



**RECORD RETENTION AND DISPOSITION: A CASE STUDY OF NUHU  
BAMALLI POLYTECHNIC KADUNA STATE NIGERIA**

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**Abstract**

*This study examined the Retention and Disposition Practices at the Registry of Nuhu Bamalli Polytechnic, Zaria, Kaduna State, Nigeria. Guided by three research questions, the study explored the procedures for records retention and disposal, as well as associated challenges. A quantitative design was adopted, targeting 69 Registry staff, with data analyzed using frequency and percentages. Findings revealed that records were retained and disposed of primarily through management directives, the duration records remained in the registry, and archiving. Challenges included poor storage facilities, insufficient resources, limited space, lack of an archival institution, absence of a comprehensive retention schedule, and inadequate staff training. The study concluded that, while records management exists, it does not meet international standards. To address these issues, the study recommends adopting a standardized retention and disposition schedule based on the legal, administrative, and historical value of records. Additionally, improving infrastructure, increasing budgetary support, recruiting trained records managers, and providing regular staff training will enhance efficiency and compliance. These findings highlight the importance of systematic records management to improve administrative efficiency, reduce storage costs, and ensure long-term preservation of vital records for decision-making and historical reference.*

**Keywords:** *Disposition, Records, Records Management, Registry, Retention*

## **Introduction**

Records management plays a pivotal role in ensuring the efficient functioning of organizations, particularly in educational institutions where accurate, reliable, and accessible records are indispensable for administrative efficiency, legal compliance, and evidence-based decision-making. According to Saffady (2021), proper records management not only enhances operational workflows but also ensures accountability and reduces institutional risks.

The Registry Department of Nuhu Bamalli Polytechnic, Zaria, Kaduna State, Nigeria, serves as the custodian of diverse institutional records, including student admissions, academic records, staff employment files, and financial documents. Effective records management in this department is critical for meeting the institution's administrative, legal, and operational obligations while maintaining the integrity and accessibility of its records.

Retention and disposition represent key pillars of records management, determining the duration records are kept and how they are appropriately disposed of, either through destruction or archival. Proper retention ensures that records remain available for as long as required, while systematic disposition prevents unnecessary accumulation of obsolete records, minimizing storage costs and mitigating legal risks (Lee-Gulley & Drudi, 2022). Nevertheless, institutions in developing countries, often grapple with challenges such as poor infrastructure, inadequate funding, and a shortage of skilled personnel, which negatively impact effective records management (Thomas, 2024). As noted by Muhumuza, Mutumba, and Nabbosa (2022), addressing these barriers is essential to streamline records retention and disposition processes and ensure compliance with regulatory and institutional policies.

At Polytechnic, records retention and disposition practices are influenced by factors such as management directives, regulatory requirements, and operational efficiency. However, inconsistencies in these practices, such as retaining records based on the length of time they remain in the registry or their physical condition, can hinder organizational efficiency.

Addressing these issues requires adopting standardized policies, comprehensive retention schedules, and proper archival practices to support institutional goals and ensure effective records lifecycle management (Thomas, 2024). This study, therefore, seeks to assess the current records retention and disposition practices at Nuhu Bamalli Polytechnic, Zaria, Kaduna State, identify the challenges facing the Registry Department, and propose strategies to enhance the overall efficiency and sustainability of records management systems.

### **Statement of the Research Problem**

In an ideal situation, records management within the Registry Department of an educational institution like Nuhu Bamalli Polytechnic, Zaria, Kaduna State, would be characterized by well-defined retention schedules and efficient disposition procedures. Records would be systematically organized, easily retrievable, and securely maintained throughout their lifecycle, ensuring that they are accessible when needed for administrative decision-making, legal compliance, and historical reference. The retention of records would align with institutional policies and regulatory requirements, while the disposition of records, whether through destruction or transfer to archives, would be carried out in a timely and secure manner to prevent unauthorized access and reduce storage cost

However, the current situation in the Registry Department of Nuhu Bamalli Polytechnic highlights significant issues related to records retention and disposition. Observations from one the researcher reveal that records are often inadequately managed, with many stacked on floors or placed haphazardly on top of cabinets which may be due to a lack of proper storage facilities and adherence to retention schedules. This disorganized handling raises concerns about the retention of records beyond their useful life, improper disposal methods, and the inability to efficiently retrieve critical information when needed. These challenges not only compromise record security and preservation but also hinder administrative efficiency and compliance with institutional policies. Consequently, the researchers embarked on a study titled “Records Retention and Disposition: A Case Study of Nuhu Bamalli Polytechnic, Kaduna State, Nigeria,” to examine the root causes of these retention and disposition issues and propose practical strategies to enhance the overall management of records in the institution.

### **Research Questions**

1. What are the methods used for retaining records in Nuhu Bamalli Polytechnic, Zaria, Kaduna State?
2. What are the procedures for disposing of records in Nuhu Bamalli Polytechnic, Zaria, Kaduna State?
3. What are the records management challenges confronting the Registry of Nuhu Bamalli Polytechnic, Zaria, Kaduna State?

### **Literature Review**

#### **Records Retention Schedule**

The importance of records retention schedules cannot be overstated, as they play a pivotal role in the effective management of records within any organization. A well-implemented retention schedule ensures that records are kept for as long as they are needed to meet operational, legal, regulatory, and historical requirements, and disposed of in a timely manner to avoid unnecessary accumulation of outdated documents (Wamukoya & Mutula, 2005; Muhumuza et al., 2022). Proper retention practices not

only enhance administrative efficiency but also optimize storage use, improve accessibility, and minimize legal and financial risks (Adewumi, 2011; Saffady, 2021). According to Lee-Gulley and Drudi (2022), a structured retention schedule ensures records are maintained for specific durations based on their value, supporting compliance and operational needs. They further emphasize that "regular review and updating of the retention schedule are crucial to ensure alignment with changing organizational policies and legal mandates." As Thomas (2024) highlights, "the systematic application of retention schedules enhances accountability, ensures legal compliance, and prevents both premature disposal and prolonged retention of obsolete records."

Records retention schedules categorize records based on their lifecycle and value, which typically includes administrative, legal, financial, and historical significance. Administrative records that support daily operations are usually retained for 2 to 5 years, while financial records, such as tax documents or audit files, are often kept for 7 to 10 years depending on legal requirements (Barragan, 2022). Legal records, which include contracts or court-related documents, may be retained for 10 to 20 years or permanently depending on statutory obligations (Muhumuza et al., 2022; Thomas, 2024). Records with historical or archival value, such as policy documents, institutional reports, and notable correspondence, are often preserved permanently to maintain institutional memory and heritage (Kwakwa & Adjei, 2023). This underscores that archival records provide long-term historical, cultural, or legal value and require proper preservation to ensure their longevity.

However, the failure to implement or consistently apply records retention schedules results in numerous inefficiencies and risks. For example, Lee-Gulley and Drudi (2022) note that "relying on informal retention practices, such as basing retention solely on age or frequency of use, leads to unnecessary accumulation of obsolete records and overcrowded storage spaces." This approach not only hampers retrieval efficiency but also increases operational costs and legal liabilities (Saffady, 2021; Thomas, 2024). In many organizations, management directives that override established retention policies create inconsistencies, leading to premature destruction of critical records or prolonged retention of documents that no longer serve any purpose (Muhumuza et al., 2022). Similarly, neglecting the condition of physical records, such as retaining damaged or deteriorating files without assessment, compromises their integrity and accessibility (Barragan, 2022).

In developing countries, challenges such as inadequate infrastructure, lack of trained personnel, and limited funding further hinder the proper implementation of retention schedules (Wamukoya & Mutula, 2005; Barragan et al. 2019). Many institutions operate without comprehensive retention policies, leading to haphazard records management practices. This often results in improper storage, inconsistent disposal procedures, and loss of valuable institutional data. According to Muhumuza et al. (2022),

"developing countries must prioritize capacity-building initiatives and allocate adequate resources to implement structured retention and disposal policies that meet global best practices." By addressing these gaps, organizations can mitigate risks, enhance decision-making, and ensure compliance with regulatory and operational demands.

To achieve an effective records management system, organizations must adopt structured retention schedules, conduct regular reviews, and ensure compliance with evolving legal and operational requirements. As Thomas (2024) points out, "the success of records management depends on consistent adherence to retention schedules, continuous staff training, and investment in appropriate infrastructure." Institutions must balance the retention of essential records with timely and secure disposal of obsolete ones, thereby improving storage efficiency, reducing operational costs, and safeguarding institutional memory. Regular monitoring, combined with proper evaluation of record values, will ensure that organizations optimize their records management processes and comply with both internal policies and external regulations (Saffady, 2021).

### **Records Disposition Schedule**

A records disposition schedule is a critical tool in records management, outlining the process for systematically disposing of records that have fulfilled their retention period. According to Muhumuza, Mutumba, and Nabbosa (2022) a disposition schedule provides a structured approach to ensure that records are either destroyed, archived, or transferred in accordance with legal and regulatory requirements. This process is essential for maintaining the efficiency of records management systems by ensuring that only necessary records are retained, thereby reducing storage costs and mitigating the risks associated with retaining obsolete records.

The importance of a well-defined records disposition schedule cannot be overstated. Lee-Gulley and Drudi (2022) highlight that "an effective disposition schedule not only helps organizations comply with legal mandates but also supports the efficient use of storage space and resources." By clearly defining when and how records should be disposed of, organizations can avoid the pitfalls of retaining unnecessary records, which can lead to cluttered storage systems and increased risks of data breaches. Furthermore, a disposition schedule promotes accountability by ensuring that records are disposed of in a manner that is documented and consistent with organizational policies.

In applying these guidelines, organizations must consider the specific needs and operational context of their records management practices. For example, in the case of Masindi Municipal Council, the records retention and disposal schedule was tailored to address the unique challenges faced by the council, such as limited storage space and the need for quick retrieval of records (Muhumuza, Mutumba, & Nabbosa, 2022). This highlights the importance of customizing the disposition schedule to fit the organizational context, ensuring that it is both practical and effective.

A well-implemented records disposition schedule is vital for maintaining an efficient and compliant records management system. By following the guidelines outlined by

recent scholars, organizations can ensure that their records are managed in a way that maximizes efficiency, reduces risks, and supports overall organizational goals.

### **Research Methodology for the study**

The research methodology employed in this study was quantitative, utilizing a survey research design. The population of this study consisted of all the 69 Registry staff in Nuhu Bamali Polytechnic, Zaria, Kaduna State. The researcher used the 69 members of the population, because it was small. This is aligning with the submission of Barnard (2012) who said that if the population of the studies is less than 200, the entire population can be used. For the purpose of this study, the instrument used was questionnaire and was subjected to face and content validity, where it was given to experts in the area of Records Management who made necessary observations, corrections and amendments which strengthened the instrument. The researchers administered the questionnaire and also employed a research assistant from the Registry Department of Nuhu Bamalli Polytechnic. Two weeks were used to collect the necessary data for the study. Sixty-nine (69) copies of the questionnaire were distributed to the respondents and sixty-three 63 (91.3%) copies were returned duly completed and found valid for analysis. The collected data were analyzed using tables, frequencies, and percentages.

### **Findings and discussions**

#### **Procedures Through Which Records are Retained in the Registry of Nuhu Bamalli Polytechnic, Zaria**

The respondents were asked to indicate the procedures through which records are retained in the Registry of Nuhu Bamalli Polytechnic, Zaria. Their responses were analyzed and presented in Table 1

**Table 1 methods used for retaining records in Nuhu Bamalli Polytechnic, Zaria, Kaduna State**

<b>Methods used for Retaining Records</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage(%)</b>
Based on retention schedule	5	7.9
Based on length of the period the records stayed in the registry	22	34.9
Based on the nature of damage of the records	6	9.5
Based on Management directives	27	42.7
Based on frequency of use of the records	3	4.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Source: Field Survey, 2021**

The data from Table 1 reveals that records management in the Registry of Nuhu Bamalli Polytechnic, Zaria, is predominantly influenced by management directives. This implies that managerial decisions are given priority over formal record retention schedules, where management plays a crucial role in determining which records are retained. While

this approach may offer flexibility in addressing immediate organizational needs, it can also lead to inconsistencies and inefficiencies if not aligned with standardized retention schedules (Lee-Gulley & Drudi, 2022).

Furthermore, retaining records based solely on their length of time in the registry reflects a traditional and reactive approach to records management. This method often results in the unnecessary accumulation of obsolete records, which can overcrowd storage spaces, increase costs, and compromise retrieval efficiency (Saffady, 2021). Gunnlaugsdóttir (2023) highlights that failure to implement structured retention schedules not only impacts operational efficiency but also exposes organizations to legal and regulatory risks due to the retention of non-essential records.

To address these issues, it is critical to strike a balance between managerial discretion and adherence to formal retention schedules. Integrating clear policies and regular reviews of records management practices will help ensure consistency, improve compliance, and enhance overall organizational efficiency (Thomas, 2024).

The low emphasis on using formal retention schedules and assessing records based on their condition or frequency of use highlights areas for improvement. Incorporating a structured retention schedule and regularly evaluating records based on their usage and condition could enhance efficiency and compliance by ensuring records are retained only as long as necessary (Thomas, 2024; Muhumuza, Mutumba, & Nabbosa, 2022). Addressing these gaps would lead to more effective records management practices, reducing risks associated with outdated or damaged records and better aligning with legal and operational requirements.

### **Procedures for Disposing of Records in Nuhu Bamalli Polytechnic, Zaria, Kaduna State**

The respondents were asked to indicate the procedures through which records are disposed in the Registry of Nuhu Bamalli Polytechnic, Zaria. Their responses were analyzed and presented in Table 2:

**Table 2 Procedures through Which Records are disposed in Registry of Nuhu Bamali Polytechnic, Zaria**

<b>Records disposal</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Through archiving	43	68.3
Through crushing	9	14.3
Through shredding	4	6.3
Through burning	4	6.3
Through burying	3	4.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Source: Researcher's Field Survey, 2021**

Table 2 showed procedures through which records were retained in the Registry of Nuhu Bamali Polytechnic, Zaria. Records were disposed through archiving with highest response rate of 43(68.3%), followed by crushing with response rate of 9(14.3%), followed by shredding and burning with both response rate of 4(6.3%), and the least is burning with 3(4.8%).

The data from Table 2 shows that archiving is the most frequently used method for records disposal in the Registry of Nuhu Bamalli Polytechnic, Zaria. This preference for archiving suggests a strong focus on preserving records for long-term access and historical reference, reflecting a commitment to maintaining valuable information for future needs (Lee-Gulley & Drudi, 2022). However, relying heavily on archiving could lead to challenges related to managing and organizing a large volume of records, potentially causing issues with storage and retrieval efficiency.

On the other hand, methods such as crushing, shredding, and burning are used less frequently. Crushing and shredding are more decisive methods for destroying records, typically employed to ensure the complete and secure disposal of sensitive information (Saffady, 2021). The limited use of burning, in particular, might reflect concerns about environmental impact and legal restrictions. This cautious approach to destruction highlights a potential area for improvement in balancing the need for effective records management with the necessity of secure disposal practices (Thomas, 2024). Implementing a more strategic approach that incorporates both preservation and secure destruction could enhance overall records management efficiency and compliance.

### **Challenges associated with Records Management in the Registry of Nuhu Bamali Polytechnic, Zaria.**

The respondents were asked to indicate the challenges associated with records management in the Registry of Nuhu Bamalli Polytechnic, Zaria. A list of challenges was provided for them. Table 4.8 summarizes the relevant data obtained. Detailed of the challenges encountered at Nuhu Bamalli Polytechnic Registry is provided on Table 4.3



**Table 4.3 Challenges associated with Records Management in the Registry**

<b>Record management challenges</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentages %</b>
Poor housing and equipment, insufficient space for records management	50	79.4
Lack of proper security for records affects the records management practices	30	47.6
Lack of professionally trained records managers contribute to problems of records management	31	49.2
Inadequate resources to facilitate proper records management practices is a problem	60	95.2
Absence of an archival institution	58	92.1
Lack of comprehensive retention and disposition schedule	60	95.2
Nonchalant attitude of organization to records management training	38	60.3

**Source: Researcher's Field Survey, 2021**

Table 4.3 highlights the key challenges associated with records management in the Registry of Nuhu Bamalli Polytechnic, Zaria. These challenges include poor housing and equipment, insufficient space for records management, inadequate resources, the absence of an archival institution, a lack of a comprehensive retention and disposition schedule, nonchalant attitudes towards records management training, a lack of professionally trained records managers, and inadequate security measures for records. The findings indicate that inadequate resources and the absence of a retention and disposition schedule are among the most significant issues affecting records management in the institution.

These findings align with previous studies, such as Otuama (2010), who identified similar issues, including the absence of an archival institution, inadequate funding, poor housing and equipment, and a lack of professionally trained personnel. Similarly, recent literature emphasizes the critical need for adequate resources and structured policies to address challenges in records management (Thomas, 2024; Lee-Gulley & Drudi, 2022). The implications of these challenges are significant, as they hinder the effective management of records and affect administrative efficiency within the institution. Without addressing these issues, the institution may face delays in decision-making processes, loss of vital information, and compromised organizational effectiveness (Saffady, 2021).

### **Summary of the findings**

1. The methods through which records are retained in the Registry of Nuhu Bamali Polytechnic, Zaria are the use of management directive and the length of period the records stayed in the Registry.
2. Archiving is the procedures through which records are disposed in the Registry of Nuhu Bamali Polytechnic, Zaria.

3. Poor housing and equipment, insufficient space, inadequate resources, absence of an archival institution, lack of comprehensive retention and disposition schedule and nonchalant attitude of organization to records management training are the challenges associated with records management in Nuhu Bamali Polytechnic, Zaria

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, this study was prompted by the observed inefficiencies and disorganized state of records management within the Registry of Nuhu Bamalli Polytechnic, Zaria, where records were often improperly stored and poorly managed. The findings revealed that records are retained primarily based on management directives, the length of time they remain in the registry, and the physical condition of the records, rather than adhering to a structured retention schedule, while disposal is predominantly achieved through archiving, with limited use of methods such as shredding and burning. However, challenges such as inadequate resources, poor storage facilities and equipment, insufficient space, the absence of a formal archival institution, lack of a comprehensive retention and disposition schedule, nonchalant attitudes toward staff training, and inadequate security measures significantly hinder effective records management. These challenges adversely affect administrative efficiency, organizational effectiveness, and compliance with best practices. This study contributes to knowledge by highlighting the critical need for standardized retention and disposal schedules, improved infrastructure, adequate staff training, and robust security measures to enhance records management practices, ultimately improving efficiency, ensuring compliance with legal and regulatory requirements, and optimizing records retrieval and storage processes within the institution.

### **Recommendations**

1. The institution should implement a comprehensive and standardized retention schedule aligned with international best practices to ensure systematic and efficient records retention. This schedule should consider factors such as the record's legal, administrative, and historical value, thereby improving accessibility and long-term preservation.
2. The Registry should adopt a clear and consistent records disposal policy that includes secure methods such as shredding for sensitive documents and archiving for valuable historical records. Staff training on disposal methods and regular reviews of records inventory should be conducted to ensure compliance and reduce unnecessary record accumulation.
3. The institution should address challenges by investing in appropriate infrastructure, such as proper housing and storage facilities, and increasing budgetary allocation for records management. Additionally, recruiting professionally trained records managers and providing regular training for existing staff will enhance skills and improve records management practices.

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