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EVALUATION OF HEALTH RECORDS MANAGEMENT PRACTICES AND THE FUNCTIONALITY OF ARCHIVAL WORKFLOW SYSTEMS AMONG SELECTED HOSPITALS IN MIGORI AND KISUMU COUNTIES, KENYA

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Abstract

Effective health records management is essential for efficient healthcare systems. However, outdated infrastructure, limited user integration, and inefficient data retrieval continue to impede healthcare service delivery in Kenyan hospitals, raising the question: to what extent do records management practices predict archival workflow functionality in public hospitals? This study was grounded in Records Management Theory, which conceptualizes records as assets moving through a defined lifecycle creation, use, maintenance, and disposition governed by policies and standards to ensure accessibility, integrity, and accountability. Building on this lens, the study's conceptual framework positions records management practices, retrieval speed and ease, records handling, and archival software use as independent variables predicting archival workflow functionality as the dependent variable, with government policies and standard operating procedures as intervening variables consistent with the theory's emphasis on regulatory oversight across the records lifecycle. The framework further incorporates system reliability, user acceptance, and user requirements, including data confidentiality and security, as dimensions shaping user trust and satisfaction, thereby identifying where adjustments are needed. A cross-sectional survey of 265 healthcare workers at Kisumu and Migori referral hospitals, sampled proportionately across professional cadres using Slovin's formula, tested these relationships using descriptive statistics, chi-square tests, and logistic regression. Findings showed generally favorable standard operating procedures compliance (64.4%), retrievability (57.8%), and software evaluations (65.1–73.1%), alongside strong support for system modernization (87.9–91.5%), though user feedback integration remained moderate. Regular disposal of outdated records, a core lifecycle stage under Records Management Theory, was significantly associated with workflow functionality ($\chi^2=33.25$, $p=0.032$), while standard operating procedures compliance (OR=1.52, $p=0.045$) and user-friendly, secure archival software (OR=1.84, $p=0.011$) emerged as significant predictors, affirming the theory's premise that structured, policy-governed management of records across their lifecycle drives system functionality. These results underscore the need to modernize archival workflow systems, strengthen data security, and deepen user participation. The study recommends standardized, automated archival workflows supported by ongoing capacity building and routine system reviews in Kenyan public hospitals

Keywords: *Health records management, archival workflow systems, hospital information systems, data retrieval, and system functionality.*

Introduction

The World Health Organization (WHO) underscores the critical role of accurate medical records in enhancing patient care, supporting clinical decision-making, and ensuring accountability in health service delivery (WHO, 2024). Health records management involves the systematic creation, collection, storage, retrieval, and protection of patient information (WHO, 2024). Developed countries have widely adopted advanced electronic health record (EHR) systems with integrated archival workflows, enabling secure storage, rapid retrieval, and efficient sharing of patient data. The International Council on Archives (ICA) establishes global guidance and standards for best practices in archival management, encompassing the selection, collection, processing, storage,

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management, and preservation of records (ICA, 2022). Conversely, many low- and middle-income countries (LMICs), including those in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), continue to experience fragmented and inadequate recordkeeping systems, leading to operational inefficiencies and reduced healthcare quality (Huda, 2026; Karolita *et al*., 2026). Effective health records management at all levels of healthcare facilities is vital for preserving critical patient information, such as medical histories, treatments, and outcomes (Kholis *et al*., 2023). The implementation of digital health systems in developing countries, including Kenya, has been recognized as a strategy to improve administrative efficiency and health records management (Muinga *et al*., 2020). However, the significance of health records practices and the operational effectiveness of archival workflows within Kenyan healthcare facilities are often overlooked, despite the acknowledged advantages of digital systems. An archival system is defined as a structured framework designed to manage and document records of enduring value under the authority of an archival institution (van Bussel, 2022)

Many healthcare archival systems continue to rely on paper-based processes, often serving as physical storage backups across departments. This reliance restricts long-term access due to risks of physical deterioration, loss, or damage (Githongo *et al*., 2023; Glew, 2022). Implementing changes in health records management practices and evaluating archival workflows are challenging, influenced by organizational power dynamics, adherence to established procedures, and the substantial effort required to adopt new workflows. These factors contribute to the slow and inconsistent implementation of change. Furthermore, the sustainability of new health records management methods is not always guaranteed, resulting in reluctance to adopt innovations. Nevertheless, technological progress is inevitable and holds significant potential to transform processes, user expectations, and professional roles in healthcare records management.

Assessing health records management practices and the functionality of archival workflows is essential to keep pace with technological advancements and address evolving user requirements (Katuu, 2020). Adapting to change and enhancing existing processes can be challenging for health records personnel, often resulting in workflow disruptions. This challenge can create a cycle of progress followed by setbacks. Implementing an effective archival workflow system necessitates professional leadership to manage the complexities of organizational change (Tintswalo *et al.,* 2022; Semantha et *al*., 2021). Effective archival processing of health records involves accessing, organizing, describing, and securely storing records in compliance with national and international standards and best practices. Health records officers play a pivotal role in evaluating, collecting, organizing, preserving, and facilitating access to archived materials (Tennent & Gillet, 2023). The rising number of inpatients and outpatients in hospitals has intensified the demand for technological advancements in health recordkeeping and archiving, as medical documents continue to accumulate. Legal requirements stipulate that these records must be retained for more than 30 years (Hofman & Katuu, 2023), creating significant spatial and organizational challenges. However, traditional hospital health records management practices and archival systems often fail to provide real-time, systematic access to health records for healthcare professionals and legal entities.

The record management theory guides the current study (Backland, 1994; Finnell, 2011). Building on this lens, the study's conceptual framework positions records management practices, retrieval speed and ease, records handling, and archival software use as independent variables predicting archival workflow functionality as the dependent variable, with government policies and SOPs operating as intervening variables consistent with the theory's emphasis on regulatory oversight across the records lifecycle. The framework further incorporates system reliability, user acceptance, and user requirements, including data confidentiality and security, as dimensions shaping user trust and satisfaction, thereby identifying where adjustments are needed (Franks, 2025). Therefore, the paper sought to address these challenges by evaluating health records management practices to improve the functionality of archival workflow systems in selected hospitals in Migori and Kisumu counties, Kenya.

Research Methodology

The study is anchored on Buckland's foundational work on records management theory, which synthesizes multiple related disciplines, including

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information retrieval, the records life cycle, and information policy, rather than proposing a single, unified theory (Backland, 1994). Consequently, records management practices are defined as a composite construct comprising several interrelated functions: documentation and coding, storage and retrieval, security, and disposition. This conceptualization aligns with Buckland's position that no single perspective sufficiently addresses the complexity of records management practice. This theoretical perspective directly informs the study's operationalization. The Likert-scale questionnaire evaluates records management across several dimensions, including documentation practices, storage and security procedures, retrieval systems, and staff competence (Finnell, 2011). This multidimensional approach supports Buckland's argument that records management cannot be reduced to a single theoretical concern. Additionally, this perspective enables the triangulation of practice-level indicators with systemic outcomes, such as archival effectiveness and adherence to standard operating procedures (SOPs), using both descriptive and inferential statistical analyses. The 'life cycle' and 'information policy' components identified by Buckland correspond to the study's practice-stage variables and the functionality of the archival workflow system, respectively.

Based on this, a cross-sectional design was employed at two level-four referral hospitals in southwestern Kenya: Migori County Referral Hospital (MCRH) and Kisumu County Referral Hospital (KCRH). These hospitals were selected due to their high volume of medical records and significant disease burden as per the Kenya Demographic Health Survey report done by the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS, 2022). This design facilitated data collection from a diverse group of health workers at a single point in time, providing a comprehensive overview of records-management practices. The study targeted 402 health care workers involved in health records management across departments including Central Records, Outpatient, Pharmacy, Laboratory, Clinical, and ICT. Exclusion criteria included staff who were unavailable, chronically ill, or unwilling to participate. The sample size was calculated using Slovin's formula with a 5% margin of error, yielding 265 respondents. Respondents were proportionally allocated by county (154 from Kisumu and 111 from Migori) and further stratified by staff role. This approach, combined with random sampling within each stratum, ensured that larger groups, such as nurses, did not overshadow smaller groups, such as ICT and public health officers, thereby enhancing sample representativeness.

Data collection was conducted using a structured Likert-scale questionnaire administered by two trained research assistants selected for their relevant experience and proficiency in English. The research assistants participated in a one-day training session covering study objectives, ethical considerations, informed consent procedures, confidentiality, and standardized questionnaire administration. This training ensured consistency and supervision during data collection. To enhance methodological rigor, university supervisors to improve clarity and structure reviewed the questionnaire. Reliability was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha on pre-test data, resulting in a score of 0.84, which exceeds the standard threshold of 0.7 and indicates that the questionnaire was reliable and appropriate for the main study (Kothari, 2017).

Data processing involved a systematic workflow in which completed questionnaires were checked, cleaned, coded, and entered into SPSS version 26. Descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations, were used alongside inferential methods such as chi-square tests and logistic regression to examine associations between records-management practices and the effectiveness of the archival system. Results were presented in frequency tables to facilitate interpretation. Ethical considerations were integral to the study. Data collection was conducted in private settings to maintain confidentiality, and collaboration with department heads minimized disruption to hospital operations. The study obtained approvals from the Rongo University Directorate of Post-graduate Studies, the Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology Institutional Scientific and Ethics Review Committee (MMUST/ISERC/173/2022), and a national research permit from National commission for Science Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI/p/23/27345). Informed consent was obtained from all participants, who were informed that participation was voluntary and that their data would be used exclusively for academic purposes.

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Results and Discussion

Health Records Management Practices in selected public hospitals in Migori and Kisumu Counties, Kenya

Effective health records management practices is widely regarded as a critical determinant of organizational success, as it ensures timely access to accurate and reliable records necessary for efficient health care service delivery. Well-established records-keeping systems are essential because records form a fundamental component of nearly all organizational processes, including those in the health sector (Akhai, 2023; Yusuf *et al.,* 2023). Against this background, most respondents held positive perceptions of records management practices in the departments, particularly regarding adherence to standard operating procedures (SOPs), support for decision-making, and the use of archival software. A majority (64.4%) agreed or strongly agreed that records are created, stored, and managed according to established standard operating procedures (SOPs) while 24.4% disagreed(M = 3.59, SD = 1.42). This reflects moderate to strong agreement and suggests that structured records management practices are well established. The finding aligns with previous research showing that effective records management enhances efficiency, accountability, and evidence-based decision-making in healthcare facilities (Akhai, 2023; Touray, 2021). The relatively large standard deviation, however, indicates that SOP application is uneven across departments.

Regarding the ease of retrieving archived records, 57.8% agreed or strongly agreed that archived records are easily and quickly retrieved when needed, while 24.7% disagreed(M=3.35,SD=1.30) .Most departments therefore maintain functional retrieval systems, although accessibility could be improved. This moderate score points to persistent gaps in managing records throughout their lifecycle. It is consistent with earlier reports that many organizations continue to rely on basic systems, which limits the overall effectiveness of records management (Touray, 2021; Kamau, 2020). For regular maintenance and proper disposal of outdated records, 53.8% agreed or strongly agreed, while 28.4% disagreed or strongly disagreed (M =3.40, SD = 1.28). This was the lowest-rated item and shows moderate agreement and variability in how the records lifecycle and disposal are managed. Taken together with the retrieval result, it suggests that lifecycle management is the weakest area of records practice in the departments studied (Touray, 2021).

Additionally, 65.1% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the archival software is user-friendly and secure, while 22.9% disagreed (M=3.64, SD=1.27). This reflects a positive perception of digital records-keeping systems and their reliability for long-term storage. Because the software was rated higher than retrieval and disposal, the technology itself does not appear to be the main constraint. The gaps more likely lie in how records are organized and governed within the system and this is consistent with previous studies (Chikomba et al., 2020; Faulkner et al., 2021) and also reaffirms the records management theory which focuses on records management as a composite of interlinked activities rather than a single function(Buckland,1994). The highest agreement (73.1%) was for the statement that records management practices support informed decision-making, with a mean of 3.91 (SD = 1.18). Only 12% disagreed, showing strong confidence that records systems contribute to evidence-based administrative and operational decisions, in line with evidence that effective records management supports accountability and informed decision-making (Akhai, 2023; Touray, 2021). Overall, these findings suggest respondents view their departments as maintaining effective records management practices, especially in decision support and adherence to SOPs. However, moderate ratings for retrieval efficiency and disposal processes indicate that ongoing improvements could further strengthen institutional records management systems (**Table 1**).

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Table 1

Health Records Management Practices

Statement	1 (%)	2 (%)	3 (%)	4 (%)	5 (%)	Mean (SD)
1. Records are created, stored, and managed in accordance with set SOPs.	39 (15.1)	24 (9.4)	29 (11.3)	79 (30.2)	89 (34.0)	3.59 (1.42)
2. Archived records are easily and quickly retrieved when needed.	23 (9.1)	40 (15.5)	46 (17.7)	75 (28.7)	76 (29.1)	3.53 (1.30)
3. There is regular maintenance and proper disposal of outdated records in my department.	23 (9.1)	51 (19.2)	46 (17.7)	79 (30.2)	62 (23.8)	3.40 (1.28)
4. The archival software currently in use is user-friendly and secure for long-term storage.	20 (7.9)	39 (15.1)	31 (12.1)	93 (35.5)	77 (29.4)	3.64 (1.27)
5. Records management practices in our department support informed decision-making.	20 (7.9)	10 (4.2)	39 (15.1)	93 (35.5)	98 (37.4)	3.91 (1.18)

Note. 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree.

Functionality of the Archival Workflow System

Workflow system functionality is essential for managing records and archival processes efficiently, securely, and in accordance with best practices. An effective system automates routine tasks, facilitates coordination, ensures seamless access to records, and upholds high standards of security and accountability (Guto, 2023; Chikomba et al., 2020). These features support both archival service delivery and the long-term preservation and accessibility of records. In the past decade, institutions, including healthcare facilities, have transitioned from predominantly paper-based to digital documentation (Zheng et al., 2020). However, healthcare providers in Kenyan facilities continue to encounter significant workflow challenges. Policy deviations impede regulatory compliance, and preventable errors in patient records may compromise care quality. Staff frequently spend excessive time on repetitive tasks such as scheduling and documentation, while manual resource management further constrains productivity. Inefficient workflows contribute to increased patient waiting times and decreased satisfaction. Additionally, departmental barriers and inadequate coordination exacerbate overcrowding and delays, particularly in emergency departments (Muinga et al., 2020; Masaba et al., 2020). Addressing these challenges necessitates the implementation of streamlined digital solutions to improve workflow efficiency and service delivery.

Respondents generally indicated moderate to high agreement with statements regarding workflow system functionality and support (Table 2). These findings suggest that health care operations are efficient for most users, although some continue to encounter technical difficulties. Over half of respondents agreed that the workflow system experiences minimal technical or procedural challenges. Of the 261 respondents, 57.5% agreed or strongly agreed (M=3.40, SD=1.11) while 22.6% disagreed or strongly disagreed indicating that technical and procedural problems have not been fully eliminated. This is consistent with reports that Kenyan health facilities still face policy deviations, record errors, and repetitive manual tasks that reduce workflow efficiency (Muinga et al., 2020; Masaba et al., 2020). Regarding the impact of workflow challenges on daily health care operations, 57.5% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that these challenges have minimal effect, while 37.6% disagreed. This item recorded the lowest mean (M = 3.16, SD = 1.33), suggesting that daily operations are generally stable, although certain departments continue to experience interruptions. The relatively high level of disagreement and the largest standard deviation indicate that workflow burdens are unevenly distributed across departments, highlighting the need for targeted interventions. This observation is consistent with reports that insufficient archive capacity creates bottlenecks and diminishes the effectiveness of managing high volumes of records, underscoring the necessity to upgrade archiving operations to address increasing technological demands (Zheng et al., 2020).

A majority of respondents (65.2%) agreed or strongly agreed that the system is reliable and adheres to standard operating procedures (SOPs) for archival processes, while 21.1% disagreed (M = 3.58, SD = 1.19). These results indicate widespread satisfaction with the system's reliability and compliance. Approximately 63.7% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that staff perceive the system as

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intuitive and have readily adopted it, while 21.9% disagreed (M = 3.55, SD = 1.15). These results suggest a positive user experience and strong adaptability among staff. This finding aligns with earlier results indicating that user-friendly, secure archival software is the strongest predictor of workflow functionality (OR = 1.84, p = 0.011) (Zheng et al. 2020). System support received favorable assessments from 58.9% of respondents, who agreed or strongly agreed that adequate assistance is available when issues arise, while 24.8% disagreed (M = 3.43, SD = 1.16). This indicates a generally positive, though somewhat inconsistent, perception of support, suggesting that some users continue to encounter unresolved issues. Insufficient capacity remains a significant challenge in records management systems, and shortages of skilled personnel and infrastructure contribute to inefficiencies (Mohammed et al., 2018). Similarly, Zheng et al. (2020) report that workflow problems can impede effective records management, timely information access, and overall service delivery (**Table 2**).

Table 2

Functionality of the Existing Workflow System

Statement	1 (%)	2 (%)	3 (%)	4 (%)	5 (%)	Mean(SD)
1.The workflow system experiences minimal technical or procedural challenges.	17 (6.4)	42 (16.1)	52 (20.3)	113 (42.6)	37 (14.0)	3.40 (1.11)
2.Workflow challenges (if any) have little impact on daily operations.	37 (14.3)	61 (23.4)	30 (11.3)	95 (36.2)	38 (14.7)	3.16 (1.33)
3.The system is reliable and adheres to SOPs for archival processes.	21 (8.1)	34 (12.8)	36 (13.6)	115 (44.1)	55 (21.1)	3.58 (1.19)
4. Staff find the system easy to use and have willingly adopted it.	17 (6.8)	39 (15.1)	38 (14.7)	118 (45.2)	49 (18.5)	3.55 (1.15)
5. There is sufficient support to resolve system-related issues when they arise.	19 (7.5)	45 (17.4)	46 (17.4)	109 (41.8)	42 (15.8)	3.43 (1.16)

Note: 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree

Therefore, institutions should differentiate among workflow challenges by identifying and analyzing the specific nature and severity of each problem, as these factors are more predictive of systemic inefficiencies and inform improvement priorities. Targeted diagnostic assessments enable decision-makers to allocate resources more effectively and implement tailored solutions rather than broad system overhauls. These findings are consistent with those of Findlay and Harvey (2017), who observed that specific workflow issues, such as processing delays and difficulties in data retrieval, reliably indicate the need for system improvements. Similarly, Lee et al. (2022) emphasize that distinct challenges, particularly those related to information handling and system integration, require customized improvement strategies.

The challenges identified in this study are consistent with those documented in the broader literature on records management, including improper documentation, inadequate record safety, a shortage of qualified records managers, insufficient resources and space, lost or misplaced critical records, the absence of records-keeping policies, ineffective retention practices, lack of institution-wide disposition schedules, and inefficient retrieval methods. Asogwa (2019) explored the complexities of maintaining electronic documents in developing nations and their implications for records administrators in sub-Saharan Africa, referencing the evolution of archives, electronic records, and information technology in the region.

Guto (2023) similarly identifies administrative and technical challenges as primary obstacles in e-records management in Africa. The advantages of managing hybrid records can only be realized with appropriate infrastructure, effective legislation, robust governance structures, adequate funding, and skilled ICT personnel, yet tools for virtual access to records remain insufficient. Multiple studies also report that limited financial and human resources, insufficient support from senior government officials, and weaknesses in existing records legislation constrain the functionality of workflow systems in healthcare and other institutions (Muinga et al., 2020; Ngugi et al., 2021; Isemeck et al., 2019). These constraints highlight the urgent need for capacity enhancement, which may include upgrading infrastructure,

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expanding staff training, or implementing more robust digital systems to accommodate increasing archival demands.

Health Records management practices and functionality of the archival workflow system

Records management practices are intrinsically connected to the functionality of archival workflow systems, given that records form a core element of organizational processes, especially within the health sector (Akhai, 2023; Yusuf et al., 2023). To examine this relationship, both bivariate and multivariate analyses were conducted. The chi-square test identified practices associated with workflow functionality, while binary logistic regression determined which practices independently predicted functionality after accounting for other variables. The Pearson chi-square test (**Table 3**) demonstrated a statistically significant association between regular maintenance and disposal of outdated records and archival workflow functionality, $\chi^2(20, N = 261) = 33.25$, $p = 0.032$. Institutions that systematically remove obsolete records are more likely to maintain effective archival systems. This effect is likely attributable to reduced congestion, improved organization, and enhanced retrieval efficiency. This finding is consistent with previous reports indicating that inadequate lifecycle management, such as the lack of retention practices and institution-wide disposition schedules, undermines records management in health institutions (Touray, 2021; Mohammed et al., 2018).

Other practices did not show a significant association with workflow functionality at this stage: compliance with SOPs ($\chi^2 = 30.05$, $p = 0.069$), ease of retrieval ($\chi^2 = 24.44$, $p = 0.224$), software usability and security ($\chi^2 = 15.85$, $p = 0.726$), and decision-making support ($\chi^2 = 12.80$, $p = 0.886$). These results indicate that the effects of these practices may only become evident when confounding variables are controlled, as explored in the regression analysis (Table 4).

Table 3

Records Management Practices and Archival Workflow Functionality

Records Management Practice	Pearson χ^2	df	p-value
Records created, stored, and managed per SOPs	30.05	20	0.069
Archived records easily and quickly retrieved	24.44	20	0.224
Regular maintenance and disposal of outdated records	33.25	20	0.032*
Archival software is user-friendly and secure	15.85	20	0.726
Records management supports decision-making	12.80	20	0.886

Note. Pearson χ^2 = Pearson Chi-square test; df = degrees of freedom. *$p < .05$.

Binary logistic regression (**Table 4**) identified compliance with SOPs as a statistically significant independent predictor of workflow functionality ($B = 0.42$, $SE = 0.21$, Wald $\chi^2 = 4.00$, $p = .045$, $OR = 1.52$). Adherence to SOPs increases the likelihood of a functional archival workflow system by 52% when controlling for other variables. This finding underscores the importance of standardized processes in promoting consistency, accuracy, and reliability within records management systems. It aligns with descriptive findings that respondents rated the system as reliable and compliant with SOPs, as well as with guidance emphasizing the centrality of clear procedures to effective archival systems (National Archives, 2020; Kamau, 2020). The results further support the argument that maintaining high standards of security and accountability depends on defined and enforced procedures (Guto, 2023). In contrast, deviations from policy have been identified as a common workflow problem in Kenyan health facilities, impeding regulatory compliance and contributing to preventable errors in patient records (Muinga et al., 2020; Masaba et al., 2020)

User-friendly and secure archival software emerged as the strongest predictor of workflow functionality ($B = 0.61$, $SE = 0.24$, Wald $\chi^2 = 6.46$, $p = .011$, $OR = 1.84$). Organizations utilizing intuitive and secure digital systems have 84% higher odds of achieving optimal workflow functionality. The magnitude of this effect emphasizes the critical role of usability and data security in system performance and user adoption. This finding is consistent with studies demonstrating that digital tools are essential for improving workflow efficiency and ensuring the long-term sustainability of archival systems (Chilunjika, 2023; Thorpe et al., 2021). It also reflects the broader transition from paper-based to digital documentation in health care

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facilities (Zheng et al., 2020). Streamlined digital solutions have been proposed to address repetitive manual tasks and coordination challenges that reduce efficiency (Muinga et al., 2020; Masaba et al., 2020). Furthermore, enhanced workflows have been shown to improve information access and service delivery (Faulkner et al., 2021; Chikomba et al., 2020).

Ease and speed of retrieval showed a positive but marginally non-significant association with functionality (B = 0.36, SE = 0.19, Wald χ^2 = 3.58, p = .058, OR = 1.43). This suggests a potential effect that may reach significance with a larger sample or more precise measurement. The direction of this result is consistent with findings that difficulty in data retrieval and processing delays are reliable indicators of workflows requiring improvement (Findlay & Harvey, 2017). Records management practices supporting decision-making did not emerge as significant independent predictors (B = 0.29, SE = 0.22, Wald χ^2 = 1.74, p = .187, OR = 1.34). Although respondents valued records as evidence for decisions, this perceived value did not translate into measurable improvements in workflow functionality. These findings indicate that decision support is more likely an outcome of effective records management rather than a direct driver of workflow performance (Akhai, 2023; Touray, 2021).

Regular maintenance and disposal was significant in the chi-square analysis but not in the regression model (B = 0.18, SE = 0.20, Wald χ^2 = 0.81, p = .368, OR = 1.20). This outcome suggests that the observed effect may be mediated or confounded by factors such as SOP compliance or system design. In practice, effective disposal typically occurs only where procedures are established and software supports retention schedules, indicating that its influence on functionality is likely indirect. These findings demonstrate why bivariate results alone can be misleading and why not all best practices yield measurable improvements in system functionality. Lee et al. (2022) similarly argue that distinct workflow problems require tailored improvement strategies rather than uniform solutions.

Table 4

Records Management Practices Predicting Archival Workflow Functionality

Records Management Practice (Predictor)	B	SE	Wald χ^2	OR	p-value
Records created, stored, and managed per SOPs	0.42	0.21	4.00	1.52	0.045*
Archived records easily and quickly retrieved	0.36	0.19	3.58	1.43	0.058
Regular maintenance and disposal of outdated records	0.18	0.20	0.81	1.20	0.368
Archival software is user-friendly and secure	0.61	0.24	6.46	1.84	0.011*
Records management supports decision-making	0.29	0.22	1.74	1.34	0.187

Note. Dependent variable = Archival workflow system functionality (computed). B = regression coefficient; SE = standard error; Wald χ^2 = Wald chi-square test statistic; OR = odds ratio.

*$p < .05$.

Overall, the results indicate that procedural adherence and technological capacity are the two practices that independently drive archival workflow functionality. Retrieval and disposal contribute in weaker or indirect ways, while decision support does not independently predict functionality. Records management is most effective when robust systems are integrated with clearly defined procedures. These findings have practical implications: health institutions should prioritize the enforcement of SOPs and invest in user-friendly, secure archival software, while addressing retrieval and disposal through retention schedules embedded in procedures and software. The success of these measures depends on enabling conditions frequently cited in the literature, including adequate infrastructure, funding, skilled personnel, and supportive legislation (Guto, 2023; Ngugi et al., 2021; Isemeck et al., 2019; Asogwa, 2019). Without these conditions, persistent gaps in lifecycle management and workflow support may continue to constrain system performance and service delivery in public hospitals.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The findings demonstrate that health records management practices have a significant impact on the functionality of archival workflow systems in selected hospitals in Migori County and Kisumu County. The current archival workflow system is effective, reliable, and user-friendly, with the majority of users reporting

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moderate to high satisfaction. However, optimal system performance requires strict adherence to standard operating procedures (SOPs) and access to secure, user-friendly digital tools. Persistent challenges, such as technical malfunctions, workflow delays, and insufficient support, continue to hinder overall system functionality.

It is recommended that Kenya Public Hospitals, under the direction of the County Director of Health, strengthen and consistently implement SOPs through regular training, systematic monitoring, and internal audits. These measures are anticipated to ensure alignment with health records management practices and to substantially improve the functionality and reliability of the archival workflow.

Additionally, the County Director of Health should invest in modern, user-friendly, and well-supported digital systems by prioritizing the upgrade of archival workflow systems to more intuitive, secure, and efficient digital platforms and by enhancing technical support services. These initiatives are expected to minimize workflow interruptions, improve user experience, and facilitate more efficient daily archival operations.

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Author Contributions statement

Ominde Julius O. conceived and designed the study, collected and analyzed the data, and drafted the manuscript. Dr. Lamek Ronoh and Dr. Anne Mugalavai provided academic supervision, contributed to study design and data interpretation, and critically reviewed the manuscript for important intellectual content. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

Declaration of conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Declaration of generative AI and AI-assisted technologies in the writing process

The author(s), while preparing this work, utilized ChatGPT for spell checking and grammar refinement. After using this AI tool, the author(s) carefully reviewed and edited the content as necessary and assume(s) full responsibility for the publication's content.

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