

The Current State of Records Management in the County Government of Nakuru, Kenya

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Abstract

Effective records management underpins accountability, transparency, and efficient service delivery in devolved governments. Yet many county governments in Kenya continue to face inadequate storage facilities, reliance on manual record-keeping, limited technological infrastructure, insufficient staff training, and weak implementation of records management policies. This study assessed the current state of records management in the County Government of Nakuru and examined its implications for governance and service delivery. A mixed-methods design was adopted. The target population comprised 152 county officers in the County Executive and the County Assembly; 126 were sampled, and 120 returned completed questionnaires (response rate = 95.2%). Six key informants were also interviewed. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and qualitative data using thematic analysis. Records classification systems existed in most departments (81.7%), but only 46.7% of respondents reported that they were consistently applied. Over half of the respondents (58.3%) rated storage facilities as inadequate or very inadequate, and 72.5% reported continued reliance on manual or hybrid systems; only 27.5% reported an implemented electronic records management system. Interviewees attributed these constraints to limited financial resources, inadequate information technology infrastructure, limited technical expertise, and insufficient staff training. The study concludes that records management in the County Government of Nakuru is at a transitional stage. Stronger policy implementation, greater investment in electronic records management systems, and continuous staff capacity development are needed to strengthen governance, accountability, and service delivery.

Keywords: *Records management, devolved governance, county government, service delivery, Nakuru County, Kenya*

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1.0 Introduction

Effective records management is a cornerstone of public administration and democratic governance. Records provide evidence of government actions and decisions, support service delivery, facilitate accountability, and promote transparency in the management of public resources. In devolved systems of governance their importance is greater still, because subnational governments are responsible for planning, budgeting, policy implementation, and the delivery of essential public services. In Kenya, the Constitution of Kenya (2010) and the County Governments Act (2012) underscore the principles of accountability, transparency, and citizen participation. Achieving these principles requires reliable records management systems that ensure timely access to accurate information (Franks, 2025).

Well-managed records strengthen institutional memory, improve operational efficiency, and support evidence-based decision-making. Conversely, ineffective records management may result in information loss, delays in service delivery, weak accountability, and diminished public trust. Despite growing recognition of these risks, public sector organizations across Africa continue to face inadequate funding, limited technological infrastructure, insufficient professional capacity, and slow digital transformation (Smallwood, 2020). The transition toward digital governance has heightened the need for records systems that support efficient access, long-term preservation, and effective use of public records. Strengthening records management has consequently become a component of governance reforms aimed at improving transparency, accountability, and public sector performance.

In Kenya, recent studies have identified persistent records management challenges in county governments, including inadequate infrastructure, shortages of qualified personnel, limited financial resources, and low adoption of electronic records management systems. These challenges have been associated with inefficient information retrieval, reduced accountability,

and constrained service delivery (Musyoka et al., 2023). The County Government of Nakuru is an appropriate setting for examining these issues, given its economic significance, large population, and administrative complexity. The county generates substantial volumes of records across its departments, the County Assembly, and county agencies, yet its records management practices remain constrained by reliance on manual processes and fragmented information systems (Tole, 2023).

This study therefore examines the current state of records management in the County Government of Nakuru. It investigates the effectiveness of records creation, classification, storage, retrieval, and disposal practices and their influence on governance efficiency, and it examines how these practices affect accountability, transparency, decision-making, and service delivery. The study contributes to the literature on information management in devolved governance systems and offers evidence-based recommendations for strengthening records management in Kenyan county governments.

2.0 Materials and Methods

Research design

This study adopted a mixed-methods design to examine records management practices in the County Government of Nakuru. Combining quantitative and qualitative approaches provided a more comprehensive understanding of current practice through methodological triangulation (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2023).

Study area

The study was conducted in the County Government of Nakuru, one of Kenya's economically significant devolved units. The county comprises the County Executive, the County Assembly, the Nakuru City Board, municipal boards, the Nakuru County Public Service Board, and water and sanitation companies, all of which generate substantial volumes of administrative, financial, legal, health, and operational records. The study focused on the County Executive and the County Assembly.

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Target population and sampling

The target population comprised 152 county officers, 104 from the County Executive and 48 from the County Assembly, who were directly involved in administrative, financial, planning, human resource, and records management functions. The sample size was determined using Yamane's (1967) formula for finite populations:

$$n = N / [1 + N(e)^2]$$

where n is the sample size, N is the target population (152), and e is the level of precision (0.05). The calculated minimum sample size was 110 respondents. To improve representativeness and allow for non-response, 126 respondents were selected, representing approximately 82.9% of the target population. Stratified sampling was used to ensure proportional representation across departments and institutional units. Purposive sampling was used to select six key informants (records management officers, departmental heads, human resource officers, and senior administrators) who had specialized knowledge of records management practices.

Data collection

Data were collected using structured questionnaires and semi-structured key informant interviews. The questionnaires contained closed-ended and five-point Likert-scale items on records creation, classification, storage, retrieval, and disposal practices; infrastructure adequacy; staff capacity; policy implementation; and the adoption of electronic records management systems. The interviews explored records management policies,

operational challenges, and the contribution of records management to accountability, transparency, decision-making, and service delivery. The instruments were validated through expert review.

Data analysis

Quantitative data were coded and analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics Version 28 (IBM Corp., 2021). Descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, and cross-tabulations, were used to summarize the data and identify patterns in records management practices. Interview data were transcribed verbatim and analyzed thematically following Braun and Clarke (2022). Themes were developed through systematic coding, reviewed for consistency, and interpreted alongside the quantitative findings. Triangulating the two datasets enhanced the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings.

Ethical considerations

Ethical approval was obtained from Kenyatta University, and research authorization was granted by the National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI) and the County Government of Nakuru. Informed consent was obtained from all participants before data collection. Participants were assured of confidentiality and anonymity, and participation was voluntary, with the right to withdraw at any stage without penalty.

3.0 Results and Discussion

Response rate and respondent profile

Of the 126 questionnaires distributed, 120 were completed and returned, giving a response rate of 95.2% (Table 1). This is adequate for reliable statistical analysis. Respondents were drawn from the County Executive and the County Assembly and represented a broad range of administrative, financial, planning, human resource, and records management functions. Most respondents had several years of professional experience in county government operations.

Table 1

Questionnaire Response Rate

Response category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Returned questionnaires	120	95.2
Non-returned questionnaires	6	4.8
Total	126	100.0

Note. Source: Field data.

Records classification practices

Respondents assessed the status of records classification systems in their departments. As shown in Table 2, 56 respondents (46.7%)

indicated that standardized classification systems were consistently applied, 42 (35.0%) reported that systems existed but were applied inconsistently, and 22 (18.3%) reported that their departments had no standardized system.

Table 2

Status of Records Classification Systems (n = 120)

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Standardized system consistently applied	56	46.7
System exists but is applied inconsistently	42	35.0
No standardized system	22	18.3
Total	120	100.0

Note. Source: Field data.

Classification systems therefore exist in most departments (98 respondents; 81.7%), but only 46.7% of respondents reported that they were consistently implemented, suggesting considerable variation in practice across departments. Inconsistent application of classification procedures can hinder efficient retrieval of information, weaken records control, and reduce the effectiveness of records management systems. These findings are consistent with Franks (2025) and Shepherd and Yeo (2003), who emphasize that standardized

classification schemes are fundamental to the organization, retrieval, and long-term preservation of records.

Adequacy of records storage facilities

The adequacy of records storage facilities was also assessed. As Table 3 shows, 70 respondents (58.3%) rated the available facilities as inadequate or very inadequate, 32 (26.7%) rated them as adequate or very adequate, and 18 (15.0%) were neutral.

Table 3

Adequacy of Records Storage Facilities (n = 120)

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Very adequate	8	6.7
Adequate	24	20.0
Neutral	18	15.0
Inadequate	48	40.0
Very inadequate	22	18.3
Total	120	100.0

Note. Source: Field data.

The qualitative findings corroborated these results. Interview participants reported overcrowded storage rooms, inadequate shelving, poor environmental conditions, and limited security measures as major challenges to records preservation. Such conditions expose records to deterioration, loss, and unauthorized

access, thereby compromising institutional memory, accountability, and operational efficiency. These findings are consistent with previous studies that identify inadequate storage infrastructure as a persistent constraint on records management in public institutions (Franks, 2025).

Adoption of electronic records management systems

The study also examined the extent to which electronic records management systems had been adopted. As shown in Table 4, only 33

respondents (27.5%) reported that such a system had been implemented in their departments, whereas 87 (72.5%) reported continued reliance on manual or hybrid systems.

Table 4

Adoption of Electronic Records Management Systems (n = 120)

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Electronic records management system implemented	33	27.5
Manual or hybrid records management system	87	72.5
Total	120	100.0

Note. Source: Field data.

The limited adoption of electronic records management systems indicates that digital transformation in the county government remains at an early stage. Interview participants attributed the low level of implementation to inadequate financial resources, insufficient information technology infrastructure, limited technical expertise, and inadequate staff training. These findings agree with those of Ngulube and Tafor (2024), who reported that financial, technological, and institutional capacity constraints continue to impede the implementation of electronic records management systems in many public sector organizations across Africa.

Summary of findings

Although records classification systems exist in most departments, their implementation remains inconsistent. Inadequate storage facilities and the limited adoption of electronic records management systems further constrain records management in the County Government of Nakuru. These challenges reduce the efficiency of information retrieval, increase operational risk, and limit the capacity of records systems to support transparency, accountability, evidence-based decision-making, and public service delivery within devolved governance.

4.0 Conclusion

This study examined the current state of records management in the County Government of Nakuru and its implications for governance efficiency. Records classification systems exist in most departments, but their implementation is inconsistent. Inadequate storage facilities and

limited adoption of electronic records management systems continue to constrain effective practice: 58.3% of respondents rated storage facilities as inadequate or very inadequate, and 72.5% reported continued reliance on manual or hybrid systems, reflecting the slow pace of digital transformation.

The qualitative findings further identified inadequate infrastructure, limited financial resources, insufficient technical expertise, and weak implementation of records management policies as key barriers. These barriers restrict timely access to information, hinder evidence-based decision-making, and weaken accountability, transparency, and service delivery.

The study concludes that records management in the County Government of Nakuru is at a transitional stage. Important structures and practices are in place, but significant improvement is needed to achieve consistent implementation, strengthen records infrastructure, expand the adoption of electronic records management systems, and enhance staff capacity. Addressing these challenges will strengthen governance, improve administrative efficiency, and support more transparent, accountable, and citizen-responsive service delivery within Kenya's devolved system of government.

5.0 Recommendations

Based on the findings, the study recommends that the County Government of Nakuru: (i) strengthen the implementation of standardized records classification systems to promote

consistency in organization and improve retrieval across departments; (ii) invest in adequate records storage facilities and accelerate the implementation of electronic records management systems to reduce reliance on manual processes and enhance the accessibility, security, and preservation of public records; and (iii) strengthen institutional capacity through continuous professional development, recruitment of qualified records management personnel, and increased financial investment in records infrastructure and technologies.

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