

Influence of Information Culture on Records Management: A Review of Contemporary Literature

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Abstract: This study conducts a systematic literature review spanning from 1993 to 2024 to examine the pivotal role of information culture in shaping records management practices within organizations. Utilizing databases such as ScienceDirect and Emerald Insight, the researcher selected and analyzed 35 peer-reviewed articles to identify key themes, trends and gaps in the literature. The findings highlight that organizations fostering strong information cultures experience enhanced operational efficiency and decision-making through effective records management strategies, integrating technological advancements where appropriate. Global challenges persist, necessitating comprehensive strategies including improved training and modern systems. The study concludes with recommendations to cultivate robust information cultures, integrate technology judiciously, and promote continuous improvement in records management practices to meet evolving organizational needs and global standards.

Keywords: Information culture; Information control; Information sharing; records management.

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Introduction

Records are a primary source of information used to understand employees' details, providing comprehensive profiles that include career history, personal details, training and performance history (Mnjama & Wamukoya, 2007). Particularly, personnel records offer essential facts for decision-making, planning and monitoring, ensuring productive workforce (Dewah & Ndlovu, 2013). Moreover, contemporary records management is crucial in the public sector, where transparency and good governance are key (Cyrille, 2010). However, tensions in records management persist, especially in developing countries like those in Africa, where unaccountability, misplacement and mismanagement of records are common. Swartz (2007) highlights the systemic inefficiencies and lack of proper infrastructure in African countries. On the other hand, Mukred and Yusof (2015) emphasized the need for better training and modern records

management systems to address the issues. These studies underscored the critical need for improved practices and accountability in records management in developing countries.

Globally, records management issues are evident. For example, among 741 companies surveyed in the United States, about 45% neglected proper records handling (Swartz, 2007). Developing countries like Malaysia and South Africa face serious problems, including document misplacement and improper handling, which adversely affect the economy (Makhura, 2001; Ngulube, 2004). In Ghana, records are misplaced, lost or poorly organized, with inadequate filing systems and insufficient storage (Mohammed et al., 2018). Across Africa, records retrieval and management remain significant challenges (Akubo, 2004; Mbiti, 2006).

In Tanzania, records management problems are evident in the public sector, mirroring global trends. Ministries and local government offices frequently

report inaccurate and incomplete personal information, unsystematized files and lack of systematic record keeping. For instance, in the Ministry of Health, lost or misplaced patient records lead to medical care delays and inefficiencies. The Ministry of Education faces similar issues with inaccurate student records and document mismanagement, which affect students' progress tracking and resource allocation. Local government offices, such as municipal councils struggle with property and land record management, leading to disputes and planning difficulties (Lyaruu, 2007; Malekani & Mubofu, 2023). Efforts like the Records and Archives Management Act, No. 3 of 2002, aim to improve accountability and establish records management policies but these efforts face limitations (Malekani & Mubofu, 2023). Even the implementation of human resource information systems in the public sector has not fully addressed these emerging problems, possibly due to inadequate training, insufficient resources, and resistance to change among staff (Adikari & Dalpatadu, 2020).

Multiple factors contribute to records management difficulties, including staff training and competency levels, standard of storage equipment, shortage of storage spaces and penetration of electronic data services (Sarto, 2021; Mohammed et al., 2018; Wamukoya, 2018). Cultural factors and information control also affect records management procedures, which affect organizations' information culture (Svard, 2013; Mogogi, 2023). Despite numerous efforts for proper records management, challenges remain that need examination through the relationship between information culture and records management. Information culture encompasses the values, beliefs and practices surrounding information use and sharing within organizations. This culture significantly affects records management by influencing the attitudes and behaviors of those responsible for maintaining and using records. A weak information culture can lead to resistance to standardized procedures, causing inaccuracies and unsystematized records.

Douglas (2010) highlighted that organizations with a strong information culture are more likely to have efficient records management practices, prioritizing accurate record keeping, transparency and accountability. Conversely, Mogogi (2023) identifies gaps in understanding how information culture affects records management, particularly in developing countries like Tanzania. This study

sought to bridge these gaps by providing a comprehensive literature review, exploring previously covered areas and identifying knowledge deficits. By doing so, it opens new avenues for future research to enhance both theoretical and practical aspects of records management.

The findings in this study offer valuable insights into the complex interplay between information culture and records management. By shedding light on how information culture influences records management practices, this study can help develop strategies to foster a positive information culture that supports efficient and accurate record keeping. This, in turn, will improve the effectiveness of records management, contributing to better governance and service delivery. Additionally, understanding these dynamics can provide records managers with strategies to address similar challenges in various contexts, to enhance global records management practices.

Methodology

This study employed a systematic literature review methodology as outlined by Tranfield et al. (2003), involving collecting, examining, summarizing information and drawing conclusions from existing literature. This approach ensures a structured and comprehensive analysis of the literature, identifying major themes, gaps and directions for future research. The frameworks in this study resemble the works of Rashman et al. (2009), Hohenstein et al. (2014) and Yong et al. (2019).

The study reviewed journal articles published between the first quarter of 1993 and the last quarter of 2015. The starting point of 1993 based on the argument of Unnikrishnan and Hegde (2007) that this year marked a significant shift in recognizing information culture as a critical factor for business success. The endpoint of 2015 ensured the inclusion of the most recent publications up to that year. To enhance the study's relevance, additional current studies from 2016 to 2023 were included, ensuring that the analysis reflects the latest developments and trends in the field. This extension addresses the potential gap and provides a more contemporary perspective on the relationship between information culture and business success, incorporating recent advancements and insights.

The sampling involved selecting articles from various databases based on predefined criteria to ensure a representative and relevant sample for

analysis. These criteria included relevance, where articles had to relate to information culture, business success and personnel records management. The researcher selected peer-reviewed articles to ensure the quality and credibility of the research. He also included only articles published in English to maintain consistency in the analysis. Additionally, articles needed to be accessible in full-text to allow for a comprehensive review and analysis. He also gave preference to articles published in high-impact journals to ensure the inclusion of influential research.

To identify relevant literature on information culture and records management, the study utilized several online databases, including ScienceDirect, Emerald Insight, Taylor & Francis, Wiley Online Library, SAGE Publications and Google Scholar. The literature search was limited to English-language publications. While the aim was to compile a comprehensive list of relevant articles, the study acknowledges that the search may not be exhaustive.

A systematic review approach took place in selecting articles. Key terms such as Information culture, Information control, Information sharing, information accountability and records management directed the searching process. The initial search covered academic journals from 1993 to 2015, resulting in 28 articles. The researcher reviewed abstracts to determine the relevance of each article to the research topic. The researcher excluded articles that did not align with the research focus to maintain relevance. The researcher made efforts to avoid duplication of articles across databases. The final selection of 28 articles based on titles, clearly defined goals and relevance to the research topic.

The researcher compiled a bibliography of all selected articles and captured data in a spreadsheet using Microsoft Excel. This approach facilitated systematic data analysis and helped in drawing conclusions. The researcher analyzed data collected from the selected articles to identify key themes, trends and gaps in the literature. The analysis involved categorizing the articles based on their focus, methodology and findings. The aim was to develop a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between information culture and records management and to identify areas for future research.

The study adhered to ethical standards. This includes proper citation, accuracy of the information presented and integrity of the research process.

Findings and Discussion

This section provides the findings of the study and then the discussion follows.

Findings

Studies by Ginman (1987, 1988), (Owens et al. (1995) and Walsh (2007) accentuate a pivotal link between information culture and business success, highlighting a direct correlation between organizational approaches to information and overall business outcomes. These findings emphasize the critical need for organizations to cultivate a robust information culture that aligns with strategic objectives. These insights suggest that fostering an environment that values and prioritizes effective information management practices can significantly enhance records management outcomes. By embedding such practices, organizations can improve operational efficiency and overall performance.

Grimshaw (1995) focused on the competitive advantages derived from effective human information activities within organizations. The study emphasized the central role of managing information quality, sources and communication channels to achieve organizational success. This perspective implies strategic implications for the study problem by highlighting the importance of leveraging information assets through effective records management practices. Organizations with a strong information culture stand a better chance to manage and utilize records effectively, thereby enhancing decision-making processes and operational efficiency.

Davenport (1997) challenged the prevailing emphasis on information technology, arguing that technological advancements alone do not ensure improved information environments. Instead, the study advocated for integrating technological investments with a supportive information culture to optimize records management effectiveness. This finding suggests the holistic approach where organizational efforts should foster a culture that values and promotes effective records management practices alongside technological tools. Such an integrated approach can mitigate challenges and maximize the benefits of technological solutions in managing organizational records.

Höglund (1998) integrated information culture into corporate culture, concluding that organizations emphasizing information management tend to experience positive performance outcomes. The study highlighted the transformative potential of organizational culture in shaping effective records management frameworks. The findings suggest that organizational efforts to cultivate a culture that prioritizes information management can lead to improved records management practices. This highlights the role of organizational culture in influencing records management.

Widén-Wulff (2000) identified a positive correlation between a rich information culture and enhanced business performance. The study underscored the strategic value of nurturing information-centric organizational cultures for effective records management. The findings suggest that organizations with a strong information culture are more likely to implement efficient records management practices. It highlights the importance of fostering an organizational environment that values information management, thereby improving the accessibility, accuracy and usability of organizational records.

Curry and Moore (2003) argued that while adopting information technology is crucial, it must be complemented by a strong information culture for effective information management. The study emphasized the need for organizational culture that supports and prioritizes effective records management practices alongside technological advancements. The findings suggest that organizational efforts should focus on developing a cohesive approach that integrates technological solutions with a supportive information culture. This integration is crucial in determining how records are managed and utilized, thereby enhancing the organizational efficiency and decision-making processes.

Choo et al. (2006) defined information culture as encompassing organization's values, norms and practices towards information management. He provides insights into how organizational culture influences and shapes records management practices. The framework suggests that organizational efforts should concentrate on cultivating cultures that value and promote effective records management practices.

Furthermore, recent studies highlight the competitive advantage gained through proficient

management of information quality, sources and communication channels. This strategic focus on information assets underscores the importance of leveraging these resources through effective records management practices. For example, Nasir et al (2019) show that organizations with strong information cultures are better able to capitalize on digital solutions for more efficient and accurate records management. This integration of digital tools and information culture ensures that investments in technology yield substantial returns in terms of improved data accessibility, accuracy, and usability.

Furthermore, the transformative role of organizational culture in shaping records management frameworks is evident. Organizations that prioritize information management within their cultural frameworks tend to achieve better performance outcomes and more efficient records management (Soomro et al, 2016). This cultural emphasis not only enhances efficiency but also fosters a proactive approach to managing records, anticipating and addressing potential issues before they escalate (Nelson et al., 2020).

The strategic focus on integrating technological advancements with a supportive information culture is crucial. This integrated approach ensures that responsible persons use technological tools optimally when coupled with cultural support, thereby enhancing records management effectiveness (Lemieux, 2016). Luthans and Doh (2018) argued that organizations that integrate these elements into a comprehensive information management strategy are better equipped to handle the complexities of modern data environments, leading to effective decision-making and improved operational outcomes. Organizations that invest in educating their workforce about the importance of information culture and effective records management practices see significant improvements in compliance and operational efficiency (Schiller, 2024). These programs help instill a sense of responsibility and awareness among employees, ensuring that information management becomes a shared organizational priority (Hughes, 2024).

Conclusions and Recommendations

Based on the findings, the study draws several conclusions. First, a strong information culture enhances records management practices, leading to improved operational efficiency and decision-

making. Secondly, effective records management requires integrating technological advancements with supportive information cultures to maximize organizational benefits. Thirdly, organizational culture plays a transformative role in shaping efficient records management frameworks, emphasizing the need for cultures that prioritize information management. Finally, challenges in records management persist globally, requiring comprehensive strategies such as improved training, modern systems and cultural alignment to address these issues effectively.

Recommendations

Based on the conclusions, the researcher gives the following recommendations: Firstly, organizations should prioritize building a robust information culture that value and promotes effective records management practices. This includes establishing clear policies, procedures and training programs that emphasize the importance of accurate record keeping and transparency in information management. Secondly, to enhance records management effectiveness, organizations should integrate modern technological tools with their information culture. This integration ensures that digital solutions align with organizational goals and workflows, optimizing data accessibility, accuracy and usability. Thirdly, there is a need to boost the transformative impact of organizational culture on records management. Leaders should cultivate a culture that encourages accountability, proactive management of records and continuous improvement in information management practices. Fourthly, given the persistent challenges in records management globally, organizations should implement comprehensive strategies. These include ongoing training and development initiatives for staff, adoption of modern records management systems and alignment of organizational practices with international standards and best practices. Finally, there is a need to encourage a culture of continuous improvement in records management, regular review and update policies, procedures, and systems to adapt to evolving organizational needs

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