

*Full Length Research*

# **Records Management Practices by Churches in Ede South Local Government, Osun State, Nigeria**

**Adeniran Pauline Oghenekaro<sup>1</sup> and Oyovwevotu Luke<sup>2</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>Tekena Tamuno Library, Redeemer's University. Corresponding author's E-mail: Adeniranp@run.edu.ng

<sup>2</sup>The Nigeria Natural Medicine Development Agency. Email: lukevotu@gmail.com

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Effective records management plays a significant role in organizational efficiency and service delivery. On the other hand, poor record management negatively affects organizations' performances as records not properly managed take much time to sort and locate needed information from large volumes of records. This study examined records management practices by churches in Ede South Local Government, Osun State, Nigeria. The study adopted the descriptive survey design. The study population comprises the established churches in Ede South Local Government that have existed for 25 years and above. The total enumeration technique was used for data collection. Fifteen copies of a questionnaire were administered to the established churches; they were completed and returned for analysis. The study found that the churches kept historical, administrative, fiscal, and legal records but that a majority of the churches did not have developed procedures, guidelines, records management manuals, and policies for managing records. The results further revealed that lack of ICT facilities for backup, lack of knowledge about records management, lack of professionally trained records manager, negative attitude of records creators, and lack of storage facilities were some of the challenges faced by the churches in terms of records management. Based on the findings, the study recommends that church founders and administrators should ensure that standard procedures for best practice in records management are put in place for proper management of church records, provide ICT facilities as a backup for record keeping, regularly sensitize and organize training for their records managers, provide records storage facilities for proper management of records, and put in place standards to identify best practices for better management of records.

**Keywords:** Records, Church Records, Records Management, Ede South, Osun State

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The concept of the church can be traced back to ancient times, when religious gatherings took place in various forms. The establishment of the Christian church dates back to the time of Jesus Christ, who laid the foundation for the faith and community that would eventually flourish. The church's primary purpose is to provide a space for believers to come together, worship, and deepen their relationship with God. The church, throughout history, has played a central role in the lives of millions worldwide. Beyond being a place of worship, it has served as a symbol of faith, a hub for community, and a sanctuary for spiritual growth.

Records management is critical to maintaining order, accountability, and historical continuity within the church. By implementing robust record-keeping practices, churches can ensure the preservation and accessibility of vital

information, promoting accountability, efficiency, and overall organizational success. A well-managed records system allows churches to focus on their primary mission of serving their congregations and communities, guided by a strong foundation of accurate and well-preserved records.

Records contain information created, produced, executed, or received in connection with the transactions and official activities of individuals or executed in the conduct of a business organization, including administration. Records include books, documents, electronic records, paper, photographs, videos, sound recordings, databases, and other data compilations used for multiple purposes or other material, regardless of physical form or characteristics. The International Organization for Standardization (ISO) (2019) defines records as "information created, received, and maintained as an asset by an organization or persons pursuing a legal obligation or business transaction." Records contain vital information seen as evidence of business transactions and are acceptable in court as legal documents that must be kept securely for decision-making when needed. Records have been applied as tools and instruments to understand organizations and serve as the basis for improvement, comparison with other organizations, and secure resources.

Records are a driving force for understanding the past, achieving success in the present, and forecasting the future. They are critical resources and exploitable assets for individuals, organizations, and society's decision-making. As crucial memories, records are intentionally managed for preservation and use. This paper examines and reports the approaches that established churches in Ede South Local Government Area of Osun State adopted to manage their records. The attempt is to benchmark the practices of the churches with the records management principles to confirm their compliance with standards.

### **Problem Statement**

Records are crucial resources that enable organizations to run effectively and efficiently. Any organization that successfully manages its records will preserve the correct information for present and future use. Proper records management could help churches to manage their information efficiently, fulfil their mandates, protect them from litigation, preserve their memories, and foster accountability and transparency. Poor records management hampers excellent planning and management of church resources. Many churches experience an increasing rate of records misplacement and loss, from which vital information for decision-making is usually acquired. This generates questions about how records are managed, what systems and policies are used to manage records by churches, which legislations and standards are applied in managing records, and who are responsible for the records management. These questions prompted this study on records management practices by the churches in Ede South Local Government Area of Osun State, Nigeria.

### **Objectives of the study**

This study investigates the records management practices by churches in Ede South Local Government Area of Osun State, Nigeria. Specific objectives are to:

1. ascertain the nature/type of records kept by the churches in Ede South Local Government Area of Osun State
2. establish the existing records management practices
3. examine whether records management practices conform to established legislation, policies, and guidelines.
4. examine whether records management practices conform to records management standards.
5. identify challenges churches face in their records management practices.
6. suggest how the use of best practices can improve records management practices.

### **Research Questions**

The following questions were raised for the study of the churches in Ede South Local Government Area of Osun State:

1. What is the nature/type of records kept?
2. What are the current practices of managing records?
3. What mechanisms, policies, rules, procedures, and legislation are in place for managing records?
4. Which records management standards are in place for managing records?
5. What challenges do churches face managing their records?

## Literature Review

Church records are documents made or acquired by the church during its activities. These records serve as a repository for official historical materials documenting the church's heritage. Church records include minutes of church meetings and church council minutes, membership records, financial records, Sunday School and church attendance records, committee files and reports, the files and papers of church staff members, photographs, slides, newsletters, programs, publications on histories, anniversaries and special occasions, Men and Women's Missionary Union records, building plans, legal documents, annual reports of the congregation, registers of baptism and marriage, registers of attendance and services, clipping files and scrapbooks. Some collections may include motion picture films, videotapes, and sound recordings. Church records are essential for present and future decision-making; hence, it becomes necessary that they are appropriately managed. Crucial church documents that cannot be retrieved become a problem that can affect the church's operations.

Church records are vital information recorded irrespective of format. They are to be protected in an emergency or disaster due to serious consequences to the church if the records are destroyed or lost. Vital Records refers to a record facility where items like legal documents of an organization, title deeds, significant contracts, property plans, minutes of specific meetings, and insurance policies are stored safely for future use. Church vital records are records that would be costly and time-consuming to re-create if destroyed or lost. Alegbeleye and Chilaka (2019) maintain that vital records are often irreplaceable and should be treated with utmost care. Adequate measures should be put in place to safeguard vital documents from every form of destruction or damage, be it fire, burglary, insect attack among others. Destruction of important records can mar the continual existence of an organization. Vital records can be used by the church (active) or in storage (inactive). Vital records, according to the UN Records and Information Management Guidance (n.d.), are those official records that, in the event of a disaster, are essential for the recovery of vital operations and the ongoing business of an office. It notes that vital records are a subset of an organization's records, without which it could not function effectively. Hence, vital records:

- contain information critical to the continuation of an office in an emergency
- are required to keep working under extraordinary circumstances
- have information essential to confirming an office's legal and financial status
- are critical to protecting rights and confirming obligations for an organization and its personnel
- are essential to recovering or protecting critical systems, equipment, facilities, or workspace
- are unique and irreplaceable or would be extremely expensive to reproduce
- would lead to severe negative consequences if unavailable

Effective management of church records is significant in efficient and effective service delivery. The church can benefit by controlling the records it creates and maintains as it revolves around such information. As reported by Odunlade et al. (2015), record management practices began during the Second World War to control the papers created by government agencies at that time. The attempt was to improve records-keeping procedures that were not properly done, making records retrieval difficult. Records management is the application of management techniques to the creation, utilization, maintenance, retention, preservation, and disposal of records undertaken to reduce costs and improve record-keeping efficiency (Sumners, n.d). Records management involves a systematic control of records throughout the life cycle of an organization to enhance the efficiency of organizational records towards achieving management's objectives and goals. According to the International Organization for Standardization (ISO), 15489-1 (2001), records management is defined as a field of management responsible for the efficient and systematic control of the creation, receipt, maintenance, use, and disposition of records, including processes for capturing and maintaining evidence of and information about business activities and transactions in the form of records. Records are managed to ensure ease of retrieval and use when needed.

Record management implements effective control systems and procedures for the flow of information from creation, use, and storage to the point at which records are appraised. Those with continuing values are moved to archives, while records that are not valuable to the organization are destroyed. Records management has been described as the application of systematic and scientific control to recorded information required in the operations of an organization's businesses (Allahmagani, 2015). The day-to-day operations of successful organizations depend entirely on their records. Bakare et al. (2016) affirm that many organizations will not survive without keeping, maintaining, and using their records. Records are vital resources that aid organizations in functioning. Touray (2021) notes that efficient records management is essential for protecting rights and entitlements, accountability, transparency, anti-corruption strategies, poverty reduction, and effective management of resources. PRISM International (2016) asserts that accidental and permanent property loss is avoided when proper record-keeping is maintained. The author PRISM International argues that properly managed records are easy to locate and use. Good records management saves time, effort, money, and space and ultimately helps fight corruption and promote sound financial management.

## Empirical Review

The findings of the study corroborate the findings of Kanzi (2010), whose study investigated the role of records management with specific reference to Amathole District Municipality. The study found that there was still avenue for improving ADM's records management practices, as the survey results presented more weaknesses in the records management system than strength. The study recommended that commitment and efforts should be exerted by all different role players.

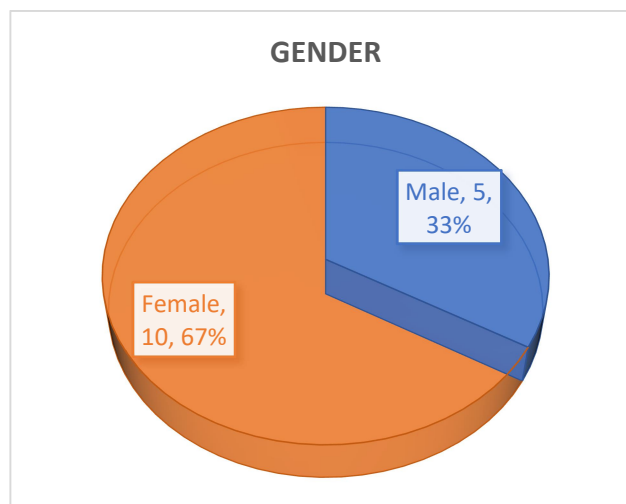
The findings of this study agree with the study of Mohammed, Tetteh and Azumah (2018) that examined the challenges associated with records management in Sunyani Technical University. The findings of the study reveal that records management in the institution is challenged by improper records management, inadequate proper security for records, inadequate professionally trained records managers, inadequate resources to facilitate proper records in the institution and others. The paper recommended the institution to consider the findings of the study and address the challenges.

Similarly, the findings of the study, support the study of Ambira, Kemoni and Ngulube (2019), on electronic records management in support of e-government in Kenya, and found that the general status of management of e-records in government ministries was inadequately positioned to support e-government. Hence, the paper recommended that the initiatives put in place to enhance existing practice in managing e-records should be improved to ensure adequate support for e-government.

## Methods and Procedure

The descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. According to Ranganathan and Aggarwal (2019), a descriptive study is one that is designed to describe the distribution of one or more variables without regard to any causal or another hypothesis. The total population of the study comprises the churches in Ede South Local Government, Osun State, that have existed for twenty-five years and above. The population is limited to only the churches that have existed for 25 and above, following the National Archives Act (2004), which states that organizations can operate archives on the attainment of twenty-five years. The total enumeration sampling technique was employed for the study due to the size of the population. The study used a self-developed questionnaire for data gathering to assess the records management practices in the churches. Descriptive statistics of frequency counts and percentages were used for analyzing the data collected.

## RESULTS

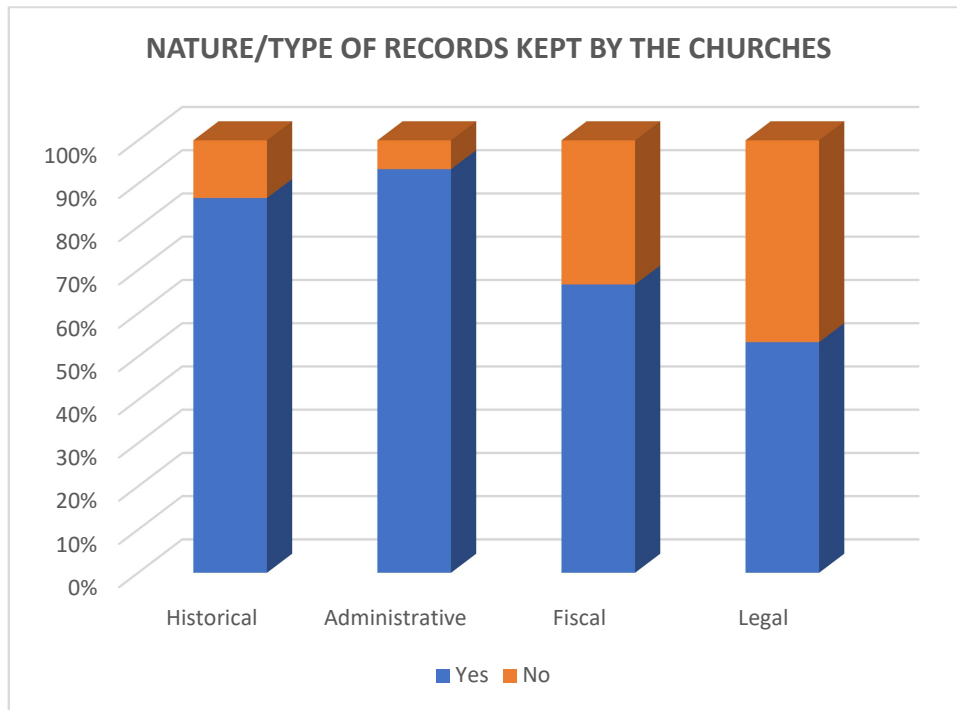


**Figure 1:** Demographic Distribution of the Records Managers by Gender

Figure 2 presents the demographic information of the respondents. Out of the fifteen records managers, (10.67%) were female and (33%) were male. Table 1 also shows the fifteen churches in Ede South Local Government Area that have existed for twenty-five years and above.

**Table 1:** Churches that have existed for 25 Years and Above in Ede South Local Government, Osun State

Deeper Life Church <i>Ministries</i>
Christ Apostolic Miracle Centre
Cherubim and Seraphin Church
Christ Redemption and Salvation Ministry
Celestial Church of Christ
The Redeemed Christian Church of God
Christ Apostolic Church
African Church
Baptist Church
Church of God's Love World Wide
Life Bridge Christian Church
Christ Great Grace Evangelical Ministry
His Coming Evangelical Church International
Winners Church
Catholic Church

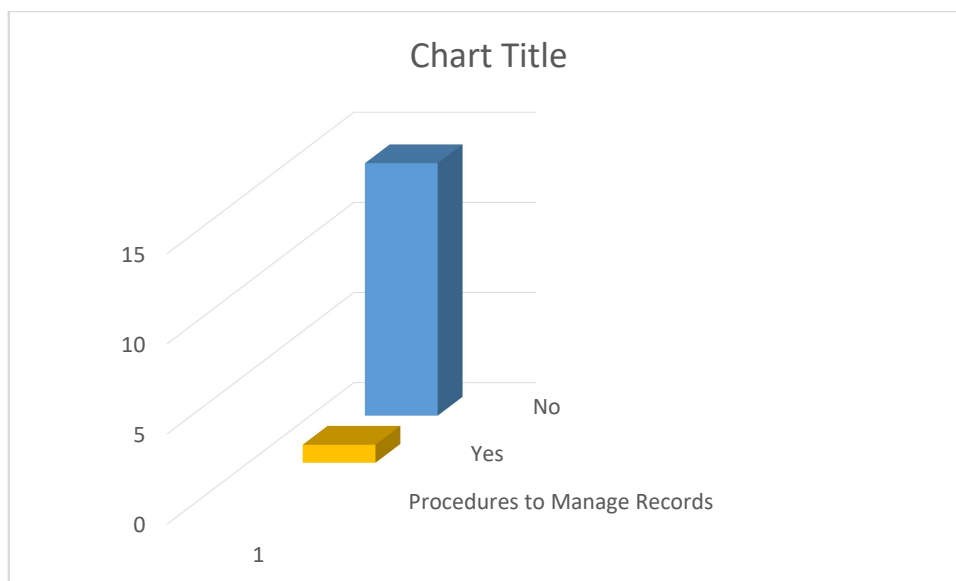


**Figure 2:** Nature/Type of Records Kept

Figure 2 presents the nature/type of records kept by the churches studied. Out of the 15 (100%) churches, Ninety-three percent kept administrative records, eight-eight percent kept historical records, sixty-seven percent kept fiscal records while fifty-three percent kept legal records.

### Procedures to Manage Records

Do you have developed procedures placed to manage records?

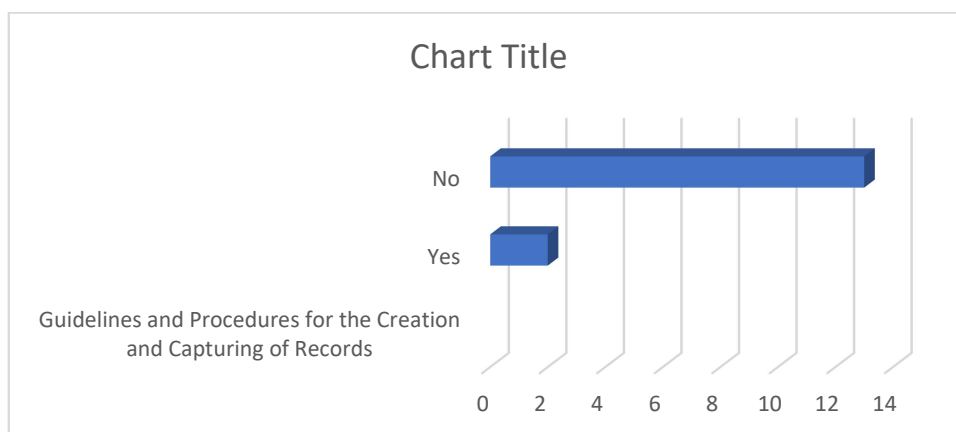


**Figure 3:** Procedures to Manage Records

Figure 3 represents information on the procedures put in place to manage records. One hundred percent of the churches indicated they did not have standard procedures for records management.

### Guidelines and Procedures for the Creation and Capturing of Records

Do you have guidelines and procedures for creating and capturing the records necessary to meet your operational, legal, fiscal, and other requirements?

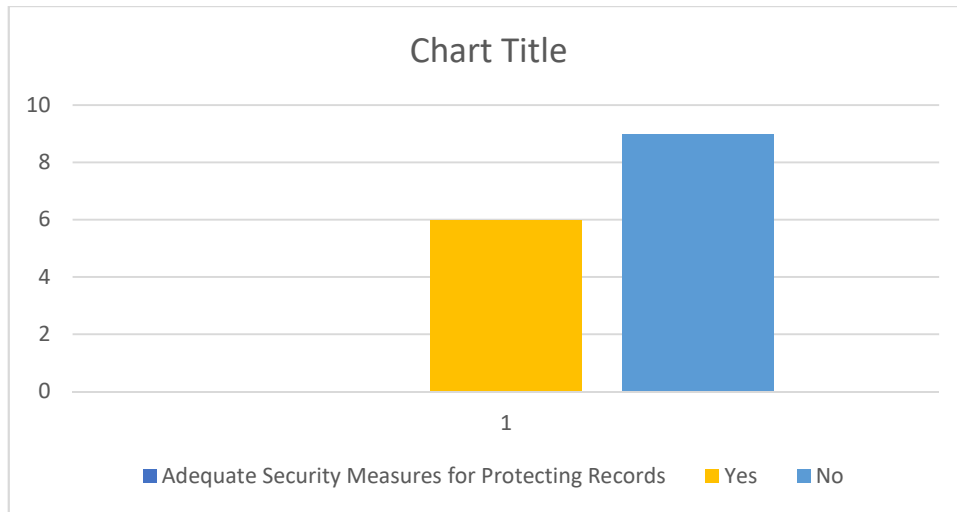


**Figure 4:** Guidelines and Procedures for the Creation and Capturing of Records

Figure 4 provides information on guidelines and procedures for creating and capturing records. Eighty percent of the churches agreed they did not have guidelines and procedures for creating and capturing records. Twenty percent indicated they had guidelines and procedures for creating and capturing records. The analysis shows that most churches do not have the guidelines and procedures for creating and capturing records.

**Adequate Security Measures for Records Management**

**Do you have adequate security measures for protecting records in place?**

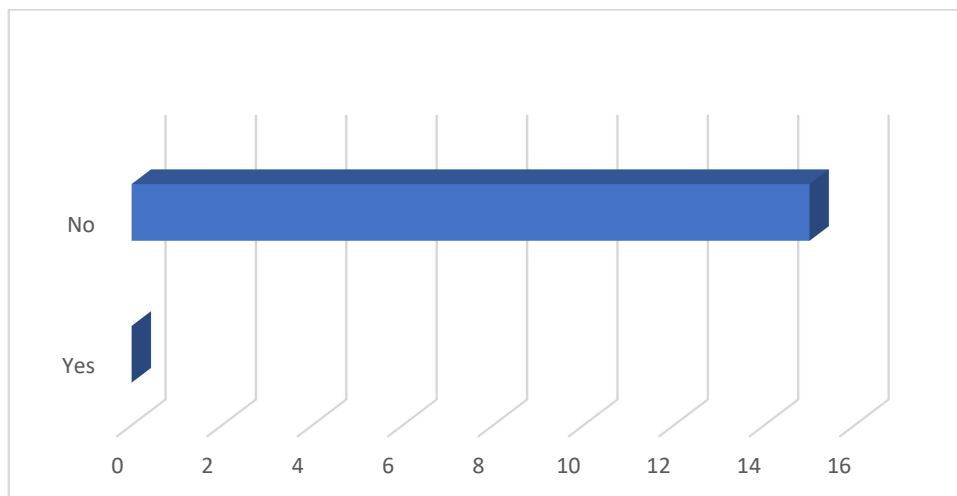


**Figure 5:** Adequate Security Measures for Protecting Records

Figure 5 presents information on security measures put in place by the churches to protect records from accidental loss or destruction. Thirty-eight percent agreed there were security measures in place to protect records, while sixty-three percent disagreed that security measures were put in place for protecting records. A high proportion of the churches did not have security measures put in place to protect records.

**Records Management Manual**

**Do you have the records management manual in place for guidance in managing records?**

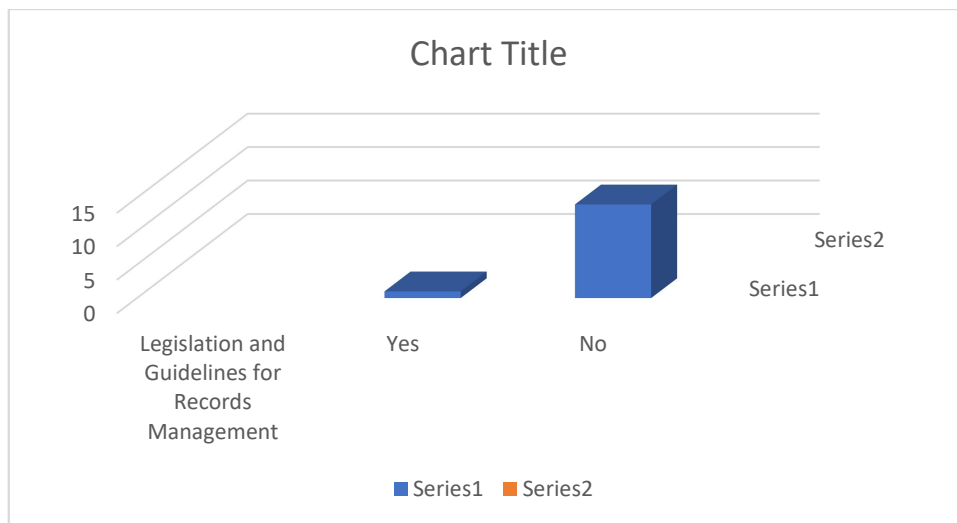


**Figure 6:** Records Management Manual in Place for the Guidance of Managing Records

Ninety percent of the churches agreed there were no manuals, while ten percent said they had manuals. (See Figure 6)

### Legislation and Guidelines for Records Management

Do you have legislation and guidelines for records management?

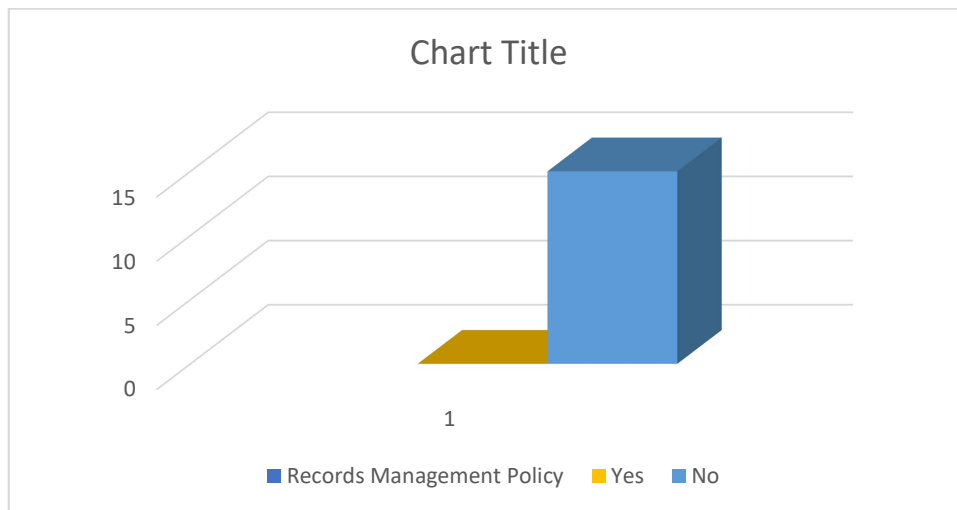


**Figure 7:** Legislation and Guidelines for Records Management

One hundred percent of the respondents agreed they did not have legislation for managing records.

### Records Management Policy

Do you have records management policy?



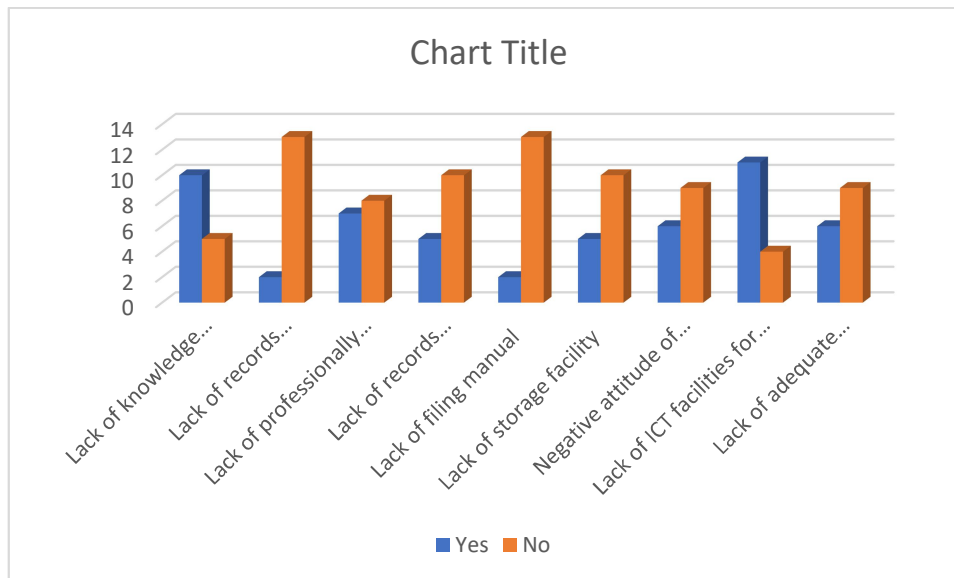
**Figure 8:** Records Management Policy

Figure 8 concerns whether the churches had a written records management policy. Out of the 15 churches, one hundred percent of the participants agreed they did not have a written records management policy. The results show that the churches did not meet the best standard in records management practice.



### Challenges Faced in Managing Church Records

What are the challenges you faced in managing church records?



**Figure 9:** Challenges Faced in Managing Church Records

Table 8 presents the challenges the churches in Ede South Local Government Area of Osun State are faced with in managing their records. Seven-three percent identified a lack of Information Communication Technology facilities for backup as the major challenge, followed by a lack of knowledge about records management (66.7%). Other challenges highlighted were the lack of professionally trained records managers, the negative attitude of records creators, and the lack of storage facilities.

## DISCUSSION

The study findings reveal that the churches did not comply with best practices in records management. The results show that many churches did not have developed procedures, guidelines, records management manuals, and records management policies. The results further revealed that lack of ICT facilities for backup, lack of knowledge about records management, lack of professionally trained records manager, negative attitude of records creators, and lack of storage facilities were some of the challenges faced by the churches in Ede South in managing their records. The study, therefore, makes the following recommendations based on its objectives and results.

The findings of the study corroborate the findings of Kanzi (2010), whose study investigated the role of records management with specific reference to Amathole District Municipality. The study found that there was still avenue for improving ADM's records management practices, as the survey results presented more weaknesses in the records management system than strength. The study recommended that commitment and efforts should be exerted by all different role players.

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## Conclusion and Recommendations

Church records or information contribute to everything the church does. Information includes facts, data, numbers, images, documents, sounds, or acts of individuals or organizations to be delivered to recipients to explain, inform and verify that such information will be used for any particular purpose. Records are essential resources that serve as evidence of administrative decisions in the church. The Berean Research Institute (2019) maintains that membership records are crucial to the church for "legal protection, administrative advantage, disciplinary matters and control, and bragging rights." Church records are significant as they may be a veritable resource for legal purposes to demonstrate the integrity of a church's activities. According to Nwaomah and Nwaomah (2021), churches and their agencies in most societies are subject to external accountability. They are responsible for their actions to their members and the general public. Hence, effective management of such records becomes increasingly important. Records management enhances the retrieval rate of documents when needed for administrative purposes, thus improving and facilitating the efficiency of the church.

Based on the findings of the study, the following are recommended. Church founders and administrators should:

1. Ensure that standard procedures for best practices in records management are implemented for proper management of church records.
2. Provide ICT facilities as a backup for record keeping.
3. Regularly sensitize and organize training for their records managers.
4. Emphasize to their records creators the importance of vital records to the church's existence.
5. Provide records storage facilities for proper records management.
6. Set standards to identify best practices for better records management.

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