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# **Exploration of education and training of records and archives management staff in the public sector organisations of Lusaka, Zambia**

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## **Abstract**

This study was based on the education and training of records and archives management staff in the public sector organisations of Lusaka, Zambia. The population of the study was drawn from four government institutions in Lusaka. The main purpose of the study was to assess the level of records management training for the records management staff in Lusaka, Zambia. Specifically, the study assessed the level of educational training in records management assessed the knowledge levels of records management of the participants and looked at the challenges encountered in the management of records and archives by public sector organisations. A survey approach was adopted for this study and employed a quantitative approach. Simple random sampling technique was used to select the 60 participants. Data were gathered using closed-ended questionnaires and analysed statistically using Statistical Package for Social Science 23.0 (SPSS).The following findings came out of the study:65% of the participants had not attended formal training in records and archive management; 55% of the participants were not very conversant in the management of records and archives; and, finally, the study revealed that 66% of the participants encountered challenges, which included a lack of support from management, a lack of knowledge on how to appraise records and how to design the records retention and disposition schedule. However,34% of the respondents did not encounter any challenges. The study concluded by recommending what should be done to mitigate the identified challenges, such as management should facilitate further training for the members of staff managing records and archives, create more storage space for records and ensure that policies on records and archives management are updated regularly.

**Keywords:** education, training, records, management, public sector, Lusaka, Zambia

## **Introduction**

Saffady (2021) states that record management is about the systematic analysis and control of recorded information, which includes any information created, received, maintained or used by an

organisation under its mission, operatives and activities. Furthermore, a Dootson (2021) comments that records management in the public sector is integral to delivering public good.

The recordkeeping profession is continually evolving, necessitating the need for staff to have relevant abilities and competencies to manage records and archives effectively. Unegbuand Adenike (2013) opine that professional training should be considered an ongoing phenomenon for all staff involved in the management of records from creation to final disposition, that is, either destruction or permanent preservation. While records and archives management require that records staff be imparted with some level of skills, recordkeeping professionals need to constantly upgrade their skills to perform their duties efficiently and effectively. However, Chaterera (2016) states that the staff mandated with the management of records and archives are not well equipped with the necessary skills and competencies to ensure that records and archives are managed in a professional manner. Furthermore, training within social services is recognised as a key means through which staff are provided with the necessary knowledge and skills to improve the organisation's performance and achieve its objectives. Therefore, the quality of any records and archive management programme is directly related to the quality of staff responsible for the records management programmes. Notably, a study by International Records Management Trust (IRMT) (2008) in Kenya's judiciary system revealed that one of the constraints discovered was the inadequacy of staff training in records management to handle the workload, develop policies and procedures and appraise records to address the backlog.

According to Weisinger (2011), effective records management, either manual or automated, must have a system that is able to locate and retrieve records in a reliable manner and in real time in order to meet the needs of users. If users are not able to locate a record, that record is as good as lost. Furthermore, Weisinger (2011) argues that if an organisation strives to have an efficient and effective system that can handle both manual and digital records, there is need to enhance good records practices such as having a good records management policy. Proper legislation put in place will influence the retention of records. Effective records management practices in organisations should have guidelines and procedures on the creation and capturing of records that are needed to meet operational, fiscal and legal requirements. Norris (2002) revealed that easy access and easy retrieval of records were critical for the effective management of records keeping as a driver for public organisational productivity.

Public sector organisations in Africa face various challenges in the management of records such as a lack of professional skills and poor infrastructure (Ngoepe & Makhubela 2015). Archival institutions in Africa do not have the necessary legal and technical infrastructure to house records. Additionally, there were not so many institutions offering records and archive management training. Furthermore, the challenges identified in a study by Asogwa (2012) revealed that

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most public organisations did not have manuals, filling guidelines and, above all, no appreciation by management and staff of the need for a well-controlled records keeping system.

According to Chaterera (2016) staff in various public sector organisations lack the requisite skills in the management of records and archives, record keeping, why they need to exist, why they need to be managed and their real responsibility over time.

Professional education and training in the management of records is an increasingly strategic issue in the effective management of records and archives. With this context, the article explores the education and training of records and archives management staff in the selected public sector organisations of Lusaka, Zambia.

### **Statement of the problem**

Efficiency and effectiveness are synonymous with the right education and training. Records are vital resources that are necessary for the effectiveness of the public sector organisations in the country. Education and training play a significance role in the efficiency and effectiveness of the management of public sector organisations. A key factor is the provision of the appropriate level of details and the appropriate level of courses, which commensurate with roles and responsibilities so that staff managing the records and archives can discharge their duties effectively and efficiently (World Bank 2009) Furthermore, the World Bank (2009) adds that most records staff are employed without having professional competency in records management. To that effect, there is a dearth of information on the education and training of staff managing records in Zambia. Therefore, it is appropriate to do an exploratory study on the education and training of records and archives management staff in the public sector organisations of Lusaka, Zambia, to establish the facts.

### **The purpose of the study**

The purpose of the study was to conduct research on education and training of records and archives management staff in the public sector organisations of Lusaka, Zambia, and to obtain an understanding of the level of education attainment of the staff managing records and archives.

### **Specific objectives**

1. To assess the levels of educational training in records management in the public sector organisations
2. To ascertain the knowledge levels of records management staff in the public sector organisations
3. To find out about the challenges encountered in the management of records in the public sector organisations

### **Research questions**

1. What are the levels of educational training in records management in the public sector organisations?
2. What are the knowledge levels of records management of staff in the public sector organisations?
3. What are the challenges encountered in the management of records in the public sector organisations?

### **Significance of the study**

This study is important for public sector policy makers, records professional and researchers because it provides useful information to policy makers for the formulation of measures that will bring about effective and effective records management staff and mitigate the challenges that can inhibit effective and efficient management of records and archives. Furthermore, the study will help sensitise recordkeeping staff about the importance of continuous professional training in records and archive management. Lastly, the study will contribute to the existing body of knowledge on skills and competencies for records and archives management professionals.

### **Methodology**

The study adopted a survey research design and employed a quantitative approach. The population of the study was the public service organisations in the Lusaka town in Zambia. Sixteen selected public sector organisations were involved in the study. The simple random sampling technique was used to select the 60 participants from a population of 189. Ethical issues were observed and ethical clearance was obtained before data collection. Data were collected using closed-ended, structured questionnaires. Data were analysed statistically using SPSS version 23.0.

## Findings and discussions

**Table 1: Demographic characteristics of respondents**

| Demographic characteristic |                      | Frequency | Percentage |
|----------------------------|----------------------|-----------|------------|
| <b>Age</b>                 | Below 30 years       | 18        | 30         |
|                            | 30 to 40 years       | 20        | 33         |
|                            | 41 to 45 years       | 16        | 27         |
|                            | Above 45 years       | 6         | 10         |
| <b>Gender</b>              | Male                 | 27        | 45         |
|                            | Female               | 33        | 55         |
| <b>Education level</b>     | Grade 12 certificate | 21        | 35         |
|                            | College certificate  | 11        | 18         |
|                            | Diploma              | 16        | 27         |
|                            | Undergraduate degree | 12        | 20         |
|                            | Master's degree      | 0         | 0          |
|                            | PhD degree           | 0         | 0          |
| <b>Work experience</b>     | Less than 5 years    | 11        | 18         |
|                            | 5 to 10 years        | 27        | 45         |
|                            | 11 to 15 years       | 15        | 25         |
|                            | Above 15 years       | 3         | 5          |

With regard to age of respondents, the study found that 33% of the respondents were 30 to 40 years of age, 30% were below 30 years, 27% were between 40 and 45 years and 10% were above 45 years. It can be concluded that most of the respondents were between 30 to 40 years old.

On education levels of the respondents, the study found that 35% had only a grade 12 certificate as the highest education attainment, 18% had a college certificates, 27% had diplomas and 20% had undergraduate degrees. Furthermore, the study revealed that none of the respondents had a master's or PhD degree at the time of study. It can then be deduced that there were more grade 12 certificate holders as the highest education that participated in this study. This could be attributed to a lack of opportunity or sponsorship to pursue further studies.

The study results further revealed that among those that participated in the study, 18% had worked for fewer than five years, followed by 45% who had work experience of between five and 10years. Twenty-five percent of the respondents reported that they had work experience of 11 to 15 years, while five had worked for more than 15 years. It appeared those who had work experience of between five and 10 years were more available for the study than the more experienced ones. The more experienced employees tended to be too busy to take part in the study.

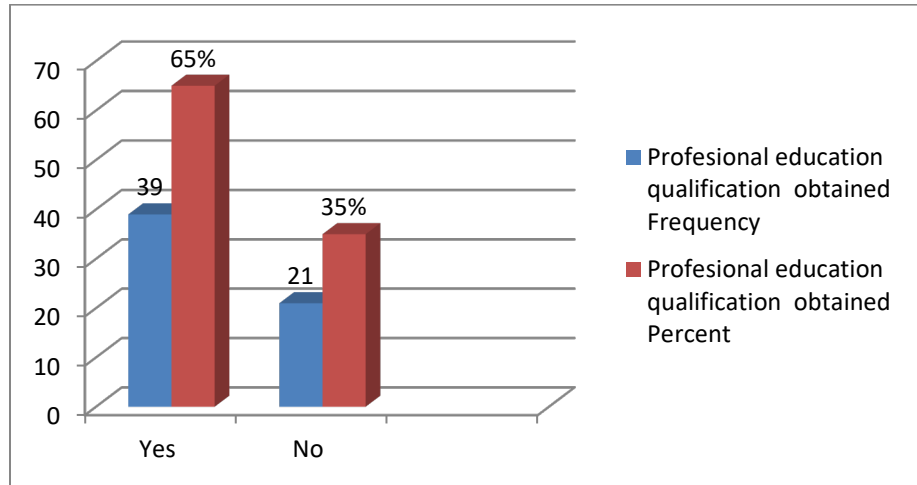


Figure 1: Professional education training of respondents

Figure 1 above shows the professional education training of respondents. The study revealed that 65% of the respondents had obtained a professional education qualification and 35% had not obtained a professional educational qualification. These results disagree with those from a study by Clark (2000) which revealed that the staff mandated with the management of records and archives were not well equipped with the necessary skills and competencies to ensure that records and archives are managed in a professional manner. Therefore, it is safe to say that many of the records management staff who participated in this study were those who had taken interests to obtain professional training and education in this field, as observed by the majority of the respondent's responses.

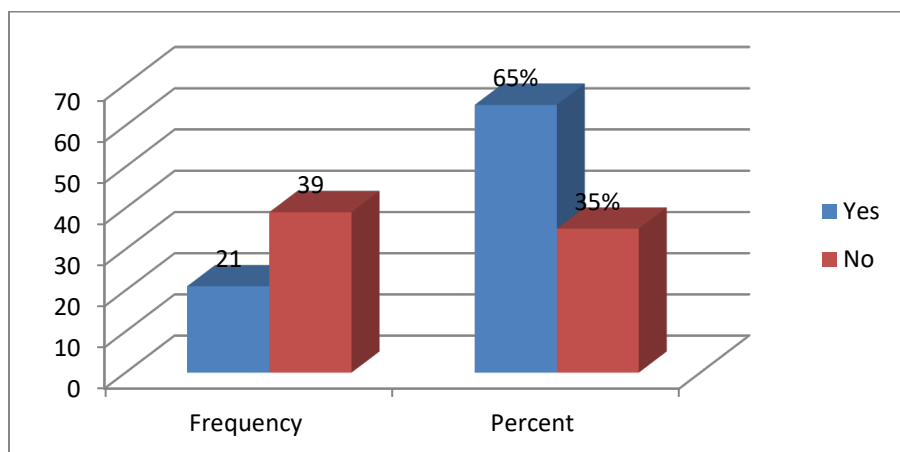


Figure 2: Training in archives and records management

The study revealed that 65% of the respondents had undergone training in archives and records management, while 35% had undergone training in other fields.

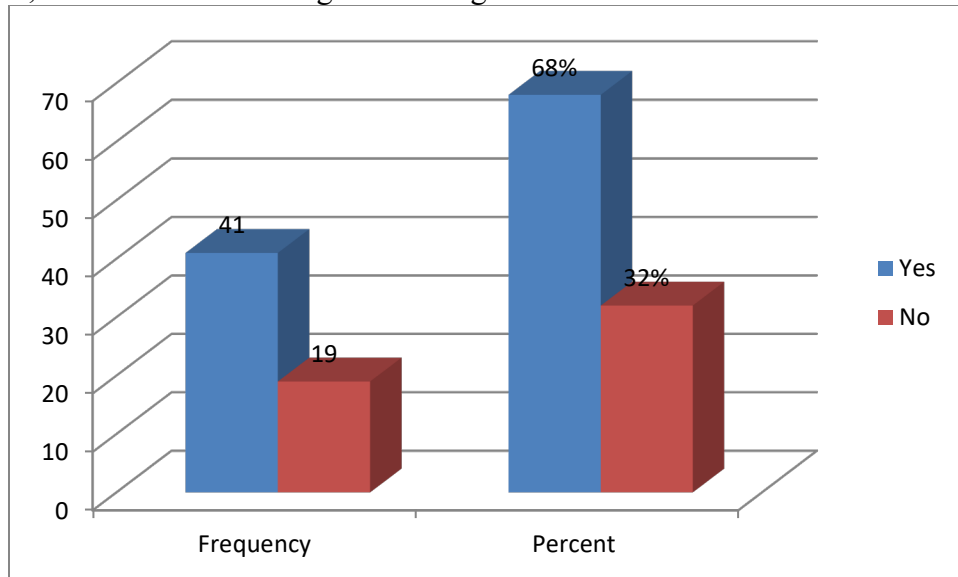


Figure 3: Knowledge of respondents about records practices

The study revealed that 68% of the respondents were of the view that they were knowledgeable about good records practices, while 32% of the respondents were not. These findings are contrary to those of the study conducted by the IRMT (1999) where it was discovered that staff in various public sector organisations lacked the requisite skills in the management of records and archives, record keeping, why they need to exist, why they need to be managed and their real responsibility over time.

Therefore, it can be deduced that records management staff are improving their skills in the management of records and, as such, they are now more knowledgeable than the past.



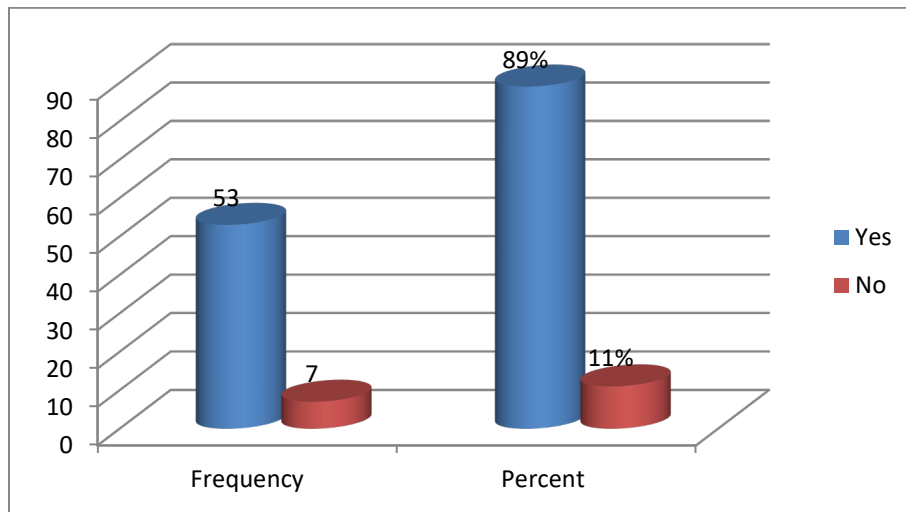


Figure 4: Availability of legislation and regulations that guided the management of records in their institutions

The study revealed that 89% of the respondents indicated that they had legislation and regulations that guided the management of records in their institutions and 11% of the respondents indicated that they did not.

### Challenges encountered in the management of records in public sector organisations

The following graph outlines the challenges experienced by the study respondents.

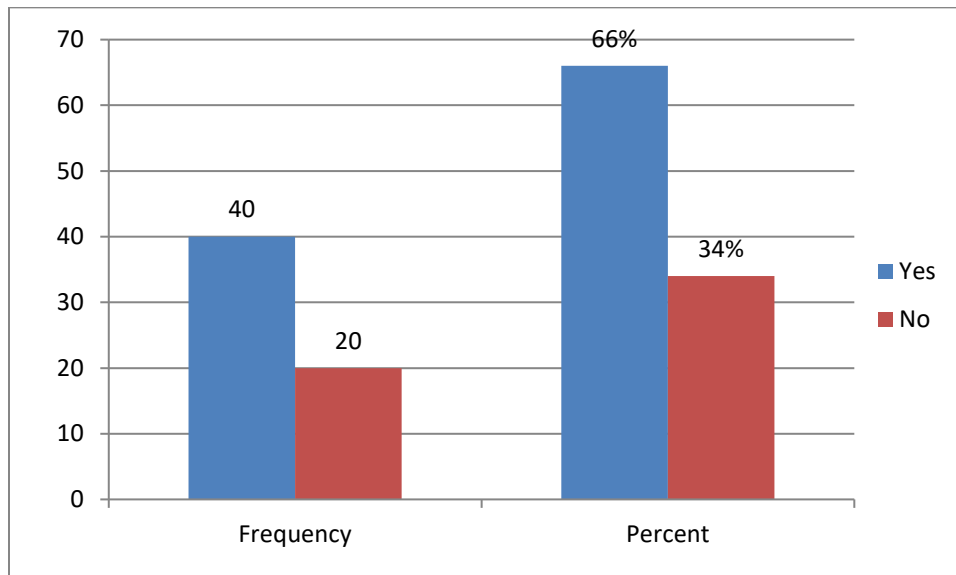


Figure 5: Whether the respondents encountered challenges

The findings from the study revealed that 66% of the respondents encountered challenges, and 34% did not encounter any challenges.

The following pie chart indicates the types of challenges that the respondents experienced.

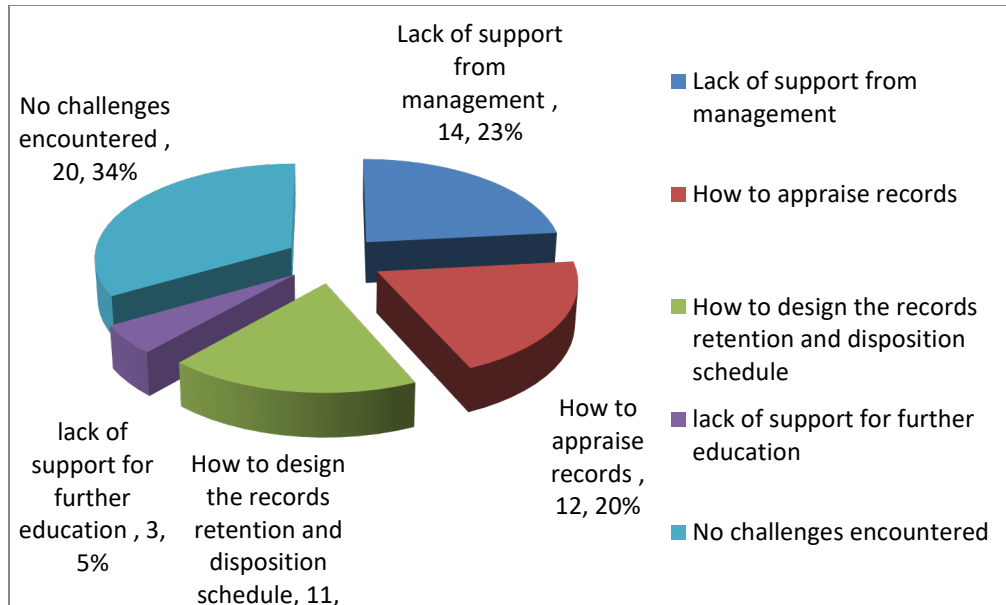


Figure 6: Kind of challenges encountered by respondents

With regard to the kind of challenges encountered by the respondents, 23% were of the view that they lacked support from their management, 20% did not know how to appraise records, 18% did not know how to design the records retention and disposition schedule and 5% felt that they lacked support for further education. These findings were similar to those of a study by Ngoepe and Makhubela (2015) which revealed that public sector organisations in Africa faced various challenges in the management of records such as a lack of professional skills and poor infrastructure. Furthermore, archival institutions in Africa do not have the necessary legal and technical infrastructure to house records.

Therefore, it can be deduced that despite records management staff have undergone professional training, they still need continuous development training to understand new trends taking place in this profession and to remind them of what they learnt in a practical way.

The pie chart that follows indicates mitigating factors applied to tackle these challenges.

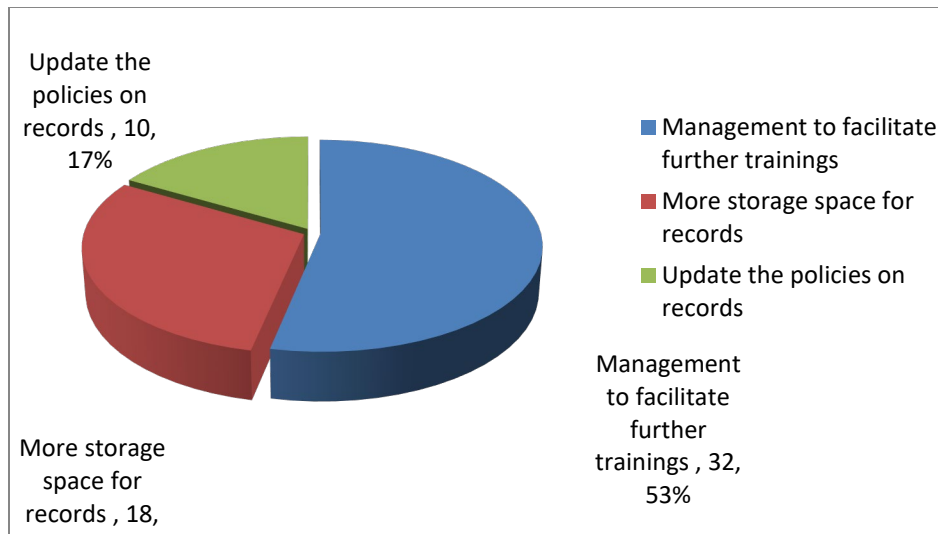


Figure 7: Mitigation of the challenges identified

When the respondents were asked to make recommendations on how the identified challenges could be mitigated, 53% were of the view that management should facilitate further training to the respondents, 30% were of the view that more storage space for records should be created and 17% indicated that policies on records should be updated.

The responses from the majority showed that there was need for continuous professional development training so that records and archives are managed in an effective and efficient way.

### Conclusions and recommendations

The present study represented the education and training of records staff in the public sector organisations. The study revealed that the majority of the respondents who took part in the study had obtained a professional education qualification. Furthermore, with regard to knowledge levels of records management staff in the public sector organisations, the study revealed that the majority had undergone training in archives and records management and that they understood what records and archives management was about. Lastly, the study revealed that the majority of the respondents encountered challenges in their management of records and archives and some of the challenges included things such as a lack support from their management, a lack of knowledge to appraise records, a lack of knowledge to design the records retention and disposition schedule.

Therefore, in line with the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Management should facilitate further training for staff members who manage records and archives.
2. Management should facilitate the creation of more storage space for records and archives and ensure that policies on records and archives management were updated regularly.

3. Management responsible should ensure that policies on records and archives management are updated regularly.

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