

Full Length Research

Records Management Practices and Administrative Effectiveness of the Judiciary in Lagos State, Nigeria

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This study focused on records management practices and administrative effectiveness of the judiciary in Lagos State, Nigeria. This study adopted a survey research design. The target population for this study consists of the administrative staff of the Lagos State High Court which includes court clerks, lawyers, registrars, verbatim court reporters and judges. Simple random sampling technique was used to select 250 staff of the court. The instrument for data collection was a self-designed structured questionnaire. Data was analyzed using the SPSS software, frequency distribution and percentages. Findings revealed that records management practices ($\beta=0.538$, $t(194) = 8.897$, $p < 0.05$) had a positive and significant influence on the administrative effectiveness in Lagos state Judiciary. It shows that the extent of administrative effectiveness in the Lagos State Judiciary was high (overall mean score = 3.89). It also revealed that the extent of records management practices employed in Lagos state Judiciary was high (overall mean score = 4.17) on a 5-point scale. The paper concluded that good records management practices is a critical element in any organizational administration, productivity and effectiveness. It was recommended that, the court should set aside sufficient funding for maintaining effective records management practices in the court. Regular training on records management should be organized for the staff of the court to attain effective records management practices

Key words: Records management practices, administrative effectiveness, judiciary, Lagos State, Nigeria

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INTRODUCTION

Records play a vital role in the activities of mankind because; a complete record contains all vital information to the daily operation of a business, organization, government, association, institutions and even persons. Records management practices involves the creation, classifying, prioritizing, storing, securing, archiving, preserving, retrieving, tracking and wrecking unneeded files (Blake, 2014). Iwhiwhu (2005) described records management as a discipline of applying well-established techniques and procedures to the control of those sources of information, which arises internally within an

organization as a result of its own activities. It can be described 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.

Record-keeping is central in the efficient and effective management of any institutional performance. It is fundamental in the administration of organizations because documents, planning and implementation of appropriate services allow proper monitoring of work progress. Wamukoya (2005) observed that if records are

to meet the requirements for accountability and good governance, their management must cover the whole extent of their existence from creation to disposition. According to Millar (2012), records are created in the course of the functions and activities of organizations and the personal lives of individuals and are preserved and maintained to support business and accountability and for cultural use. They provide evidence of, and information about, the actions of their creators and the environment in which those actions occurred. They extend and corroborate human and corporate memory and play a critical role in maintaining awareness of how the present is shaped by the past. Records are kept by almost everyone, but their management (and especially their medium-term and long-term management) is a professional discipline with its own distinctive body of knowledge.

The Judiciaries produce records on variety of cases which require adequate storage, and retrieval. Some of these records are archives or statistics stored in either papers and/or digital forms. Thus, it is vital that judicial records and or/information is captured and preserved in a safe manner that cares for its integrity as properly as possible. Achieving this peak ought to be possible if the registry personnel is in line with the global technological trend; being computer literate and possess the skills and competencies needed to control records of judicial proceedings throughout its life cycle. It must be emphasised that good records management practices are fundamental to the efficient and effective operation of the legal system of any country and are more critical to the administration of law than any other function of the public sector. The dimension of group or team effectiveness deals with a common understanding of goals and objectives together with the ability of the groups to accomplishing them as a unit. The goals of an organization can only be accomplished when components of the organization are working in a coordinated fashion. The ability to manage resources, organize people, information, knowledge and set time to accomplish goals also related to administrative effectiveness (Amah, Daminabo-Weje, & Dosunmu, 2013).

A judiciary staff as an administrator must display quality administrative capabilities such as showing the way, managing change, exhibiting a clear picture of personality trait to can lead and the capability to foresee problems beforehand. Adeniyi (2014), reasoned that indicators of administrative effectiveness should involve openness, agreeableness and conscientiousness. Administrative effectiveness also involves adaptation, goal attainment, integration, and sustaining organizational values (Karsli & Sahin, 2015). Tanvee and Khan (2014) administrative effectiveness should take cognizance of the leadership traits of administrators. Therefore, a judicial staff as an administrator will need to possess the right skills and

ability to drive effective administration within the judicial system of any nation.

To be effective, administrators in the court must exhibit sufficient administrative skills such as coordination if effective administration must be triggered. He or she has the responsibility to manage all case files in the court and to assist in the court process geared towards administering justice. These activities may not be well carried out without some level of coordination and effective communication. Good communication has to do with getting the right message to the right person in the right medium at the right time. Effective communication allows for administrative staff to perform the job well. With the aid of effective communication, an organization is able to have good coordination among the members or unit in that organization. Therefore, the absence of effective communication has the tendency of creating problems in the smooth operation of the judiciary.

Effectiveness is the ability of an organization to carry out its functionalities without any hindrances. Administrative effectiveness is a concept that deals with work activities. It is referred to as the degree administrative goals are achieved. Effectiveness in an organization can be achieved when an organization work together to achieve a common purpose through its mission goals and objectives. Administrative effectiveness measures or predicts if an organization achieves its objectives and mission statements or not. There are different parameters to measure effectiveness in administrative. Administrative effectiveness is the positive response to administrative efforts and actions with the intention to accomplish stated goal (Ademilua 2012).

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

Judiciary is granted the right to provide legal services to the citizenry of a society. They are expected to provide unbiased administration and uphold the rule of law in a democratic system. However, in the light of literature, the judiciary have not been effective in the timely discharge of their responsibility as highlighted by Enaohwo and Eferaka (2009) who argued that, administrative effectiveness encompassed timeliness, teamwork, coordination and communication which has been lacking in the judicial sector. Observation from the researcher also shows that record retrieval has been very poor, a situation which might lead to slow administrative ineffectiveness in Lagos state judiciary sector. Over the years, the administrative effectiveness of the judiciary system in Nigeria blamed on poor records management practices and lack of conducive working environment as such, the administrative effectiveness of the Judiciary of Lagos state in particular is difficult to ascertain. Hence, there are cases of delay in response to applicants and

litigants, adjournment of cases for lack of sufficient documentary evidence, accumulation of legal processes, poor teamwork and poor collaboration among the administrative staff of the court.

This affects in its totality the effective administrative process in the Judiciary when it comes to the quick dispensation of justice. Too, the workload in many courts is such that the presiding judges and magistrates may not devote adequate time to the management of their records. The court clerks have little training in records management practices, and some do not attach importance to records management practices thereby substantiating evidences of poor records management practices in courts in Nigeria. The current study therefore seeks to investigate records management practices and work environment in relation to administrative effectiveness in Lagos State Judiciary.

The objectives of the study

The general objective of this study is to examine influence of the records management practices on administrative effectiveness of Lagos state Judiciary. The specific objectives are to:

1. assess the level of records management practices of the Lagos state Judiciary;
2. determine the extent of administrative effectiveness of the Lagos State Judiciary;
3. Ascertain the influence of records management practices on administrative effectiveness of the Lagos State Judiciary.

Research Questions

This study will be guided by the following research questions:

- 1.What is the level of records management practices employed in Lagos state Judiciary?
- 2.What is the extent of administrative effectiveness in the Lagos State Judiciary?
- 3.What is the influence of records management practices on administrative effectiveness of the Lagos State Judiciary?

Hypothesis

Ho: Records management practices will not significantly influence administrative effectiveness in Lagos state Judiciary.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a survey research design. The target population for this study consists of the administrative staff of the Lagos State High Court which includes court clerks, lawyers, registrars, verbatim court reporters and judges. Simple random sampling technique was used to select 250 staff of the court. The instrument for data collection was a self-designed structured questionnaire. The reliability test was established by means of Cronbach’s alpha test and a score of 0.7 and above was considered adequate for the study. Data analysis was done by means of percentage distribution, mean and standard deviation as well as regression analysis respectively.

Analysis of Research Questions

Research Question One: What is the extent of administrative effectiveness in the Lagos State Judiciary?

Table 1. Extent of administrative effectiveness in the Lagos State Judiciary

Survey items	Very Poor	Poor	Fair	Good	Very Good	Mean	Std.
Teamwork						4.38	0.73
Collaboration among sectional heads to accomplish tasks	02(0.8)	03(1.2)	22(8.9)	77(31.0)	144(58.1)	4.44	0.77
Display of teamwork among junior staff in Lagos State judiciary	01(0.4)	06(2.4)	28(11.3)	67(26.9)	147(59.0)	4.42	0.81
Participation in teamwork activities in the judiciary	01(0.4)	04(1.6)	23(9.3)	90(36.4)	129(52.3)	4.39	0.76
Accomplishment of duties in team spirit in the judiciary	01(0.4)	02(0.8)	38(15.3)	73(29.3)	135(54.2)	4.36	0.80
Collaboration among senior members of the judiciary staff	01(0.4)		43(17.3)	70(28.1)	135(54.2)	4.36	0.79

Table 1. continues

Collaboration among team leaders and members in accomplishing tasks	01(0.4)	02(0.8)	28(11.4)	98(39.8)1	117(47.6)	4.33	0.74
Coordination						4.36	0.63
Assignment of tasks by the judge for job co-ordination	01(0.4)		15(6.1)	93(38.2)	135(55.3)	4.48	0.65
Organization of all case files in the judiciary	01(0.4)	01(0.4)	20(8.2)	94(38.7)	127(52.3)	4.42	0.70
Organization of work activities in the judiciary		01(0.4)	23(9.4)	100(40.8)	121(49.4)	4.39	0.67
Organization of activities from all units in the judiciary	02(0.8)	01(0.4)	24(9.9)	96(39.5)	120(49.4)	4.36	0.74
Coordination of judicial efforts towards protecting the common man	02(0.8)	01(0.4)	26(10.6)	104(42.5)	112(45.7)	4.32	0.74
Coordination of judiciary in responding to applicants and litigants	01(0.4)	01(0.4)	29(11.8)	105(42.9)	109(44.5)	4.31	0.72
Timeliness						4.28	0.70
Timely accomplishment of tasks by high-ranking staff	02(0.8)	03(1.2)	20(8.3)	108(44.7)	109(45.0)	4.32	0.75
Early accomplishment of assigned duties by employees		02(0.8)	33(13.6)	100(41.2)	108(44.4)	4.29	0.73
Completion of assigned task within allotted time	03(1.2)	05(2.1)	19(7.9)	108(44.6)	107(44.2)	4.29	0.80
Promptly handling of cases in the judiciary	02(0.8)	02(0.8)	28(11.4)	111(45.4)	102(41.6)	4.26	0.76
Provision of quick response to applicants within record time	02(0.8)	03(1.2)	31(12.7)	107(43.7)	102(41.6)	4.24	0.78
Timeliness of the judiciary in the resolution of disputes		03(1.2)	31(12.9)	112(46.5)	95(39.4)	4.24	0.72
Commitment						4.17	0.66
Possibility of staff in Lagos State judiciary spending the rest of their career in the judiciary		05(2.0)	36(14.7)	112(45.7)	92(37.6)	4.19	0.76
Willingness of staff in Lagos State judiciary to put in more effort than expected	02(0.8)	07(2.9)	29(11.8)	121(49.4)	86(35.1)	4.15	0.80
Loyalty of staff towards the judiciary	02(0.8)	06(2.5)	32(13.3)	115(47.9)	85(35.5)	4.15	0.80
Possibility of staff leaving Lagos State judiciary even for a better offer	31(12.6)	35(14.2)	32(13.0)	74(30.0)	75(30.2)	3.51	1.38
Productivity						3.34	1.13
Job satisfaction rates of staff in Lagos	08(3.6)	30(13.5)	75(33.8)	63(28.4)	46(20.7)	3.49	1.08
Attrition rates of staff in Lagos judiciary	10(4.5)	27(12.1)	95(42.4)	52(23.2)	40(17.8)	3.38	1.05
Staff leaving before the work time is over	14(6.1)	51(22.3)	62(27.1)	39(17.0)	63(27.5)	3.38	1.27
Staff arriving late to work	14(6.1)	39(16.9)	89(38.5)	47(20.3)	42(18.2)	3.28	1.13
Absentee rates of staff in Lagos judiciary	19(8.3)	44(19.3)	76(33.4)	40(17.5)	49(21.5)	3.25	1.23
Administrative Effectiveness (Overall Mean = 3.89; Std. = 0.77)							

NB. Decision Rule: If mean falls between 1-1.49 = Very low; 1.5-2.49 = low; 2.5-3.49 = Fair (Average); 3.5-4.49 = High; 4.5-5.0 = Very high.

The result in Table 1 showed that the extent of administrative effectiveness in the Lagos State Judiciary was high (overall mean score = 3.89) on a five-point scale. Administrative effectiveness was measured by five dimensions (teamwork, coordination, timeliness, commitment and productivity) with each indicator having statements under them which the respondents were to respond to by ticking the appropriate response in front of each statement. The mean scores for the administrative effectiveness dimensions were calculated. Of the five dimensions of administrative effectiveness, teamwork (average mean = 4.38) was highest while productivity was lowest (average mean = 3.34) in Lagos state judiciary. The average mean score (4.38) for teamwork indicates that staff in Lagos judiciary are highly proficient in their teamwork activities such as collaboration among sectional heads to accomplish tasks and display of teamwork among junior staff in Lagos state judiciary. Next to teamwork is coordination as another indicator with an average mean score of 4.36 which is considered high. This implies that staff of the personnel of State Judiciary demonstrated high extents of coordination in such areas as assignment of tasks, organization of all case files and work activities in the judiciary. Also, the average mean score for timeliness (4.28) is high, this signifies that the respondents are highly effective in timely accomplishment of tasks, early accomplishment of assigned duties and completion of assigned task within allotted time.

In addition to timeliness, the result further shows high extent of commitment in Lagos State Judiciary (average mean = 4.17). This implies that the personnel in the study area demonstrated willingness to spend the rest of their career in the judiciary and to put in more effort than expected. On the other hand, in the aspect of productivity, the result found average level of productivity in the study area (average mean = 3.34). This signifies the need to enhance staff productivity indicators ratings in areas such as lateness, absentee rates, attrition rates, job dissatisfaction in Lagos state judiciary.

Research Question Two: What is the extent of records management practices employed in Lagos state Judiciary?

Table 2. Extent of records management practices employed in Lagos state Judiciary

	Never True	Rarely True	Sometimes True	Usually True	Always True	Mean	Std.
Record Retrieval						4.33	0.62
All records in the court are given certain ID codes for easy retrieval		01(0.5)	20(10.7)	79(42.0)	88(46.8)	4.35	0.69
Court records are well numbered and coded for easy retrieval	01(0.5)	03(1.6)	15(8.1)	84(45.2)	83(44.6)	4.32	0.74
Records Maintenance						4.31	0.72
the Judiciary has a legal policy to maintain records	01(0.5)	04(2.2)	15(8.2)	77(41.8)	87(47.3)	4.33	0.76
There are established standards and procedures for classifying, indexing, filing, and retrieving records		05(2.6)	23(12.3)	70(37.0)	91(48.1)	4.31	0.79
Judicial records are constantly updated	03(1.6)	05(2.7)	20(10.8)	66(35.7)	91(49.2)	4.28	0.88
Legal records are well maintained	03(1.6)	02(1.1)	16(8.7)	85(46.2)	78(42.4)	4.27	.80
Records Creation and Capture						4.30	0.78
The judiciary captures all forms of legal records		05(2.7)	14(7.4)	68(36.2)	101(53.7)	4.41	0.74
Every decision in the court is automatically created in a file for future use		03(1.6)	17(8.9)	73(38.0)	99(51.5)	4.40	0.72
Records are created every day in the court based on the presented cases	01(0.5)		21(10.8)	85(43.9)	87(44.8)	4.33	0.71
The use of file classification plan for electronic records are in existence	04(2.1)	03(1.6)	16(8.4)	86(45.0)	82(42.9)	4.25	0.84

Table 2. continues

Records Access						4.29	0.69
There are systems in place to prevent unauthorized access to all records	03(1.6)	02(1.1)	16(8.4)	84(44.2)	85(44.7)	4.30	0.80
There is no unauthorized access to records after staff leaves the judiciary	02(1.1)	01(0.5)	16(8.5)	91(48.4)	78(41.5)	4.29	0.73
There is centralized filing system that allows staff to retrieve documents and record	04(2.1)	03(1.6)	32(16.8)	72(37.9)	79(41.6)	4.15	0.90
Records Programme Authorization and Organization						4.13	0.74
All staff are informed of the role of the staff member in charge of records	01(0.6)	03(1.8)	25(14.6)	69(40.4)	72(42.6)	4.20	0.87
The judiciary incorporates its records management activities into its records management programme		07(4.1)	32(18.5)	58(33.5)	76(43.9)	4.17	0.87
The judiciary designates a staff member with sole responsibility for records management activities		08(4.7)	17(10.1)	94(55.6)	50(29.6)	4.10	0.76
Records Management Policy						4.11	0.76
There are plans to draft records management policy		02(1.2)	30(18.7)	71(44.1)	58(36.0)	4.15	0.76
Records management policies are made available to staff.		04(2.4)	23(13.9)	84(50.6)	55(33.1)	4.15	0.74
There are policies for records management in the judiciary.	03(1.8)	07(4.2)	23(13.9)	73(44.0)	60(36.1)	4.08	0.91
Record Disposition						4.05	0.94
Inactive judicial records are sent to the records centre	01(0.6)	08(5.0)	21(13.2)	64(40.3)	65(40.9)	4.16	0.88
Inactive judicial records are sent to the archive	09(5.1)	04(2.3)	26(14.7)	61(34.7)	76(43.2)	4.08	1.06
Records of the court are disposed off when it has passed its enduring values	09(5.3)	02(1.2)	28(16.5)	72(42.3)	59(34.7)	4.00	1.02
There are shredding machines in the judiciary	01(0.6)	15(9.1)	24(14.6)	68(41.5)	56(34.2)	3.99	0.96
Record Storage						4.04	1.0
Judicial records stored online are passworded	07(3.8)	05(2.7)	19(10.4)	61(33.6)	90(49.5)	4.22	1.00
Judicial records are store in both hard and soft copies		06(3.3)	31(16.9)	70(38.0)	77(41.8)	4.19	0.83
Judicial records are well protected in fire proof cabinet	21(11.0)	22(11.5)	07(3.7)	48(24.1)	95(49.7)	3.90	1.41
Record Retention						3.98	0.85
Retention of all vital records is taken seriously	01(0.6)	03(1.9)	37(23.4)	53(33.6)	64(40.5)	4.11	0.87
Judiciary has a retention policy	02(1.3)	04(2.5)	32(20.3)	67(42.4)	53(33.5)	4.04	0.87
The judiciary has a policy to retain inactive records	05(3.1)	05(3.1)	28(17.4)	70(43.5)	53(32.9)	4.00	0.96
Records retention in the court follows the retention policy of the court	03(1.8)	07(4.2)	31(18.7)	71(42.8)	54(32.5)	4.00	0.92
Records management practices (Overall Mean = 4.17; Std. = 0.75)							

Decision Rule: If mean falls between 1-1.49 = Very Low Extent; 1.5-2.49 = Low Extent; 2.5-3.49 = Moderate Extent; 3.5-4.49 = High Extent; 4.5-5.0 = Very High Extent.

Table 2 revealed that the extent of records management practices employed in Lagos state Judiciary was high (overall mean score = 4.17) on a 5-point scale. The table showed records management practices was measured using nine dimensions (record retrieval, records maintenance, records creation and capture, records access, records programme authorization and organization, records management policy, record disposition, record storage, record retention) with each indicator having statements under them which the respondents were to respond to by ticking the appropriate response in front of each statement. Records retrieval as an indicator of records management practice has the highest mean score of 4.33. This indicates that the judiciaries are making efforts to ensure that all records in the court are easily retrieved through well numbered and coded ID codes.

Next to records retrieval is records maintenance with an average mean score of 4.31, which is considered high, this means that there is a legal policy in place to maintain records in the Judiciary. Records maintenance is followed by the high mean score of records creation and capture (4.30) which shows that the judiciaries are making effort to capture all forms of legal records for use in the workplace. With a high average mean score of 4.29, the judiciary personnel were of the opinion that there are systems in place to prevent unauthorized access to all records. However, there is no unauthorized access to records after staff leaves the judiciary, this shows the weakness in the record access practice in Lagos state judiciary.

For records programme authorization and organization, the average mean score is high (4.13). This implies that all staff are informed of the role of the staff member in charge of records. Next is records management policy with an average mean score (4.11) which is considered high, this implies that there are plans to draft records management policy and made them available to staff. Record disposition with a high average mean score (4.05), indicates that inactive judicial records are usually sent to the records centre and archive. Next to record disposition is record storage as another indicator with an average mean score (4.04) which is considered high. This implies that judicial records stored online are pass-worded and also stored in both hard and soft copies. Record retention with a high average mean score (3.98) shows that the Lagos state Judiciary has a retention policy and all vital records are taken seriously for retention.

Hypothesis Testing:

Records management practices will not significantly influence administrative effectiveness in Lagos state Judiciary.

Hypothesis one was tested with simple linear regression analysis.

Table 3. Simple linear regression analysis of the influence of records management practices on administrative effectiveness

Predictors	B	Beta (β)	T	p	R ²	Adj. R ²	F	ANOVA (Sig.)
(Constant)	1.526		5.575	.000*	0.290	0.286	79.159	0.000*
Records management practices	.575	.538	8.897	.000*				
Dependent Variable: Administrative effectiveness Predictor: (Constant), Records management practices DF (F-Statistic) = 1, 194 DF (T-Statistic) = 194 The asterisked p-value implies significant The non-asterisked p-value implies non-significant								

Source: Field Survey Results, 2020

Table 3 shows the simple linear regression analysis result for testing of hypothesis one. The independent variable (records management practices) was regressed against administrative effectiveness. According to the result, records management practices ($\beta=0.538$, $t(194) =$

8.897 , $p < 0.05$) had a positive and significant influence on the administrative effectiveness in Lagos state Judiciary. The R^2 is the coefficient of determination explains the variation in the dependent variable due to changes in the independent variable. The $R^2(0.290)$ of

the regression model indicate that 29.0% of the variation in administrative effectiveness is explained by records management practices in Lagos state Judiciary. The $F(1, 194) = 79.159, p < 0.05$ shows that the regression model 1 can be used in predicting administrative effectiveness.

Summary of Findings

Research question one sought to find out the extent of administrative effectiveness in the Lagos State Judiciary. The result showed that the extent of administrative effectiveness in the Lagos State Judiciary was high. This finding is in agreement with previous studies by Amah et al (2013) and Karsli Sahin (2015). For instance, Amah et al (2013) asserted that administrative effectiveness is the ability to manage resources, organize people, information, knowledge and set time to accomplish goals. Karsli and Sahin (2015) described that administrative effectiveness involves adaptation, goal attainment, integration, and sustaining organizational values.

The result revealed that the extent of records management practices employed in Lagos state Judiciary was high. The finding agrees with studies carried out by Blake (2014), Mountain (2005), Adikwu (2007), Mohammed (2009) and Infokits (2007). For instance, Blake (2014), Blake (2014), emphasized that records administration practices include creation, classify, prioritize, store, secure, archive, preserve, retrieve, track and wreck unneeded files while Mountain (2005) stressed the importance of having the right files administration practices in place for all cases under different jurisdiction across all units in the judiciary. The finding from hypothesis one revealed that that records management practices had a positive and significant influence on the administrative effectiveness in Lagos state Judiciary. This finding is supported by the work of Analoui (2007) who explained that achieving sustainable judicial administrative effectiveness is hanging on good records management practices of the court. He further clarified that the availability of information for use by administrators to adjudicate judicial cases depends on the way records have been physically managed.

Conclusion

Findings from this research indicate that good records management practices is imperative in any organization. It shows that through records management everyday activities of any organization can be accounted for. The paper concluded that good records management practices is a critical element in any organizational administration, productivity and effectiveness. It is therefore recommended that, the court should set aside sufficient funding for maintaining effective records management practices in the court. Regular training on records management should be organized for the staff of the court to attain effective records management practices.

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