR processes and ensure compliance with legal requirements, including hiring, onboarding, performance management, and offboarding. The government formulated a strategy for improvement of the poor state of records management in the public services.

4.3 Infrastructure and resources for the management of human resources records

According to Mathangani and Nzioka (2017), ICTs can be used for a wide range of records management functions such as corresponding, personnel management, statistics and accounting, reporting, classification and listing of current records, printing file labels, scheduling of current records, and tracking of current and semi-current records. Proper record-keeping in any organisation must be supported by an effective records management infrastructure that provides direction, responsibility, tools, and capacity with effective policies, programmes, and services. According to Kemoni (2007), without a records management policy, it is difficult to establish an efficient records management system that supports decision-making. A policy provides a framework and assigns responsibilities for ensuring that full and accurate records of activities of the ministry of the best practices are created

4.4 Challenges in the management of human resource records

Risk management has become essential for business operations and is no longer about insurance coverage, but primarily about internal business process issues and legal compliance issues (World Bank 2002). Creating agencies' RMUs need to have a regular programme for monitoring records management systems and procedures, which should include system inspection records managed in accordance with the ministry guidelines to ensure compliance with records management procedures and policies, identifying areas of strength and weakness, and measuring performance. HR records management faces the challenges of paper records, which are still found in HR records, even though there is a drive to make paperless a priority. Compliance with regulations and legal rules governing the retention of HR records is a burden in most organisations. According to Wato (2006:69), managing electronic records is one area that has always challenged archivists and records managers, especially in developing countries. This is partly because their creation, use, and preservation require acquisition of costly hardware and software and training of the archivists and records managers to be conversant with e-records management.

4.5 Strategies for management of human resource records

According to Mampe and Kalusopa (2012), an effective records management programme ensures that records are available for users when needed. Organisations should have efficient and effective records management programmes that would make available records and information when required. Effective filing and sorting of HR records enable employees to access the information they need more efficiently, saving time and avoiding unnecessary frustration. Ngulube (2005) states that in Kenya, lost files, missing files, and misfiled records were described as common features in governments. According to the Government Ministry of Local Government of Kenya customer satisfaction survey, the registry was rated among the poorest performance areas and it was recommended that users should identify problems, set performance targets for registry services, identify capacity problems, and train staff in registry.

5. Methodology and population

The study adopted sections: design, target population sampling procedures, research methods and instrument data collection procedures, data validity and reliability, pilot testing, data collection methods and instruments, data collection procedures, data presentation and analysis, and ethical consideration in the research methods. This section discusses various research methodologies and research methods that information system researchers commonly use (Goundar 2012). Research design is a strategy for answering the research question using empirical data. Creating a research design means making decisions about the said sections of the research methods. The study predominantly used the qualitative design supplemented by the quantitative approach through questionnaires and adopted descriptive method and triangulation of both qualitative and quantitative approaches.

Population is the entire group from which the researcher wants to draw conclusions, while a sample is the specific group from which data will be obtained. The sample is always smaller than the total size of the population (Bhandari 2020). Table 1 is showing the targeted population for study in the Ministry of Health.

Table 1: Population for study in the Ministry of Health

Cadre	Target Population	Sample Size	Percentage
Top Management	1	1	N/A
Heads of Department	40	12	30
Records Management officers	55	17	30
Clerical Officers	50	15	30
Information and Communication Technology Officers	36	11	30
Secretarial staff	50	15	30
Human Resource Management Officers	50	15	30
Finance Staff	25	8	30
Total sampled Size	307	94	30

The sample for the study was drawn from various categories of staff in the ministry and its departments. The sample size was 94 out of 307 targeted staff members who were selected from the ministry headquarters and its departments through purposive sampling. Statistically, in order for generalisation to take place, the sample must be at least 30% (Copper & Schindle 2006). Thus from the above population of 307, a sample of 30% was selected from each group. Sekaran (2006) refers to sampling as the process of selecting a sufficient number of elements from the population so that studying the sample and understanding its properties or characteristics make it possible to generalise such properties or characteristics to the population elements. The study adopted simple random sampling, stratified random sampling, and purposive sampling. The study also observed validity and reliability of the research instrument, pilot testing, and ethical consideration.

6. Findings of the study

The findings of the study were derived from the interview guides, questionnaires, and observation checklist in line with the research objectives. Interviews were conducted for records management officers, heads of departments (HoDs), and top management in the MoH. Questionnaires were distributed to secretarial staff, clerical officers, ICT officers, HR officers, and finance staff in their capacity as records creators and users. Data were collected from the MoH headquarters, departments, divisions, and units that create, use, and keep HR records.

6.1 Human resource records management in the ministry

Regarding the management of HR records in the ministry. The researcher interviewed the secretary in the administration in the ministry on his role in records management policy formulation and implementation, and the support the ministry provides for records management and performance of records management staff in the ministry, the importance of HR records for the performance of the ministry, and future plans for records management in the ministry. He stated the following:

“Records management in the ministry is regulated by policies, various guidelines and circulars. The guidelines are observed by all staff and our role is to ensure these are communicated and adhered to for the smooth operation of records management in the ministry”

On decision-making, the secretary said all records were important tools for consultation towards decision making in the ministry.

“Records act as the memory and have to be consulted for the next course of action for any activity going on in the ministry. Human Resource records help in making decisions on matters concerning the welfare of health workers e.g. promotions; leave various categories of payments, compensation and retirement”.

Regarding accountability and transparency, the secretary said:

“Accountability and transparency in the ministry are enhanced by well managed records that are readily accessible whenever required for perusal to unearth any malpractices”.

He concluded on accountability and transparency by saying that:

“Good human resource records management enable workers to access their personal records and enable them raise issues touching on their welfare.”

Concerning the overall efficiency of the record-keeping system in the ministry and departments, most of respondents said the system had been in poor condition before some files were transferred to counties. One participant said:

“There had been some update but still needed more improvement”.

The rest of the respondents said the reason for inefficiency was lack of control for file movement. They said:

“Digitization in the departments enable accessibility of records and if the same is extended to human resource records, then there will be no need of relying on individuals for assistance”

Regarding whether the records were readily available when requested, most respondents said no, while one respondent said:

“At times records are readily available on request”

The ministry encountered challenges involving the absence of a disposal policy and retention and disposal schedules, resulting closed files accumulating. This exposed these records to threats involving disasters of physical, chemical, and biological nature. The ministry had not vigorously embarked on the digitisation process to ensure the safety, preservation, and backup of vital records. Only a few files had been scanned and kept as backups. Files were not readily available to users and loss of files remained a major challenge leading to delays in decision-making. Respondents noted that most challenges related to best practices that could be addressed by formulating and implementing a policy. Various guidelines and circulars were issued by the secretary in charge of administration regarding the policy. To achieve a successful records management programme, an organisation needs to establish sustainable infrastructure involving the development of policies for the management of records and information at all levels and forms of activities in records management.

6.2 Best practices and standards in the management of human resource records

Regarding whether records were readily available on request in the headquarters' RMU, most HoDs interviewed disagreed, while a few agreed. The respondents who did not agree to issues raised about the manual system, said they contributed to slow retrieval of records in the RMUs. They noted that files were not kept in one centralised room, which brought confusion regarding how to access them. They said that for departmental records, authority had to be sought to access their databases. This created the impression that record keeping was more efficient in a decentralised system than in a centralised system because it was easier to access records in a decentralised system in the departments than in a centralised system in the ministry headquarters. The finding on poor filing concurred with DPM's report on streamlining the operation of registries in government ministries and local government in Kenya in 2004, which stated that poor filing was rife in most government ministries and local governments. The respondents mentioned action officers said that files were archived but this was not the case. They specified the pensions section where files overstayed while waiting for retirees or their dependants to avail required documents for processing of pensions. Figure 1 indicates application of ICT in the ministry.

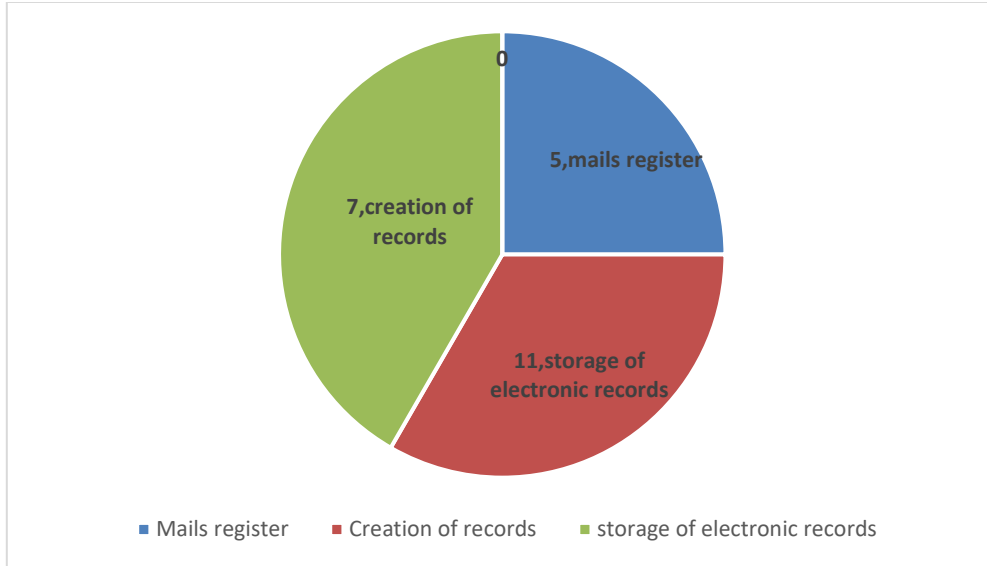


Figure 1: The use of ICT

According to the finance staff, ICT is used in the ministry where five respondents said that it is used in registration of mails, seven said that it is used for creation of records and 11 that it is used in storage of electronic records. This confirmed a number of applications where IT could be used to solve challenges affecting HR records management in both the headquarters and affiliated departments. The figure 2 indicates the advantages derived from the ICT use in the ministry.

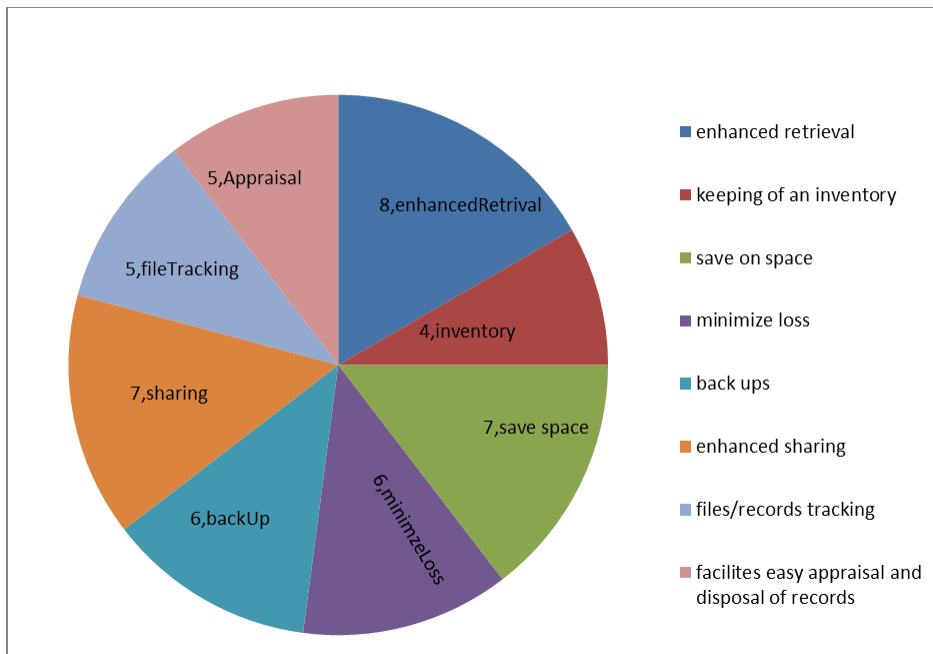


Figure 2: The advantages of using ICT

Regarding the consideration of the benefits of using ICT, five respondent said they used ICT in appraisal, four said for inventory, six for backups, six said ICT helped minimise losses, seven used it to share information, six to save space, eight to enhance retrieval of information, and five for file tracking. From the analysis of the above data, ICT is critical in providing important services in the ministry where it is mostly used in enhancing information retrieval. The affiliated departments were engaged in activities that involved dissemination of information which called for effective ICT use. Various challenges in records management could be handled effectively through ICT.

Most staff were not conversant with disposal procedures; therefore, there was an accumulation of records in the ministry headquarters and departments. The use of registers to track records and best practices and procedures for following emails had not been used well. Cases of missing files were rife in the ministry headquarters compared to the departments, which had fewer files and were under the custody of the HoDs. It was established that temporary files were opened or action was taken on loose letters where files were not readily accessible. This confirmed the unsatisfactory state of record keeping in the ministry. This exposed records to risks such as loss of information and lack of prompt and consistent decision-making. Reasons for missing files included action officers not cooperating with records staff in control of file movement in their sections. This concurred with the views of Minnesota State Archives (2012) to the effect that ministries moved fast towards electronic records management due to advancements in technology and the changing times. The secretary in charge of administration noted that the MoH was transitioning to developing full automation of records management for fast service provision.

The risks affecting electronic records management included intermittent power and internet. ICT staff had not fully mastered the use of metadata and audit trails, they had no control in retention and disposal schedules because the ministry had not fully adopted the electronic records management system (ERMS).

On whether the ministry experienced cases of missing files, most records management officers interviewed agreed. Some disagreed and a few said minimal. Those who agreed said action officers kept files in their drawers and did not return them to the RMU. Some respondents said the staff deployed in RMUs had acquired basic education as a requirement for the records management job but lacked training and capacity building on new approaches. This rendered their performance below standard because records in all formats were subject to statutory and regulatory requirements, and professionalism in any field required training. According to them, some files were hidden due to the nature of their content and records staff lost track of file movement if not recorded in those offices. The respondents who said minimal noted that there was improvement due to the transfer of files to the counties after the devolution of the ministry's functions. The respondents who disagreed with departments said it was difficult to lose track of their records because files were handled and kept by the same persons. From the analysis in figure 2, it is evident that ICT application in solving challenges faced in the management of HR records in the ministry, such as misplacement and loss of files, would be corrected if proper attention is accorded to records management programmes involving staff training in the ministry. Lack of such commitments in this would leave users (HR managers) of HR records in a helpless situation where they could not make a quick decision on matters affecting the employees. In such circumstances, workers would get demoralised, leading to poor performance in both public and private sectors.

6.3 Infrastructure to support the management of human resource records in the ministry

The HoDs commented on top management's management of records regarding policy formulation and implementation, budgetary allocation, equipment and suppliers, storage and accommodation, IT and capacity building, and training. In capacity building and training, most of the respondents said that records management staff were considered along with other ministry staff in training projections. The remaining respondents said they had been trained. Specific respondent said:

“This had barred us from getting adequate training”.

Regarding the formulation and implementation of a policy, most records management officers interviewed said there was no policy and sought support of the management for the formulation of policy and resource mobilisation. According to them, the policy will ensure that preparations are implemented for the ministry to deal with all kinds of disasters. Disaster management programmes for records is a sure way of protecting and securing records against agents of destruction ranging from human to natural. Premises and their surroundings should be safe and secured for storage, access, and equipment handling. One respondent stated:

“We are depending on the guidelines, circulars, and directives provided by the Directorate of Public Service Management and National Archives to conduct activities in records management”

Some did not respond.

Ministry headquarters and departments lacked a records management policy and budget allocation for records management. Records management required staff ICT-related courses. Supplies for the RMU were captured through normal requisition from stores. The ministry experienced an accumulation of closed and non-active files with inadequate storage space. According to HR managers, ICT had not been fully integrated to support digitisation and was mainly used as a storage medium in the ministry, but its application could be extended to derive more benefits in areas such as creation, tracking, retrieval, saving space, sharing, and minimisation of loss of records. For ERMS, priority should be given to training, power, and internet fluctuations, among other challenges, for effective management of electronic records.

6.4 Challenges in the management of human resource records in the ministry

Regarding challenges experienced in the management of HR records, six finance staff members said inadequately trained staff led to lack of professionalism in the management of HR records. Further, they said that closed volumes of files were not accessible because there was no order in their arrangement. One respondent said:

“We encountered problems due to inefficiency in recordkeeping practices, inadequate staff, and the slow manual system.”

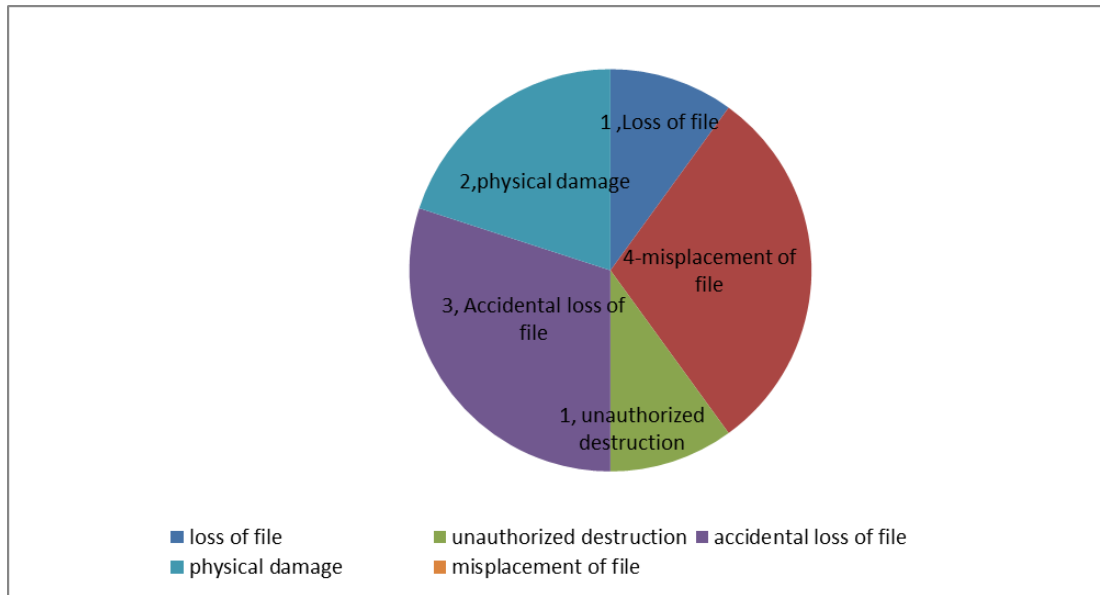


Figure 3: Imminent risks that records are exposed

Figure 3 indicates imminent risks records are exposed to, according to finance staff. According to the respondents in the above pie chart, records faced the risks involving: One loss of records, one unauthorised destruction, two physical damage, three accidental loss of files and four misplacement of files. This confirmed that management of records required intervention measures that would ensure safety of records. It is evident from the analysis of the pie chart that four respondents out of 11 said files were lost through misplacement, four said that the loss of files was accidental, two said there were physical damage to the files, one said there were unauthorised destruction of files while one said loss of files was experienced in the ministry. This confirmed various challenges faced in the management of HR records in the ministry. Misplacement and loss of files in any organisation renders records users (HR managers) in a helpless situation where they cannot make quick decisions on matters affecting the employee. In these circumstances, workers become demoralised, leading to poor performance in both the public and private sectors.

Regarding the challenges experienced in the management of HR records, two (13.3%) records management officers interviewed said there were problems with tracking HR records. This was a manual process involving physically visiting offices where records were marked or requested. Four (26.6%) respondents cited no support from top management in the supply of equipment and stationery, two (13.3%) said action officers held files for too long and there were rampant cases of missing files resulting in the accumulation of pending mail, three (20%) said there were inadequate staff and lack of incentives as well as lack of technological skills, which contributed negatively to the low performance of the RMU. Two (13.3%) respondents claimed that some action officers directly received mail in their offices without channelling them through the RMU. According to them, the officers consulted the index on the subject of the mail and then called for the relevant file. They said that records management had not been allocated a budget and authority to incur expenditure. Two (13.3%) respondents said lack of consultation with records staff indicated non-commitment and concern by management. This, according to them, contributed to limited resources, lack of equipment, inadequate storage space for closed files, and lack of file auditing in the ministry. Observed data revealed shortcomings in the manner HR records were managed. There

were challenges involving insufficient support from records management and users. There was non-compliance with regulations and non-commitment by records management officers and ICT officers to fully manage the systems and activities. It is envisaged that, apart from linking ministries and departments, ICT would enhance service delivery and promote accountability and transparency. The findings further proposed that all correspondence and mail be channelled through the RMU in line with ISO-15489 recommendations that mail received must be signed for by the receiving officers in the RMU. The manner in which records were handled had far-reaching effects on their integrity, security, and safety. Most of the respondents interviewed opined it is possible to change the situation if sensitisation of staff on records is done at an early stage to safeguard records for disposition. Some respondents hinted that with proper staffing, records management policy, scheme of service, and training of records management officers, it is likely that records management functions will improve.

The ministry faced challenges relating to lack of capacity building for records management staff and manual operations of the RMU. Not much effort had gone into procuring an ERMS. According to the records users, low-quality file folders contributed to the damage and loss of records. The deployment of inadequate staff and shortage of computers and equipment had far-reaching effects on the operation of the RMU. The lack of a record disposal policy contributed to a shortage of space for records storage. Added to the list of the numerous established challenges, there were cases of lack of proper control and tracking of records, poor folding of letters, and inadequate supply of equipment. These were common challenges facing records management practices in government ministries that require concerted efforts and a common approach by all government ministries to formulate and implement records management policies. The policies would provide uniform guidelines for effective records management practices in all ministries. Most of the respondents interviewed suggested that budget should be allocated for records management to cater for various records management activities, including the supply of equipment for maintenance.

7. Recommendations

The study findings revealed that the MoH faced challenges HR records management. This negatively affected service delivery in the ministry as per the data collected from various categories of respondents interviewed. The respondents made recommendations and suggestions, and voiced their opinions on the entire records management in the ministry. The researcher also made observations on the practices and the physical environment of RMUs leading to the following recommendations to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency in service delivery.

Records management staff in the ministry headquarters and department units require capacity building and refresher courses in records management. Training them would enable them to provide the professionalism required for effective performance. The study therefore recommends that training programmes should be prepared for officers serving in record management units for improvement of performance and effective service delivery. With the introduction of the integrated records management system (IRMS) in the service, all records management officers should be computer literate. To maintain the integrity, accuracy, and authenticity of electronic records, records staff should be provided with adequate skills and competencies to manage electronic records. With budgetary allocation for records management staff, they would be able to take

advantage of refresher courses on HR records management and sensitisation programmes for ministry staff and opportunities for records management staff to undertake training in recognised institutions, including universities. Deploying adequately trained staff was essential for the ministry to effectively manage ERMS. To maintain the integrity, accuracy, and authenticity of electronic records, it was necessary to ensure that records staff were provided with adequate skills and competencies in the management of electronic records.

Records retention and disposal schedules should be developed, in consultation with the Kenya National Archives and Documentation Service, to minimise the accumulation of records in RMUs. Staff directly involved in the disposal of records should be sensitised to acquaint them with policy procedures and guidelines for the disposal of records.

Any form of automation implemented in the ministry should involve records management staff that will ensure the integrity and trustworthiness of the records captured in the system. This will ensure that records maintained by the ministry can be trusted as evidence and can guarantee effective service delivery. Consideration should also be given to the introduction of an IRMS that will link up ministry headquarters with other departments. ICT staff and records management officers should ensure that HR records in all formats are given special attention and information provided can be trusted for its integrity and for evidence purposes for effective service delivery. ICT staff should advise on proper software that will be able to capture all the information required for HR records management. The problem of controlling the movement of records could be solved by adopting the use of ERMS in the ministry for tracking files.

A records management policy would help provide guidance, control, and direction in the management of records from creation to disposal and would facilitate standardisation of records management procedures and practices in the ministry. The study recommends that senior management in the ministry should give urgent attention to the development of a records management policy. Most of the challenges mentioned by the respondents focused on the best practices that can be addressed by formulation and implementation of a policy. This policy should go beyond circulars to address the general elements of records management infrastructure. To achieve a successful records management programme, organisations should establish sustainable infrastructure involving the development of policies for the management of records and information in all forms. A policy should be formulated to facilitate the procurement of quality equipment and stationery that contributed to the poor condition of records.

This study recommends there should be top management support to address the challenges. The management should budget funds for various activities. In addition, management should continuously monitor and evaluate records management against the ministry's goals for effective service delivery. The management should ensure necessary steps are taken towards the facilitation of future preservation of records by using standardised equipment.

Top management was a key element in the development and implementation of records management systems and programmes. Therefore, top management should support efforts aimed at streamlining records management systems, particularly ERMSs, to effectively support service delivery in the ministry. Management should ensure that necessary steps are taken to preserve valuable records for future use by ensuring their security and safety in a secure environment. The role of the records management programme towards reforming the ministry's records management

practices should be prioritised so the restructuring of the records management can start including formulation of a records management policy and establishing records management procedures. Adequate training, monitoring, and review of the system in use should be carried out to enhance the performance of staff. For efficiency and effectiveness in the management of electronic records, adopting ERMSs would hasten and streamline the operations of both the ministry headquarters and departments. Adopting best practices and compliance with records management procedures would address the logistical issues surrounding the retrieval of files. Records management officers should be involved in determining records management software to ensure effective operations of the RMU. The role of ICT staff would be to provide technical assistance.

The study recommends that records management officers should incorporate records management standards and best practices in the management of the ministry's records while also setting priorities for improved performance. There is a need for records management officers to use available resources to promote efficient and effective management of records in the MoH.

The study recommends cooperation from all users. Files should be brought back into storage as soon as possible. Users should be sensitised on regulations, procedures, and issues affecting the management of records. They should also be sensitised to the risks records are exposed to and how negligence on their part contributes to those threats and risks.

8. Conclusion

The paper found that the development of effective infrastructure and programmes are the key requirements for the sound management of human resource records in the MoH. Specifically, various initiatives that could be explored in enhancing and streamlining human resource records management in the ministry were identified. In particular, best practices, compliance with regulations, and commitment on the part of both records management officers and the top management should provide the required support in streamlining records management systems. The study proposed an action plan showing seven steps required to be followed in the management of HR records in the MoH to assist in enhancing efficiency and effectiveness in service delivery. The paper also clearly defined roles that should be played by various stakeholders in providing support. It is envisaged that the development of HR records management programmes and implementation strategies would strengthen the existing capacity for improved service delivery.

Declarations

The authors declare that:

- The manuscript has not been previously published and is not under consideration for publication with any other journal or copyrighted publishing platform of any kind.
- Permission was granted for collection and publication of the presented identifiable data from target organisation (Permission letter must be provided with manuscript).
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- Manuscript and study meet all the ethical requirements of the journal and that of my institution or company, as well as legal requirements of the study country.
- There is no any potential conflict of interest for the research.
- Authors take responsibility to keep participants information confidential as required by legislations including Protection of personal information Act.
- I give consent to the Journal of South African Society of Archivist to publish the manuscript.

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