

**RECORDS MANAGEMENT PRACTICES IN INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER  
LEARNING IN SOUTH AFRICA: A CASE OF UNIVERSITY OF VENDA**

by

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## DECLARATION

I Singo Geven, declare that this dissertation titled: "RECORDS MANAGEMENT PRACTICES IN INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER LEARNING IN SOUTH AFRICA: A CASE OF UNIVERSITY OF VENDA", hereby submitted to the Programme of Information Studies, Department of Communication, Media and Information Studies belongs to me and has not been submitted before for any other degree at any other university. I also declare that this is my work and the references have been duly acknowledged.



.....  
Singo G

04 December2023

Date

## **DEDICATION**

This work is dedicated to my loving mother, Sarah Singo; my daughter, Rudzani; my brother, Singo Mboneni and my family, whose unconditional support, encouragement, love, and inspiration have enabled me to complete this research project.

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## **ABSTRACT**

This qualitative study aimed to explore the records management practices at the University of Venda in South Africa. An interpretivist philosophy guided the study to understand subjective experiences of records management staff. Case study approach was used to gain in-depth insights into the University's records management. The study used qualitative semi-structured interviews and thematic analysis. Ten purposively selected records management personnel participated. Primary data were collected through in-depth, face-to-face interviews. Interview transcripts were thematically analysed using NVivo software. Key findings were that records management practices are inconsistent across the University due to gaps in oversight; a continued dependence on paper records was also found, though digital growth is acknowledged; perspectives on the benefits of records management varied among staff; inadequate infrastructure and systems pose major challenges; legal compliance ambiguities persist across departments; and poor record accessibility and retrieval hamper operations. Recommendations made were to develop a comprehensive records management strategy and electronic records system; provide extensive training programmes to build expertise; establish centralised governance to coordinate practices; conduct regular audits for monitoring and compliance; and formulate policies for consistency in records management. In summary, the study revealed substantial deficiencies in records management practices compared to standards and provides evidence-based recommendations focused on strategy, technology, training, governance and auditing to modernise and strengthen records management across the University.

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## **CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY**

### **1.1. BACKGROUND AND MOTIVATION**

Evidently, numerous global institutions engage in the creation of records, whether it be through deliberate or inadvertent means, with certain establishments pursuing administrative objectives while others adhere to regulatory mandates, among other motivations. Nevertheless, it is imperative to acknowledge that records have emerged as a highly coveted asset, prompting the imperative for enhanced administrative practices that demand the adoption of increasingly standardised methodologies (Ghosh, 2011). In accordance with the scholarly work of Musembi (2016), it is posited that records serve as tangible evidence of the various actions and functions executed within the context of a university setting, for instance. Moreover, it is imperative to concede that the maintenance of records plays a pivotal role in enhancing administrative efficacy, while concurrently serving as a means to authenticate human conduct, foster the principles of good governance, and augment the quality of services rendered within the academic realm (Musembi, 2016).

As per Brooks (2019), it is elucidated that administrative records are meticulously crafted with the purpose of providing comprehensive support for the myriad of actions that transpire within the confines of a university setting. According to Khumalo and Chigariro (2017), institutions cannot lay claim to the attributes of accountability and transparency unless they establish and adhere to a robust policy governing the management of records. Building upon this notion, Luthuli and Buthelezi (2021) expound that universities, being public enterprises, bear the responsibility of being accountable and transparent.

As posited by Ngoepe and Van Der Walt (2009), the operational endeavours of institutions are fundamentally predicated upon their ability to access and utilise the information encapsulated within records. Consequently, the discipline of records management is widely recognised as an essential cornerstone in the realm of effective

institutional governance and administration. The implementation of sound record management practices facilitates the timely and efficient retrieval of records and pertinent information. The researcher posits that the implementation of records management facilitates the expeditious elimination of inefficient and obsolete records through the means of destruction or transfer to archival repositories. However, the profound importance of meticulous records management is often only truly recognised in the aftermath of an unfortunate occurrence (Musembi, 2016). The aforementioned events, namely; the downfall of Enron and the catastrophic collapse of the World Trade Centre Towers during the twenty-first century, have significantly amplified the significance of archives and records services within the United States, as expounded upon by Suermann and Isa in their scholarly work published in 2009. Moreover, the precipitous downfall of Enron, a prominent energy corporation, and the catastrophic annihilation of the iconic World Trade Centre Towers have served as poignant reminders of the utmost significance attributed to the meticulous preservation and management of records.

Within the realm of higher education, the meticulous management of records assumes a paramount significance, particularly in instances where academic institutions find themselves immersed in an environment characterised by the utmost importance placed upon governance, audit, and risk factors. The aforementioned assertion aligns with the findings posited by Ngulube (2004), wherein the author expounded upon the significant challenge of inadequate accessibility to records within public institutions. According to Ngoepe, Mokoena and Ngulube (2010), it is of utmost importance for a university, specifically its faculties and schools, to discern and protect records that substantiate its fundamental activities encompassing pedagogy, scholarship, inquiry, and societal engagement. Moreover, it has been posited by Atulomah (2011) that the documentation of organisational and institutional records yields valuable insights that can serve as a blueprint for effective strategic planning and informed decision-making.

Nwaomah (2017) expounded upon the aforementioned assertion by affirming that the implementation of effective and efficient record and information management practices

holds paramount importance in ensuring the seamless functioning of an organisation or institution. The aforementioned statement underscores the paramount significance of meticulous record-keeping within the realm of institutions of higher education. Universities can utilise records as a means to showcase their adherence to optimal methodologies and established protocols. In a similar vein, Ngoepe (2014) posits that institutions of higher education depend on effective records management practices to provide comprehensive services, fulfil their obligations of accountability to the local community, students, and faculty, and safeguard their respective rights.

As posited by Kemoni and Wamukoya (2000), a robust records management system serves the dual purpose of facilitating the dissemination of vital information essential for the effective functioning of a higher education establishment, while concurrently highlighting the pernicious consequences that may ensue from inadequate record management practices, thereby posing a significant threat to the institution's well-being. According to Chigariro and Khumalo (2017), it is evident that record management has assumed a pivotal role as a potent facilitator in the advancement and dissemination of information, expertise, and methodologies pertaining to the optimal practises associated with the creation and administration of institutional records. The present study endeavoured to examine and scrutinise the intricate realm of records management practices within an academic institution known as University of Venda.

## **1.2. PROBLEM STATEMENT**

Despite the undeniable evidence on the significance of records management within the context of universities, it is evident that the implementation and utilisation of records management practices in South African institutions of higher education are not accorded the level of appreciation and utilisation they truly deserve (Mnjama, 2002). According to Egwunyenga (2009), the insufficiency of financial resources, adequately skilled personnel, appropriate infrastructure, the surge in student enrolment, and the subsequent spatial constraints, along with the scarcity of material resources, collectively impede the effective maintenance of records. Nevertheless, the presence of

unattainable, erroneous, and deficient records, coupled with deceitful records, detrimentally impact the conceptualisation and implementation of architectural frameworks and amenities, appropriate allocation of financial resources, and meticulous formulation and assessment of policies within institutions of higher education (Utulu, 2001).

Certain academic institutions may lack comprehensive guidelines pertaining to the organisation and management of records. According to Netshakhuma (2019), the absence of a comprehensive record manual and inadequate filing requirements can potentially lead to the inadvertent loss of vital information. In addition, it has been observed that certain universities have indeed been successful in generating records that possess the qualities of accuracy, reliability, and trustworthiness, while also satisfying the necessary evidentiary standards (Chaputula, 2022). However, it is worth noting that these records are not being sufficiently administered and supervised. The scholar argues that the management of records plays a crucial role in the administration of higher education, commencing with the inception of programmes and persisting throughout the phases of execution, supervision, assessment, and rejuvenation, thereby underscoring the indispensable nature of these data for the institution's sustained existence. Furthermore, it is worth noting that the procedures pertaining to record management, specifically those concerning record generation, maintenance, and destruction, exhibit a dearth of explicitly delineated initiation and termination stages. The research and experimentation conducted by Maicibi and Nkata (2005) have shed light on the significance of records management within the commercial context. The existing body of research has predominantly focused on examining the various factors that influence the adoption of electronic records management systems.

Additionally, scholars have explored the nature and characteristics of staff records, shedding light on their intricacies and peculiarities (Mosweu and Rakemane, 2020). However, there exists a dearth of scholarly literature that is grounded in empirical research pertaining to the efficacy of records management practices within the realm of university administration. Furthermore, the existing body of literature concerning the



utilisation of records management methodologies, including record creation, upkeep, and elimination, by university administrators to enhance their professional efficacy, is rather limited (Senabulya, 2013). The research conducted by Chinyemba and Ngulube (2005) at the University of KwaZulu-Natal revealed a discrepancy between the anticipated outcomes and the actual results pertaining to the preservation of the institution's records collection, which documented its operational history. The researchers additionally unearthed challenges, such as the conspicuous lack of comprehensive records management guidelines at the university level. Any extant regulations and protocols were formulated solely as a consequence of individual endeavours.

Effective record management is crucial for universities to enhance their operational efficiency, fulfil their obligations, safeguard against legal disputes, uphold institutional knowledge, and establish a culture of transparency and sound administration. Ngoepe and Ngulube (2014) substantiate this assertion by positing that establishments that adeptly manage their records acquire an instantaneous edge in the competitive landscape, as they are empowered to harness the entirety of accessible information resources. As posited by Gold (1995), the strategic utilisation of record management emerges as a covert instrument and triumphant approach for an organisation to attain a distinctive edge in the competitive landscape. The University of Venda has implemented a comprehensive record management practice to effectively support the institution's day-to-day administrative operations. The underlying assumption posits that lingering challenges persist in the realm of records management, which are essential for facilitating the University of Venda's routine administrative operations. Consequently, it becomes imperative to fully grasp and thoroughly examine the multifaceted role played by records management in this context.

### **1.3. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

#### **1.3.1. Aim**

According to Babbie (2001), the aim of any research project should be understood as a general statement of intent, a broad aim with very little precision, that the researcher hopes to achieve when the entire research is completed. The aim of this research was to evaluate records management practices at the University of Venda.

#### **1.3.2. Objectives of the study**

The objective of the study is assessing records management practices and the contribution of effective records management to enhancing records management at university of Venda, and further to:

- To establish records management practices at the University of Venda.
- To determine awareness of the benefits of records management practices at the University of Venda.
- To identify the University of Venda's records management challenges.
- To determine effective strategies for improving records management at the University of Venda.

### **1.4. RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The study attempted to answer the following questions:

- What are the records management practices at the University of Venda?
- What are awareness of the benefits of records management practices at the University of Venda?
- What are record management challenges faced by the University of Venda?
- What are effective strategies for records management at the University of Venda?

### **1.5. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

As per the scholarly work of Creswell (2003), the evaluation of a study's significance is contingent upon several key determinants. These determinants encompass the study's contribution to the existing body of academic research and literature within the respective field, its potential to augment practical applications within the area of interest, and its capacity to yield advantageous outcomes for policy formulation and implementation. The present investigation makes a valuable contribution to the existing corpus of knowledge in the field of Information Studies pertaining to records management systems within the context of higher education. Furthermore, it serves to optimise records management practices within institutions of higher education while effectively addressing any deficiencies within the records department. The present study serves to further augment the existing corpus of knowledge by elucidating the paramount importance of records management methodologies within the realm of higher education administration. Moreover, it is imperative to underscore the paramount importance of implementing exemplary records management methodologies within the realm of organisational management, as this not only facilitates expeditious retrieval of pertinent documents but also enhances overall operational efficiency.

In the realm of policymaking, the discoveries derived from research serve to enlighten policymakers regarding the formulation and implementation of organisational policies. For instance, one such policy pertains to the integration and facilitation of record management within an organisation, which serves as a regulatory measure aimed at enhancing the overall efficacy of organisational administration. The study additionally made a valuable contribution to the knowledge base within the realm of information practitioners, aiding records management professionals in gaining a deeper comprehension of pertinent records management matters and facilitating the formulation of efficacious records keeping strategies. Hence, the outcomes of this research endeavour are anticipated to engender a heightened sense of consciousness among academic institutions, compelling them to adopt records management as an indispensable instrument for cultivating sound governance practices and cultivating a culture of transparency and responsibility in the realm of proficient and streamlined records preservation. It is fervently anticipated that this scholarly investigation will yield

valuable insights for esteemed policymakers, specifically the university council, in their pursuit of adherence to the legislative framework and policies governing the realm of records management. This intervention will effectively address the prevailing deficiencies in the domain of records management within the context of tertiary education institutions.

## **1.6. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS**

The comprehensive examination of the theoretical frameworks and models underpinning this study can be found in Chapter Two, which is dedicated to an extensive literature review. This section, conversely, is intended to function as an introductory exposition to the theoretical frameworks elucidated in the subsequent chapter. The utilisation of the Records Continuum Model and the Life Cycle of Records Model serves as the fundamental underpinnings for the examination at hand. The study facilitated a streamlined process for participants to provide responses to inquiries predicated upon the aforementioned model, thereby necessitating the amalgamation of the two theoretical frameworks. The utilisation of the Life Cycle Model served as a foundational framework for the investigation, working as an initial juncture for the cultivation of a proficient records management programme. This model facilitates the creation of suitable instruments, systems, and procedures to aptly administer each phase of a record's life cycle (Yusof & Chell, 2000). Duranti and Preston (2008) expound upon the continuum model, characterising it as an intricately designed framework for record-keeping that serves to enhance provenance, establish accountability, and furnish authoritative sources of value-added information. The comprehensive examination of the theories and models that serve as the foundation for this study was expounded upon in Chapter Two, specifically in the section dedicated to the theoretical framework. This chapter also encompassed an extensive review of the existing literature in the field.

## **1.7. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW**

In the forthcoming chapter, an exhaustive examination of scholarly literature pertaining to the present research inquiry was provided. The discourse aimed to expound upon antecedent scholarly investigations pertaining to the implementation of records management protocols within the milieu of academic institutions. By delving into the aforementioned studies, the objective was to establish a comprehensive research framework and underscore the inherent importance of the identified issue. The present inquiry encompassed an examination of theoretical models, specifically the Records Life Cycle and Records Continuum Model, which were subjected to critical analysis. These models have been widely acknowledged and embraced within the scholarly discourse, as they offer comprehensive frameworks that facilitate a profound comprehension of the intricate processes inherent in records management. The comprehensive examination of the advantages of proficient records management were thoroughly investigated, as elucidated by esteemed scholars such as Slote (2000), the advantages encompassing the protection of invaluable records, facilitation of information accessibility, enhancement of client services, and facilitation of well-informed decision-making are pivotal to the intrinsic worth of records management within the academic realm.

Furthermore, this chapter thoroughly analysed the recommended strategies and best practices for augmenting records management programmes, drawing upon the extensive body of literature available on the subject matter. The forthcoming section entailed a comprehensive examination of the legislative and regulatory landscape pertaining to records management, with a specific focus on the laws and policies that hold relevance within the South African milieu. This review aptly situated the study within the expansive realm of records management research and practice. The present study endeavoured to identify and address the lacunae in the existing body of literature by adopting a context-specific approach to examine the records management practices within a South African university.

## **1.8. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **1.8.1. Research Design**

The present study employed a qualitative research methodology, utilising a case study design to investigate the records management practices at the University of Venda. In this regard, the records officer and records manager participated in a series of meticulously crafted inquiries pertaining to their respective roles and responsibilities within the University's records management system.

### **1.8.2. Population and Sampling**

The population of the study comprised the records officers and records manager at the University of Venda. Researcher employed the purposive sampling technique to facilitate an in-depth investigation into the record management practices implemented at the esteemed University of Venda.

### **1.8.3 Data Collection**

The researcher used interview questions, where data were collected by means of asking questionnaires consisting of open-ended and closed-ended questions.

### **1.8.4 Data Analysis**

Data were collected through Interviews and transcribed thematically analysed using NVivo software.

### **1.8.4 Ethical Considerations**

Prior to commencing any research endeavour, it is imperative to conscientiously contemplate and incorporate a set of ethical principles. In the present investigation, the scholar was compelled to submit an application for an ethical clearance certificate to conduct the study. Furthermore, it is imperative for the researcher to demonstrate a

profound commitment to upholding the principles of privacy and confidentiality when engaging with study participants. Henceforth, the participants were duly instructed to abstain from inscribing their personal appellations upon the questionnaire. Prior to proceeding with the questionnaire, participants were additionally required to diligently fulfil and affix their signature on a consent form. A comprehensive exposition on the meticulous observance of ethical principles in this study can be found in Chapter Three of the present study.

### **1.9. Limitations of the Study**

While the purpose of this study was to give complete insights into records management practises at the University of Venda, it is important to recognise the limitations that may impact the interpretability and generalizability of its findings and suggestions.

For starters, the research was confined to the University of Venda, therefore the findings may not be relevant to other universities. Although excellent in-depth insights have been gained, the localised emphasis limits the results' broader application. Additional validation would be required for generalisation to other educational institutions, particularly those with diverse organisational structures or cultures (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). This is consistent with Yin's (2014) warning about the inherent limits of case studies in providing universally applicable findings.

Another significant disadvantage is the small sample size of 10 individuals. Despite efforts to identify a varied variety of participants from various departments and functions within the institution, the limited sample size may restrict the capacity to draw broad conclusions. The study's qualitative character relies primarily on the viewpoints of these select people, who may not be typical of the university's greater population (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaa, 2013).

Furthermore, the study relied on self-reported data, such as opinions and experiences, which is prone to subjectivity and bias. Although self-reported statistics are important for capturing participants' perspectives and experiences (Patton, 2015), they may not be a fully accurate picture of the university's real condition of records management. Individual

biases, cognitive biases, or even organisational politics may impact such data, thereby influencing the validity of the conclusions (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2013).

Another disadvantage of the study was its period. Due to academic deadlines and participant availability, the research was limited to a very short period of time. This constraint prevented the use of longitudinal methodologies, which would have allowed for a more nuanced assessment of changes in records management practises across time (Bryman, 2015).

Finally, this research did not do a thorough cost-benefit analysis for implementing its suggestions. While the suggested modifications seek to be both transformational and practical, their economic sustainability remains an issue that needs additional investigation. Given that financial restrictions are a typical barrier in higher education, as Marginson (2016) points out, a full-fledged economic analysis would have bolstered the study's conclusions.

## **1.10. DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS**

To obtain and provide a comprehensive comprehension of the practices pertaining to records management within a university setting, it is imperative to delineate several fundamental terminologies employed in this study. This elucidation serves to augment the readers' comprehension of their significance and mitigate any potential confusion.

### **1.9.1. Records**

Cox (2001) defines records as “an extension of human memory, purposefully created to record information, document transactions, communicate thoughts, substantiate claims, advance explanations, offer justifications and provide lasting evidence of events”. Healy’s (2010) definition of a record is “information created, received, and maintained as evidence and information by an organisation or person, in pursuance of legal obligations or in the transaction of business”. Shepherd (2006) states that “records which



are managed as part of an appropriate records management programme will help the organisation to conduct business in an efficient, accountable manner, deliver services consistently, support managerial decision-making and transparent policy formation and ensure continuity in policy execution, management and administration”.

### **1.9.2. Records management**

The discipline of records management, also known as information governance, is a field of study that focuses on the systematic and strategic management of an organisation. Newton (1989) proffers that records management can be defined as the systematic implementation of optimal standards and expertise in the regulation of information that is generated within an organisational context as a consequence of its own operational endeavours. According to Cook (2006), the primary objective of records management is to effectively facilitate the clarification of reliable evidence, the demonstration of organisational policies and transactions, and the preservation of records. Additionally, Katuu (2023) asserts that the establishment of effective record-keeping practices plays a pivotal role in fostering governmental accountability and serves to cultivate the interests of citizens in comprehending and exercising their rights.

### **1.9.3. Records-keeping**

Yusof and Chell (1999) say that the practice of record-keeping encompasses the act of creating and upholding comprehensive, precise, and dependable documentation of commercial transactions, manifested in the medium of recorded information. In the context of this study, record-keeping is operationally defined as the intricate procedure encompassing the generation, acquisition, arrangement, and preservation of documentation pertaining to the activities and transactions of an individual or collective entity. The facilitation of the record-keeping process is augmented by the scholarly endeavour of records management.

#### **1.9.4. Records management practices**

Makgahlela (2021) elucidates that records management practices encompass a confluence of various processes and procedures that are to be diligently adhered to in the realm of record management and preservation. In the context of this study, the practice of records management is delineated as the discipline of administration that bears the responsibility of effectually and methodically governing the inception, reception, preservation, utilisation, and disposal of records. This encompasses the requisite processes and protocols to be adhered to when capturing and upholding the substantiation of, as well as records pertaining to, commercial undertakings and transactions. As elucidated by Mwangi (2017), the implementation of records management practices assumes paramount significance owing to its ability to effectively harness records, which serve as invaluable resources within institutional settings. According to Ngoepe (2008), the implementation of effective records management practices is essential to achieve optimal records management outcomes, as the operational functions of institutions heavily rely on the accessibility of information encapsulated within records.

#### **1.10. RESEARCH OUTLINE**

**Chapter One:** This chapter served as an introductory section, providing a concise overview of the subject matter and furnishing a brief contextual backdrop to the study in relation to the research problem, aim and objectives, limitations, significance, and the elucidation of key ideas. The research topic was identified as the central focus of the overall research endeavour, while the significance of the study encompassed the underlying rationale, importance, and relevance of the research. The chapter concluded by presenting the fundamental notions that were crucial to this subject.

**Chapter Two:** This chapter provided an overview of the theoretical foundation, and reviewed literature related to records administration within the context of a university setting. Two examples of models used in the field of records management are the

Records Life Cycle Model and the Records Continuum Model. This chapter additionally elucidated the notion of records management.

**Chapter Three:** The chapter provided a comprehensive analysis of the research methodology employed for data collection in the study. This chapter encompassed an overview of the research technique and design employed in the study, as well as the demographic and sampling method utilised. Additionally, it discussed the data collection devices employed and the methodology employed for data analysis.

**Chapter Four:** The process of presenting, analysing, and interpreting data was stated comprehensively in this chapter. This chapter, therefore, encompassed the exposition and examination of data. The findings were presented and examined in this chapter and thereafter analysed and interpreted in a descriptive manner, employing a narrative approach that drew upon existing literature.

**Chapter Five:** The final chapter of the study presented a comprehensive analysis of the primary findings and conclusions pertaining to the research objectives, with a particular focus on the conclusions that were drawn from the findings of the study. Additionally, this chapter provided recommendations based on the study's outcomes. The recommendations presented in this study were derived from the findings and conclusions, and were deemed applicable not just to this particular study, but also to future studies that may emerge from the outcomes of this research.

### **1.11. SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER**

In Chapter 1, the backdrop and rationale for the present study on records management practices at the University of Venda were presented. The purpose and context of the study were established by outlining the problem statement, research questions, aim, objectives, and importance. The fundamental notions of records, records management, and records management practices were explicitly delineated. The theoretical frameworks employed in this study encompassed the records Life Cycle and Records

Continuum theories. The researcher provided a concise summary of the literature, indicating that a comprehensive review would be presented in Chapter 2. The research methodology was succinctly outlined, encompassing the utilisation of a qualitative approach, an exploratory case study design, purposive sampling techniques, interviews as the primary means of data collecting, and subsequent theme analysis. The study's delimitations and ethical considerations were also clearly delineated. In summary, Chapter 1 established the fundamental basis for the comprehensive examination of records management practices at the University of Venda that was discussed in the following chapters.

## **CHAPTER 2: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1. INTRODUCTION**

In the preceding chapter, the various facets pertaining to the contextual underpinnings of the research problem, the study's overarching aim, the significance of the study, and the organisational structure of the chapter were deliberated upon. This chapter elucidates the conceptual underpinnings and comprehensive examination of the extant scholarly works pertaining to the subject matter at hand. The theoretical frameworks were deliberately chosen to provide guidance to this study were the Record Continuum Theory and the Life Cycle Theory. The comprehensive review of the existing literature presented a valuable occasion to delve into the pertinent body of research conducted on the subject matter of university records management. The comprehensive examination of the existing body of literature has effectively illuminated the various methodologies and research techniques that have been previously employed in similar studies. Furthermore, it has successfully identified the theoretical frameworks that have been utilised to conceptualise the variables under investigation, as highlighted by Du Toit and Mouton (2013). The initial phase entailed the selected subject matter into a meticulously crafted research objective with the aim of critically examining the current body of scholarly literature. By employing this methodology, the researcher effectively elucidated the existing scholarly discourse pertaining to the subject matter under investigation. The assertion in question finds validation in the scholarly work of Marobane (2021), who posited that it is incumbent upon the researcher to delineate the position of their study within the broader global landscape, specifically in relation to the existing body of literature, thereby situating it within the overarching realm of scientific knowledge.

### **2.2. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

The utilisation of a conceptual framework within the realm of research is an invaluable instrument that is distinguished by its meticulousness, comprehensiveness, and capacity to produce outcomes that can be seamlessly linked to preexisting investigations (Stewart

& Klein, 2016). Gwatiringa, Modiba and Mavondo (2022) argue that the presence of a theoretical framework holds significant importance in defining the boundaries of investigation and shaping the perspective from which phenomena are examined. Furthermore, it expounds upon the intricate dynamics that exist between current research pursuits and the preexisting corpus of knowledge. The author presents an additional proposition in which the conceptual framework incorporates the way in which current research enhances the research being analysed. Concurrently, Legodi (2021) argues that the theoretical framework functions as a medium through which the complexities of the study are contextualised and expounded upon for both the researcher and the reader. The current investigation adopted the Records Life Cycle Model and the Records Continuum Model as its conceptual framework.

### **2.2.1 The Records Life Cycle Model**

The Records Life Cycle Model, initially posited by Theodore Schellenberg during the 1960s, continues to exert a significant impact as a conceptual framework for comprehending the progressive phases within the realm of records management. Fundamentally, this model illustrates the trajectory of records as they traverse discrete stages, commencing from their inception and culminating in their ultimate disposition (Williamson, 2020). Gaining a comprehensive comprehension of these distinct phases facilitates the development of suitable systems aimed at effectively managing records throughout their entire life cycle.

The initial phase entails the process of creation, during which records are generated as a direct result of various activities conducted within the university setting. The significance of this phase cannot be overstated, as the initial metadata and organisation have a profound influence on the subsequent management processes (Saffady, 2021). Subsequently, the records undergo a phase characterised by vigorous utilisation and meticulous upkeep, thereby enabling seamless operational processes. Over the course of temporal progression, records that experience diminished utilisation gradually transition into a state of semi-activity and yet persist in their preservation. Over time,

records undergo a transition from an active state to an inactive state, ultimately leading to their disposition through either destruction or archival processes, which are determined through a meticulous appraisal process (Chiwambo, 2022).

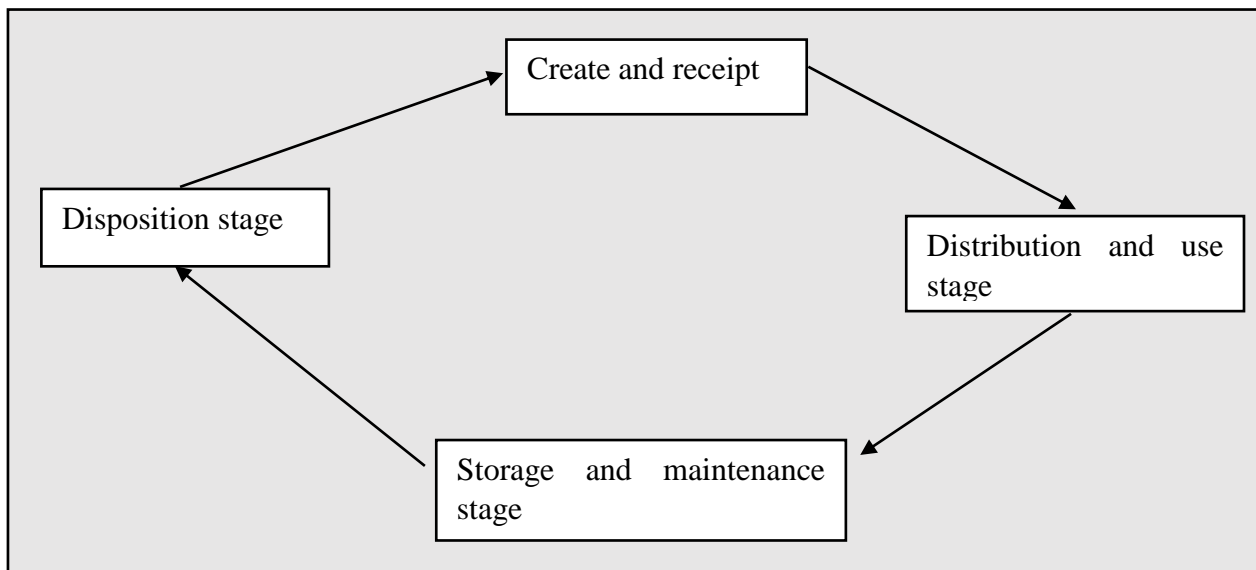
The life cycle model offers a notable advantage by elucidating a well-defined sequence of steps that impart a sense of discipline and structure to the domain of records management (Murillo, 2020). The process of document organisation serves to establish a coherent structure amidst the vast expanse of accumulated textual materials. Nevertheless, it is imperative to acknowledge that rigid constructs possess inherent limitations within the contemporary landscape of dynamic digital environments, wherein records' uses are constantly evolving (Ndenje-Sichalwe, 2021). The model places a greater emphasis on custodial actions pertaining to records, rather than adopting a comprehensive approach to information governance (Kasim, 2020).

The life cycle approach continues to hold significant value for universities, as it offers a comprehensive framework for effectively managing records during crucial stages of transformation (Jain, 2020). Lecture attendance registration undergo a transition from an active state to a semi-active state throughout a student's attendance trajectory, thereby influencing the allocation of access privileges. Administrative records have the potential to transition from a semi-active state to one of archival preservation once their operational significance diminishes. The spatial, technological, and handling requirements vary across different stages. The act of delineating these distinct phases facilitates the strategic management of resources and systems.

The proposed model presents a linear perspective on the advancement of stages. However, contemporary frameworks such as the continuum model place greater emphasis on the dynamic and interconnected nature of records curation over time (Masalu, 2021). Integrated approaches demonstrate a superior alignment with the intricate and multifaceted nature of contemporary university environments, which are characterised by the proliferation of digital records that serve diverse purposes concurrently. The augmentation of scholarly comprehension and the facilitation of

institutional progress can be achieved through the continued amalgamation of various models (Chiwambo, 2020). The primary objective of this study was to investigate the applicability of the Life Cycle Model in the context of a particular South African university that is striving to enhance its records management practices in a more proactive manner. Evaluating the efficacy and constraints of academic records policies and practices may contribute to the enhancement thereof.

**Figure 1:** Records Life Cycle Model



**Source:** Shepherd and Yeo (2003)

### 2.2.1.1. Create and receipts

The inception and acquisition stages mark the initiation of the record’s life cycle. The present phase encompasses the generation and acquisition of documents within the organisational framework for the purpose of conducting business operations and/or executing concepts articulated within said documents. MacNeil and Eastwood (2017) say that it is imperative to commence the process of records management by undertaking the initial step, which involves establishing the underlying principles that elucidate the circumstances and justifications surrounding the creation of records, both in the present and in the past. While the rationales underlying the creation of records



may exhibit variability, it is unequivocally evident that their paramount significance lies in their capacity to function as substantiating evidence for the occurrence of specific activities. Moreover, it is imperative to acknowledge that records serve as a mechanism to ensure the utmost accountability of individuals engaged in various activities, thereby holding them responsible for their actions and decisions. Moreover, the establishment of records is undertaken with the primary objective of preserving and retaining recollections of occurrences, all the while functioning as invaluable repositories of knowledge for forthcoming undertakings within an academic institution (Phiri & Tough, 2018). In the records creation stage, it is imperative to acknowledge the presence of multiple stakeholders. However, it is crucial to recognise that among these stakeholders, the record creators hold paramount significance. This is attributed to the fact that they bear the primary responsibility for effectively managing the record.

#### **2.2.1.2. Distribution and use stage**

The second stage of the records continuum process involves the examination and analysis of the distribution and utilisation of the collected data. This particular stage encompasses the utilisation of archival materials through the active engagement with the information they encapsulate. According to Saffady (2021), the concepts of distribution and use pertain to the intricate management of records that are both generated and received within the organisational context. The distribution of records may occur both intra-organisational and inter-organisational contexts, as it pertains to the conduct of business transactions with external entities. According to Phiri and Tough (2018), the records in question, at this particular stage, are commonly denoted as active records. Moreover, records play a pivotal role in the ongoing activities and operations within the organisational framework. The individual responsible for the creation or reception of a record assumes a pivotal position in the administration of said record.

#### **2.1.1.3. Storage and maintenance stage**

The stage of storage and maintenance encompasses the process by which a determination is made to retain a given record for future utilisation, subsequently leading to its storage, retrieval, and safeguarding (Ngoepe, 2014). Additionally, it should be noted that during the progression of this particular phase, the aforementioned records are diligently and meticulously stored within a highly secure and inaccessible registry, ensuring utmost protection and confidentiality. Access to such records is restricted solely to personnel affiliated with the registry. In accordance with the established protocols of the institution, it is permissible for individuals affiliated with the said institution to submit a formal written request for access to the records. Upon the conferral of access, the inquirer of the document is bestowed with a designated temporal interval within which they are obliged to duly restore the said document to the registry for the purpose of safekeeping. Moreover, it is imperative to note that this particular phase encompasses the intricate task of record maintenance, wherein diligent efforts are undertaken to safeguard the integrity of records and rectify any damage inflicted upon those with torn covers. The act of maintaining records should refrain from engaging in any form of content modification (Maseh, 2015). During this particular phase, it is imperative that the records manager assumes full responsibility for the records, as they are securely housed within the confines of the records management section under their diligent supervision. The archives are actively engaged in the provision of guidance and implementation of best practises pertaining to records management. The aforementioned task is typically accomplished by means of performing meticulous examinations of records and discerning noteworthy aspects (Sharma, 2011).

#### **2.2.1.4. Disposition stage**

Disposition represents the ultimate stage within the comprehensive life cycle of records. As posited by Ngoepe (2014), subsequent to the lapse of a pre-established temporal interval, the aforementioned records are duly disposed of, either through the process of annihilation or through their relocation to a perpetually designated repository within the archives. According to Marutha (2016), the proper management of records necessitates the recognition of the significance of disposing of said records as a crucial operational

undertaking. The process of disposal encompasses the actions of preserving, eradicating, transferring, or annihilating records subsequent to the completion of appraisal and the subsequent determination that said records are to be discarded. Maseh (2015) opines that the aforementioned records are presently in a state of inactivity and are slated for disposal subsequent to careful deliberation of their respective retention periods. During this particular stage, archives assume a pivotal role in facilitating the determination of records' value via the appraisal process.

The records possessing inherent archival value are duly preserved, while those lacking such archival value are subjected to appropriate disposal measures. In the process of disposing records, it is imperative to adhere to the prescribed protocol of obtaining a disposal authority, which necessitates submitting an application and subsequently receiving approval prior to initiating any disposal activities. In the context of South Africa, the determination of authorisation for the act of disposal is entrusted to the esteemed National Archives of South Africa or the provincial archives, contingent upon the prescribed duration of retention for the given record, the inherent worth of the said record, and any additional circumstances that may exert influence upon the disposition of said record (Marutha, 2016). In alternative scenarios, it is plausible that certain records may be deemed to possess archival worthiness during the process of disposal. Consequently, in such circumstances, it becomes conceivable for said records to undergo a transfer process. Pursuant to the provisions outlined in section 11(2) (a) of the National Archives Act, it is imperative that public records, which have been duly recognised as possessing archival significance during the disposal procedure, be promptly conveyed to the designated repository of an archival institution.

The life cycle theory of records was deemed appropriate for application within the context of this research endeavour. The aforementioned theory exhibits considerable promise in its potential application within the realm of university records management. This phenomenon can be attributed to the implementation of systems integration within university settings, resulting in the generation of various records. The operational procedures of the university necessitate the establishment, examination, elimination,

and preservation of records through the implementation of the Archives and Records Management protocols. In light of the aforementioned context, it was imperative to employ the Records Life Cycle Model in this scholarly investigation due to its inherent congruence with the overarching research purpose, inquiries, and objectives. In light of the researcher's objective to investigate the intricacies of records management throughout the entire life cycle of a record, it was determined that the Records Life Cycle model would be the most appropriate framework to employ within the academic institution, University of Venda. The examination of the application of the records life cycle to records within universities holds paramount significance.

### **2.2.2. Records Continuum Model**

The Records Continuum Model has emerged as a prominent theoretical framework that provides guidance for contemporary records management practises. The Records Continuum Model, which originated in Australia during the 1980s, proposes a comprehensive approach to the management of records, ensuring their seamless integration throughout their entire life cycle (Jain, 2020). The foregoing assertion addresses the issue of fragmented approaches in the domains of records management, archival custody, and historical preservation (Chiwambo, 2021).

The fundamental essence of the continuum model lies in its emphasis on the active curation and preservation of records as invaluable informational assets, as opposed to their passive warehousing (Murillo, 2020). An acknowledgment is made that the establishment of comprehensive metadata during the initial stages of records' existence enhances their subsequent administration and utilisation for a wide range of objectives, spanning from operational purposes to facilitating public accessibility (Kasim, 2021). An additional fundamental tenet pertains to the imperative collaboration between records managers and archivists, as opposed to operating within isolated domains (Williamson, 2020). The persistent maintenance of records' evidential integrity and availability is ensured through continuous management from their inception.

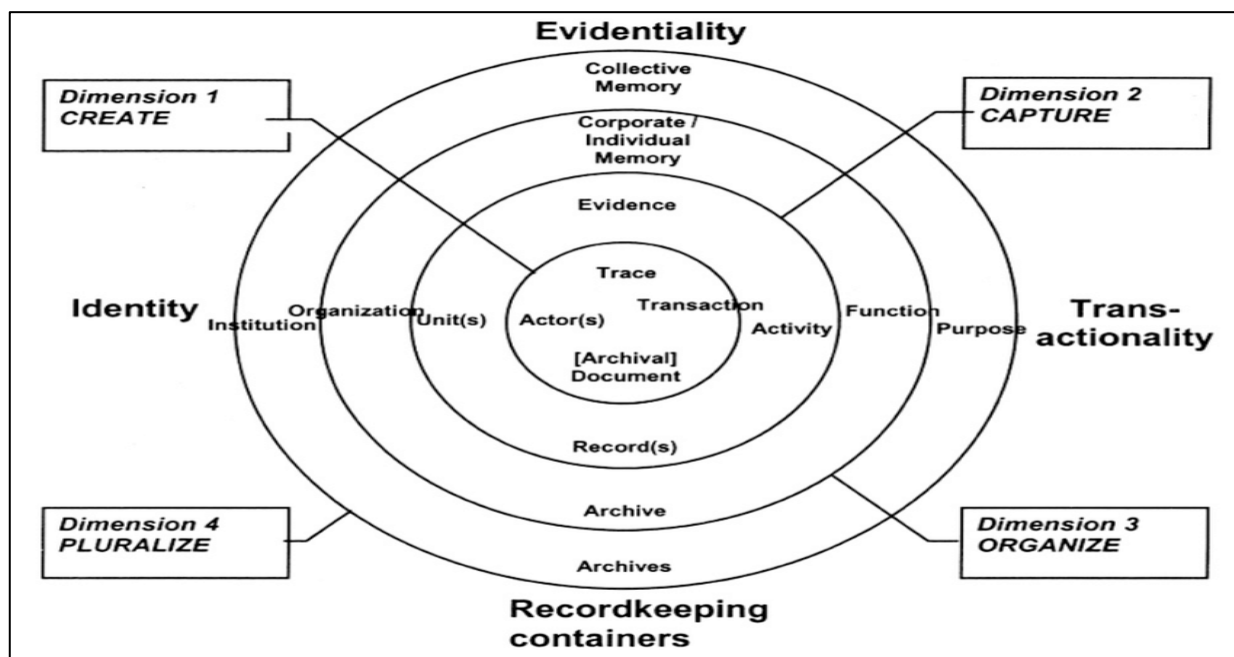
The continuum model holds significant relevance in contemporary times as educational institutions strive to strike a delicate equilibrium between conventional paper records and the exponentially increasing volume of born-digital content. The aforementioned statement posits a comprehensive framework that facilitates the management of hybrid physical and electronic records in a cohesive manner, grounded in their informational value and interconnections, rather than their physical manifestation (Saffady, 2021). The implementation of continuum thinking has the potential to elevate the practice of university records management from a mere reactive custody approach to a more strategic curation approach (Chiwambo, 2020). The task at hand encompasses the intricate process of formulating a cohesive system of governance and infrastructure that effectively dismantles the existing obstacles between present-day operational accessibility and the imperative preservation of historical artefacts (Ndenje-Sichalwe, 2022).

As an illustration, digitisation initiatives would proactively undertake the conversion of vulnerable paper-based records into durable digital formats that can be effectively utilised across various operational domains. The integration of descriptive standards, such as metadata, would be harmonised to facilitate the process of discovery and the preservation of contextual information. This approach would prioritise the unification of these standards, rather than optimising them independently for internal workflows or external research access. The competencies and duties of the staff would align with the objective of consistently enhancing the value of records as dynamic information assets within varying time frames.

The recognition of the adoption of a continuum approach presents inherent complexities, as it necessitates the profound transformation of existing systems, cultural norms, and cognitive frameworks (Masalu, 2020). However, it is important to emphasise the significance of research in facilitating a comprehensive approach to university records management, which in turn ensures the preservation of institutional memory. The primary objective of this study is to offer valuable insights into the various opportunities and barriers associated with the implementation of continuum thinking within the context

of a South African university. In light of the growing demand for empirical research evaluating the efficacy of the continuum model in the context of contemporary academic records management, Murillo (2021) provides a response to such calls. The discoveries would enhance the scholarly comprehension and provide assistance to universities that are striving to enhance their records management practises.

**Figure 2:** The Records Continuum Model



**Source:** <https://www.ispatguru.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/The-records-continuum-a-spacetime-model.jpg>

According to Upward (2005), the Records Continuum Model represents a significant shift in archival practice. This transition entails departing from a longstanding tradition where continuity relied on sequential control. The model additionally espoused an integrated approach to the management of documents, records, and archives. According to Upward (2005), the Records Continuum Model establishes a convergence between the fundamental processes of the records life cycle (creation, capture, organisation, and pluralisation) and the various dimensions of records. The four dimensions encompassed within this particular framework are as follows:

Dimension 1: Creation - This dimension centres around the principal agents, the actions undertaken, and the written records that document and delineate said actions. Dimension 2: known as "Capture," delves into the intricate realm of personal and organisational record-keeping systems. This dimension scrutinises the policies in place that guarantee the capture of records in their appropriate context and with an adequate level of detail, thereby rendering them suitable for use as evidentiary material. The third dimension, known as Dimension 3: pertains to the intricate organisation of recordkeeping processes within an organisation. It is imperative to establish a recordkeeping regime that is robust enough to effectively capture and preserve a comprehensive account of both the organisational and societal activities undertaken. Dimension 4: encompasses the incorporation of records within the societal framework in which they are situated.

The integration of these two models serves to expedite and accommodate the coexistence of the manual system, which remains pertinent, and the electronic system. Bantin (2008) provides support for the assertions made by Roper and Millar (1999) regarding the limitations of the Life Cycle Model and continuum in effectively managing electronic records and manual records. The aforementioned limitations have faced significant criticism, thereby necessitating the emergence of the continuum model as a viable alternative for managing both electronic and paper-based records.

### **2.2.3. Theoretical Argumentation and Integration to the Study**

The present study was underpinned by two fundamental theoretical frameworks, namely; the Records Life Cycle Model and the Records Continuum Model. The records Life Cycle Model serves as a conceptual framework that elucidates the various stages involved in the management of records, spanning from their inception to their ultimate disposal (Yusof & Chell, 2000). The present discourse offers a theoretical framework for scrutinising the management of records throughout their entire life cycle within the University of Venda. In the realm of records management, the Records Continuum Model presents an all-encompassing methodology that facilitates the seamless

management of records, transcending the confines of administrative and archival boundaries (Upward, 2005). Collectively, these models offer a comprehensive framework for investigating the research objectives pertaining to the practices and strategies of records management. The continuum model effectively integrates both digital and physical records, thereby offering a comprehensive framework for comprehending contemporary university records systems.

### **2.3. RECORDS MANAGEMENT PRACTICES AT UNIVERSITIES**

The field of records management encompasses a scholarly discipline that employs a methodical and effective approach to governing the documented information within an academic institution throughout the various phases of its records life cycle (Netshakhuma, 2020). Furthermore, it is imperative to note that the management of records extends beyond their mere existence, encompassing their entire life cycle from inception to final disposition. In this regard, it is essential to highlight the systematic elimination of records devoid of any discernible value, including those pertaining to unsuccessful applicants who did not meet the stringent criteria set forth by the esteemed institution. Simultaneously, it is of paramount importance to safeguard and uphold valuable information, ensuring its preservation and accessibility in a manner that facilitates efficient utilisation. Moreover, it is vital to acknowledge the presence of three distinct categories of records within the academic institutions, specifically denoted as “current or active records, semi-current records, and non-current records” (Namuddu, 2019). Moreover, the active stage represents a pivotal phase wherein records are indispensably utilised to meticulously uphold comprehensive information pertaining to the operational facets of the organisation on a day-to-day basis. Conversely, the semi-active stage signifies a distinct period during which the records cease to be of immediate necessity in directly bolstering the routine operations of the organisation. Marshall, Pytel and Yurek (2007) posit that once the principal utility of records to an organisation becomes obsolete, they are subsequently deemed inactive. Consequently, it becomes imperative to eliminate transient records that occupy precious office real estate, while simultaneously transferring valuable records to archival repositories. According to the



provisions outlined in Subsection 13(2) of the NARSSA Act 25, appropriate measures must be taken for the archiving or destruction of inactive records, as directed by the provincial archivist.

The praxis of records management encompasses the systematic regulation of documented information with the objective of optimising operational efficiency, guaranteeing compliance with regulatory obligations, and facilitating the enduring preservation of such records (ARMA International, 2020). Netshakhuma (2020) opines that the meticulous implementation of controls across the entire lifespan of a record, commencing from its inception to its ultimate disposition, facilitates the eradication of extraneous records while concurrently ensuring the preservation of those records that possess substantial worth. The principles explicated in the scholarly investigation conducted by Mnjama (2020) possess substantial pertinence within the milieu of tertiary institutions distinguished by the production and supervision of copious administrative, fiscal, educational, and scholarly records. Igwe (2020) says that it has been observed that entities can be categorised into three distinct classifications, namely; active, semi-active, and inactive. The classification of these entities is contingent upon their frequency of utilisation, as determined by scholars in the field. Active records, such as the esteemed student files, serve as a pivotal component in expediting the intricate web of daily operational activities. Entities that exhibit a semi-active state are accessed with a relatively low frequency. Kumalo (2020) notes that records that have undergone a loss of their primary value are subjected to either transfer or disposal. The regulation of university records disposal or archiving in South Africa is governed by the National Archives and records of south Africa Act (Makoti, 2020).

Several recent studies have been undertaken to scrutinise the operational practises employed by universities in the management of their records, with the ultimate objective of acquiring pragmatic insights. In the year 2020, a comprehensive investigation was undertaken by Jones, delving into a multitude of practices within the administrative and academic sectors of Australian institutions. This study encompassed various aspects, namely; classification, tracking, storage, security, and disposal. The findings of the study

have elucidated that the existence of constrained resources and suboptimal coordination has hindered the establishment of standardised protocols. The focal point of Murillo's (2021) study revolved around the paramount significance attributed to the practice of digitalisation, an increasingly indispensable facet within the realm of records management. An inconspicuous implementation of digital formats for the purpose of converting paper-based materials was noted within the educational institutions of Mexico. Both empirical investigations unequivocally demonstrate that institutions of higher education are encountering formidable challenges in the successful implementation and seamless integration of dynamic and progressive methodologies, notwithstanding their explicit recognition of their paramount importance.

A multitude of scholars have undertaken an exhaustive examination of paradigm shifts in the realm of university records management on a global level. Williamson (2020) conducted a comprehensive investigation elucidating the intricate process of transitioning from conventional paper-based records to digital formats, meticulously delineating the manifold prospects and challenges that ensued as a consequence. Ndenje-Sichalwe (2020) conducted a comprehensive analysis, employing a historical perspective to juxtapose current methodologies in the 21st century with the enduring customs of scholarly documentation that have persisted over numerous centuries. This lens elucidates the imperative nature of strategically integrating established and emerging practises to effectively harness the potential of digital prospects.

Scholarly inquiries have likewise been undertaken to examine stakeholder viewpoints on the subject of records management. The scholarly investigation undertaken by Masalu (2020) scrutinised the cognitive dispositions of academic administrators in Tanzania pertaining to the practice of compliance auditing and monitoring. Notwithstanding the duly recognised significance of these practices, a discernible ambivalence was observed. Ngoepe's (2020), comprehensive investigation was conducted to scrutinise the phenomenon known as the value-action gap. The study encompassed a cohort of esteemed university records managers hailing from the illustrious nation of South Africa. The primary objective of this scholarly endeavour was

to meticulously discern the underlying catalysts and impediments that exert influence upon the embracement of optimal methodologies within their esteemed domain. The discernment of aptitudes, readiness in technology, and the milieu of the professional environment have surfaced as pivotal components, signifying the imperative for all-encompassing endeavours aimed at expediting metamorphosis.

An additional domain of inquiry concerns the discernment of appropriate conceptual frameworks for the administration of archival materials within an academic institution. Saffady (2021) asserts that it is highly recommended to employ the continuum method, which effectively integrates seamless information lifecycle management into the research process. Kisilu (2020) posits a proposition for an integrated model that amalgamates continuum thinking, life cycle stages, and capability evaluations within his scholarly endeavour. The present framework presents a comprehensive and holistic perspective for the analysis of intricate ecosystems of university records within the context of the real world. Recent scholarly literature has underscored the paramount significance of integrating records management within the strategic imperatives of higher education institutions, surpassing mere isolated technological undertakings. The comprehensive viewpoint encapsulates a multitude of dimensions, comprising the practice-focused, adoption, historical, and conceptual facets (Saffady, 2021). As posited by Jain (2020), the management of records is espoused as an indispensable facet of institutional operations, underscoring its paramount importance as invaluable repositories of information. To effectuate this paradigm shift, it is of utmost importance to possess a resolute governmental apparatus, ample reservoirs of resources, and the indispensable proficiencies (Chiwambo, 2020).

Henceforth, the current corpus of scholarly literature presents a myriad of viewpoints pertaining to the ever-evolving domain of records management within the academic realm. The aforementioned perspectives are derived from meticulously documented practices, robust predictors of adoption, cutting-edge technological advancements, and the formulation of novel theoretical frameworks. In aggregate, these perspectives underscore the pressing need for all-encompassing and enduring capabilities to

strategically govern records within the academic milieu. The interventions expounded upon within this scholarly investigation encompass a myriad of dimensions, namely; perceptual, systemic, and practical aspects. These dimensions are deemed imperative to efficaciously facilitate the transformation of awareness into a state of excellence in the realm of records management. The principal aim of this investigation was to undertake a thorough assessment of the aforementioned dynamics within a South African institution of higher learning. The present research endeavour aimed to effectively bridge the prevailing gaps in regional knowledge by providing practical recommendations that are firmly grounded in the current scholarly literature.

### **2.3.1. Records Management Practices and Standards**

The impact of compliance with legislation and standards on the processes of record creation, utilisation, retrieval, and preservation cannot be overstated. According to Netshakhuma (2020), the optimisation of record creation and capture processes can be achieved through the active involvement of records management professionals, in conjunction with other relevant stakeholders. In contrast, Ngoepe (2019) highlights the crucial nature of adhering to legal and legislative obligations to strengthen the implementation of effective records management practises within organisations. In addition, it is imperative to note that the process of records creation and capturing necessitates the establishment of coherent guidelines aimed at upholding both the integrity and accessibility of said records. Moreover, it entails making informed decisions regarding the implementation of systems that effectively log and track these records, as well as the development of procedures for their registration, classification, and indexing (Yusof & Chell, 1999). Furthermore, according to Netshakhuma (2020), the evaluation of the imperative to generate and retain records necessitates a thorough examination of the organisational prerequisites that furnish substantiation and intelligence for the operational undertakings of an entity, thereby ensuring responsibility and the mechanisms for safeguarding records. Records storage facilities are expected to implement robust measures to safeguard records against unauthorised access, theft,

damage, loss, destruction, and the perils of natural disasters. The aforementioned study, RSA 2003, holds significant relevance within the academic discourse.

Furthermore, Nevhutalu (2016) posits that the subject of records management procedures in South Africa, Africa, and other global regions has long been a topic of considerable scholarly intrigue. According to the International Council on Archives (ICA) in their publication from 2008, the establishment of effective records management practices is of utmost importance for the optimal functioning of an organisation. This is due to the fact that such practices not only facilitate the smooth execution of business activities, but also serve as a foundation for the efficient delivery of services. According to Adzido and Agbanu (2015), the implementation of effective records management practices often leads to the enhancement of proficient public services. Various methodologies for record management exist, one of which is the conventional approach where physical records are handled subsequent to their creation, thereby occupying significant office real estate (Tagbotor, Muchaonyerwa & Khayundi, 2014). As posited by Ngoepe (2019), the genesis of administrative records can be traced to their indispensable role in facilitating and bolstering the multifarious operations undertaken within an organisational framework. He additionally posits that the norms and values which an institution takes into account in its governance practices are a direct consequence of effective governance. According to Keakopa (2013), for records management activities to effectively contribute to organisational strategic directions and broader national development, it is imperative that they are strategically positioned within the organisational framework.

### **2.3.2 Current Standard of Records Management**

According to Tsabedze (2019), the utilisation of importance standards, tools, and procedural strategies can effectively contribute to enhancing the competitive edge of organisations, fostering skill development within the workforce, optimising the utilisation of technology, enhancing overall quality, and facilitating prompt responses to innovative advancements. The methodologies governing the system of Archives and Records

Management are predicated upon the implementation of a standardised framework, which serves as the bedrock for devising strategies that have demonstrated their efficacy and pertinence in other contexts. Standards offer a refined and intricate framework for the discipline of Records Management, encompassing a comprehensive analysis of the advantages associated with implementing effective records management practices. Furthermore, these standards take into account the regulatory factors that exert influence on the operational aspects of records management programmes, underscoring the significance of assigning clear-cut responsibilities for the successful implementation and execution of records management initiatives (Mosweu & Kenosi, 2018). The mentioned standard not only furnishes implementation guidelines, but also presents a comprehensive methodology and an overarching depiction of the requisite processes to achieve compliance. The policies and procedures implemented by universities exemplify the integration of the regulatory framework into the operational workflow.

#### **2.4. CHALLENGES FACED BY RECORDS MANAGERS AT INSTITUTIONS**

Makgahlela and Nsibirwa (2021) noted that a considerable number of establishments situated within the Limpopo Province are currently grappling with a plethora of challenges in relation to their policies surrounding the management of records. The aforementioned challenges encompass notable deficiencies in personnel resources, manifest insufficiency in training provisions, and conspicuous inadequacy in storage facilities. Furthermore, Mosweu and Rakemane (2020) assert that institutions face significant challenges in the domain of records management, encompassing deficiencies in both comprehensive strategising for records management and the availability of sufficient resources for advancing records management practices. Ngoepe and Ngulube (2014) state that a considerable segment of managers operating within the public sector fails to allocate adequate significance to the meticulous organisation of records as a paramount domain of concentration.

The researcher postulates that a noteworthy issue resides in the conspicuous dearth of incorporation of records management into the strategic goals and key performance

indicators of high-ranking executives within the organisation. In the realm of South African higher education institutions, it is imperative to direct our focus towards a prominent concern that necessitates due consideration, namely; the dearth of compliance with record management policies. Schellnack-Kelly (2014) adds that it becomes apparent that despite the presence of regulatory frameworks pertaining to records management across diverse institutions, the successful execution of these guidelines continues to pose a formidable obstacle. Furthermore, Ngoepe and Ngulube (2014) posit that the records within the public sector are plagued by a scarcity of acknowledgment, primarily originating from a lack in the importance ascribed to vital administrative protocols, consequently resulting in the regrettable disregard of records management. Within the contextual confines of a given organisational structure, it is of utmost importance to duly recognise that the lack of a comprehensive records management system inevitably gives rise to less than optimal results and creates gaps within the informational framework.

The aforementioned phenomenon, as a consequence, gives rise to a scarcity of productivity, consequently hindering the organisation's capacity to attain its predetermined objectives. Furthermore, the scarcity of scrupulous record-keeping practises serves to exacerbate the situation, as it ultimately leads to the unintended misplacement of vital documents, thereby intensifying the adverse repercussions. The prominent concern at hand pertains to the insufficiency of record accessibility within universities, as eloquently elucidated by Mahama (2017) in his scholarly discourse. It is important to elaborate upon the concept that insufficient record management practices give rise to a plethora of adverse outcomes, encompassing but not restricted to the wastage of precious time and the delivery of substandard client services within the academic domain. Furthermore, the fact that specific records, once they have been lost, become irrecoverable, hinders the uninterrupted continuation of diverse activities that are reliant upon the effective administration of said records. The challenges associated with records management can be delineated below.

### **2.4.1 Lack of Policies Guideline**

Given the complex challenges inherent in the domain of record management within South African universities, it is disconcerting to note that a significant proportion of these esteemed institutions have not yet formulated a comprehensive strategy to overcome this formidable hurdle. The empirical inquiry undertaken by Netshakhuma (2020) has unveiled the dearth of a comprehensive records management policy within the academic institutions associated with the University of Venda. The inquiry further determined that a lack of a viable strategy is observed within academic institutions. In light of the conspicuous absence of a well-defined implementation strategy, it is pertinent to acknowledge that the existing policy falls short in its scope, particularly in regard to the domain of Electronic Records Management. The dearth of comprehensive protocols pertaining to the administration of dormant records within South African universities has been substantiated by the scholarly investigation undertaken by Chinyemba and Ngulube (2005).

Furthermore, the lack of a comprehensive policy writing serves to intensify the difficulties inherent in efficiently overseeing records, consequently augmenting the probability of records encountering loss or misplacement. As expounded upon by Mwangi (2017), the successful execution of a resilient records management policy assumes a paramount position within the intricate fabric of institutional frameworks. The contention put forth by the author posits that the lack of a proficient records management system has the potential to give rise to disorder, thus impeding auditors in their endeavour to expeditiously retrieve necessary documents, assuming they are able to locate them in the first place. The lack of an all-encompassing policy for managing records and the restricted availability of information within the organisation has been a subject of considerable apprehension, as elucidated by Ndenje-Sichalwe and Ngulube (2008). The present quandary is inextricably linked to deficient records management methodologies and an overarching dearth of accessibility to pivotal information. The scholarly inquiry conducted by Omolo (2016) regarding the assessment of records management



practices at the dispensary of Moi University in Eldoret illuminates a conspicuous dearth of a comprehensive records management policy within the higher education domain.

Ngulube (2008) expounded a significant concern pertaining to the scarcity of all-encompassing policies governing the management of records and the enactment of laws pertaining to access to information within the specific context of Tanzania. The aforementioned deficiency has been intricately associated with suboptimal records management practises and the consequent inaccessibility of pivotal information. Moreover, Mutula and Wamukoya (2005) have astutely observed a parallel situation, where they have discerned numerous pivotal matters. The aforementioned concerns encompass the conspicuous absence of comprehensive policies and guidelines, a notable dearth of awareness among records personnel, a discernible lack of trust, discernment of knowledge gaps, and a constrained set of skills pertaining to the domain of records management. Furthermore, the insufficiency of existing organisational records management standards and by-laws has been underscored, alongside the conspicuous absence of comprehensive institutional preservation and recovery systems for the long-term. The lack of adequate support within the parental organisations is also a notable concern. The establishment of comprehensive guidelines and policies holds immense significance in furnishing guidance and demarcating expectations within the framework of an organisational milieu. It is of utmost importance for an organisation to proactively engage in the formulation and implementation of policies and guidelines that are designed to effectively govern the management of records. The implementation of this strategic approach effectively mitigates the potentiality of adverse publicity and guarantees the achievement of utmost efficiency in the realm of record management practices.

Furthermore, a comprehensive empirical inquiry conducted by esteemed scholars Manewe Sisa, Mnjama, and Mooko (2016) has brought to light the glaring observation that the esteemed Botswana Ministry of Labour and Home Affairs has demonstrated a notable deficiency in its commitment to upholding the well-established policy pertaining to records management. Consequently, this unfortunate oversight has led to a

regrettable state of non-compliance with the relevant legislative frameworks in place. The lack of compliance with a records management policy within institutions indicates a deficiency in the implementation of records management practises throughout the complete life cycle of records, encompassing their creation to their final disposition. Muchaonyerwa and Khayundi (2014) assert that the records management policy possesses the potential to be perceived as an all-encompassing governance framework that is applicable to various institutions of higher education. The trajectory of records management policy development in select African universities paralleled that of their counterparts in developed nations, such as the United States and the United Kingdom, where a noticeable absence of a well-defined records management policy was noted. Based on the empirical evidence presented in Hansen's (2015) seminal study, a conspicuous observation emerged, namely; the conspicuous absence of a comprehensive records management policy within the esteemed Illinois State University, situated within the United States of America.

#### **2.4.2 Lack of Training**

The successful implementation of records management practices within the specific framework of South African universities has been confronted with a myriad of formidable challenges. One of the foremost concerns within the records department of institutions of higher learning pertains to the dearth of comprehensive training. The aforementioned observation is congruent with the research conducted by Makgahlela and Nsibirwa (2021), who shed light on the prevalent concern of insufficient training within the realm of records management. The findings of their investigation unveiled a substantial portion, surpassing the threshold of 50%, of individuals responsible for managing records exhibit a dearth of requisite training within this particular field. Furthermore, Kanzi (2010) has elucidated the paramount significance of records management within the Amathole District Municipality. The empirical observations have brought to light a disconcerting dearth of cognisance among personnel within institutional settings pertaining to the criticality of adequate training in the domain of records management. Mohammed (2018) says that the domain of record management in the context of institutional settings is

confronted with a multitude of challenges, with a prominent concern being the presence of insufficient records management practises. Furthermore, Mohammed (2018) showcased the emergence of inadequate training among officials in the domain of record management as a significant contributing factor in the overall administration of records. Therefore, one can deduce that the education and training of the individuals tasked with the management of records assume a crucial function in efficiently supervising said records. Furthermore, Abdulrahman (2015) postulated that a noteworthy observation was made with regards to the conspicuous lack of initiatives pertaining to records management training and awareness in several universities located in the Southern African region, including the renowned University of Stellenbosch.

The results of a comprehensive case study undertaken by Ovbiagele, Mgbonyebi, and Veronica, esteemed alumni of the esteemed Polytechnic Office Technology Management programme in the South-South region of Nigeria, brought to light a significant dearth in the proficiencies possessed by the personnel entrusted with the task of imparting knowledge in the domain of records management training. In lieu of universities proactively undertaking the responsibility of imparting records management training, they instead depend on external service providers to facilitate training sessions and cultivate awareness pertaining to this domain. The scholarly investigations carried out by Manewe-Sisa, Mnjama, and Mooko (2016) as well as Abdulrahman (2015) have revealed a conspicuous dearth in cognisance and instruction regarding the discipline of records management within the predominant proportion of establishments situated in the Southern African domain. Furthermore, within the context of the subject matter previously discussed, there were specific African establishments that had not yet embarked upon any manner of educational instruction.

Numerous establishments, such as the esteemed Botswana Ministry of Labour and Home Affairs, have undertaken the commendable endeavour of executing records management orientation initiatives with the primary objective of furnishing their personnel with comprehensive guidance pertaining to the efficacious implementation of records management practises. The guidelines proffered by the national archives

constitute a highly esteemed and invaluable resource, serving as a pedagogical tool for imparting knowledge and guidance to both the creators and users of records. The research conducted by Segaletsho (2014) at the prestigious University of Botswana unveiled a notable scarcity in the education and development of individuals in the field of records management. Therefore, the incorporation of comprehensive records management training has undeniably served as a crucial catalyst in augmenting the intellectual acumen and competencies within the realm of the records management discipline (Muchaonyerwa & Khayundi, 2014).

### **2.4.3 Resource Constraints**

The body of research extensively emphasises the role of resource limits as a primary obstacle to achieving effective records management within universities. The allocation of financial resources has a substantial impact on various aspects of an organisation, including personnel, physical facilities, educational programmes, and technological resources (Cartwright, 2020; Ngoepe, 2021). The insufficiency of financial resources results in a deficit of staff; hence, necessitating existing personnel to undertake a multitude of records administration tasks in addition to their primary jobs. This situation subsequently leads to the occurrence of delays, backlogs, and substandard practises (Chiwambo, 2021). The presence of inadequate infrastructure, such as insufficient storage facilities, poses challenges to the organisation and protection of physical data. Similarly, the absence of servers and networks limits the capabilities of digital systems (Kasim, 2020).

Financial limitations significantly hinder the ability to provide enough professional development opportunities for both records management employees and users; hence, impeding the development of necessary capabilities. According to Murillo (2021), research indicates that personnel who receive inadequate training face challenges in remaining abreast of fast shifting best practices and acquiring proficiency in emerging technologies. Universities face constraints in terms of financial resources, which impede their capacity to acquire or create enterprise solutions for the purposes of digitising data,

automating workflows, and assuring discoverability within extensive collections of digital documents (Masalu, 2021).

In addition to operational costs, researchers argue that university leadership frequently neglects to prioritise records management due to competing demands, resulting in insufficient strategic resourcing (ARMA International, 2021). The absence of specific and coordinated appropriations results in the inadequate development of crucial long-term capacities. The aforementioned components encompass infrastructure modernisation, training initiatives, and the employment of specialised professionals such as records managers and archivists (Sawant & Kumar, 2022). Therefore, it is highly emphasised by researchers that there is a need for enhanced strategic financing assistance, which should be coordinated through high-level initiatives. This will serve to elevate the value proposition of records management within institutions. One example of an approach is the establishment of centralised records management units, which aim to consolidate resources, institutionalise procedures, and develop internal competence (Chiwambo, 2020).

#### **2.4.4 Fragmented Digitisation**

The management of the transition from traditional paper-based systems to digital platforms poses a significant challenge for universities, as they strive to strike a delicate balance between embracing modernisation and ensuring the preservation of information integrity (Igwe & Oyewo, 2020). Nevertheless, it has been observed through various scholarly investigations that the digitisation endeavours undertaken by numerous academic institutions tend to exhibit a lack of integration and cohesion, rather than being subjected to a comprehensive and systematic approach to management (Kasim, 2021). The preservation of extensive paper-based records archives remains intact within physical facilities, despite the exponential growth of born-digital content across various systems and formats. It has been observed by researchers that digitisation initiatives often exhibit a tendency to concentrate their efforts on specific operational aspects, such as the digitisation of student enrollment records, rather than adopting a comprehensive

approach that encompasses the conversion of entire institutional archives (Murillo, 2020).

The adoption of a fragmented methodology perpetuates the preservation of extensive physical documentation in its original form, while simultaneously witnessing the exponential growth of digital materials. Users often experience difficulties when navigating through both mediums simultaneously. Furthermore, the presence of manual paper workflows in conjunction with digital systems poses a significant challenge for records management personnel (Masalu, 2020). The issue at hand pertains to the overwhelming challenges that employees encounter when confronted with the coexistence of hybrid physical-digital processes, which unfortunately tend to exist in a disorderly manner rather than seamlessly integrating with one another. The challenge faced by users lies in the arduous task of locating information that is dispersed in a fragmented manner across both physical files and various digital repositories.

Scholars underscore the imperative for the progression of digitisation, transitioning from sporadic and localised initiatives to comprehensive and cohesive organisation-wide strategies. These strategies aim to systematically and comprehensively transform paper archives into enterprise digital document management systems, thereby ensuring a holistic approach to the process (Mnjama, 2021). This necessitates comprehending records as esteemed information assets as opposed to onerous paperwork. Furthermore, it involves the strategic positioning of digitisation as an investment in infrastructure, rather than merely a means of cost reduction. To facilitate this transformation, it is imperative for leadership to effectively synchronise institutional priorities, allocate resources strategically, and cultivate a conducive organisational culture (Jain, 2020).

Furthermore, it is imperative to implement intentional change management strategies to facilitate the effective utilisation of novel technologies and modalities, particularly in cases where traditional paper-based methodologies undergo digital enhancements. The incorporation of training, system co-creation, and post-implementation support serves to

establish a state of normalcy in the adoption of novel workflows (Ndenje-Sichalwe, 2020). Nevertheless, the task of accommodating diverse user requirements continues to pose significant challenges. Records are accessed by a diverse range of individuals, including technical specialists, casual users, and external stakeholders. As a result, it is necessary to provide tailored and compassionate support during periods of change.

#### **2.4.5 Weak monitoring systems**

It is impossible to overestimate the value of having clear policies and processes in place to maintain coherence in records management. On the other hand, academic research has thrown light on the continuous problem of successfully monitoring the execution of these rules and processes (Chiwambo, 2021). Existing rules for records management may have flaws in terms of adequate coverage, relevance to current practices, or ability to effectively disseminate information across a variety of departments. The fact that the records staff and other employees have differing interpretations of their responsibilities further muddies the waters on who is accountable for what. The traditional physical inspection techniques, which are often utilised for records that are kept on paper, are going to require an increased level of sophistication as a result of the expansion of digital formats across a variety of systems.

According to ARMA International 2020, academics place a significant amount of importance on the incorporation of compliance monitoring into digital workflows through the use of system controls such as permissions, notifications, and the standardisation of metadata. This technique incorporates the practise of monitoring into day-to-day operations, which reduces the need on sporadic audits. In addition, it makes the improvement of discoverability and the fortification of security measures easier to do. When it comes to the development of these kinds of systems on campus, however, it is not uncommon for institutions to run across constraints in terms of the resources available and the knowledge available (Murillo, 2020). Even if there is a wide variety of functionality offered by commercially available tools, it is essential that these tools be adapted to meet the particular needs of each individual institution. This cannot be

emphasised enough. Moreover, maintaining a smooth connection with existing legacy systems, notwithstanding the fragmented structure of these systems, is essential for reaching the goal of interoperability.

According to Jones (2021), the academic discourse places a strong focus on the necessity of strengthening supervision and internal audit procedures to successfully navigate the dynamic and decentralised terrain of digital information. Establishing the administration of records as a strategic priority within the framework of the institution is an absolute necessity if this issue is to be addressed in an efficient manner. This requires putting into place governance structures that encourage accountability across the entire university. It is absolutely necessary for central units to have sufficient authority and resources if they are going to be able to coordinate monitoring operations in an efficient manner. Because it is vital to modernise monitoring, it is necessary to adopt digitally integrated controls to scale supervision while simultaneously guaranteeing high-level oversight. This must be done in order to meet the requirements of the necessity to modernise monitoring.

#### **2.4.6 User Difficulties**

The advent of emerging technologies frequently holds the potential to alleviate the challenges associated with records management. Nevertheless, it has been observed through empirical investigations that a considerable number of users encounter challenges when attempting to effectively harness the capabilities of these systems, thereby impeding the attainment of the anticipated advantages (Igwe, 2020). The allocation of an inordinate amount of time by records management personnel towards the creation of manuals and the resolution of issues, rather than the strategic advancement of programmes, is observed. The challenges faced by users in effectively navigating intricate digital interfaces and comprehending metadata taxonomies hinder their ability to locate pertinent records (Kasim, 2021). The presence of a reliance on instructional manuals suggests a deficiency in the inherent user-friendliness of the tools in question. The significance of co-creating systems with a continuous stream of user



feedback and rigorous testing to enhance adoption and utility has been underscored by scholars (Chiwambo, 2021).

The task of accommodating diverse users within a system poses enduring and persistent challenges. The access to records is a multifaceted process involving a diverse range of individuals, including but not limited to records management personnel, esteemed university administrators, erudite faculty members, diligent researchers, ambitious students, and esteemed external stakeholders (Murillo, 2020). These individuals possess distinct needs and exhibit varying levels of proficiency in navigating the realm of records management. The issue of ensuring findability in the face of rapidly expanding digital content is also a matter that is growing in significance. The integration of metadata and full-text functionalities within search systems is imperative to effectively cater to the multifaceted objectives of users, ranging from the attainment of precise information to the pursuit of exploratory research (Jain, 2021).

The resolution of user challenges pertaining to records systems is essential to effectively achieve the desired levels of efficiency, transparency, and functional advantages associated with the implementation of digitised records management. The advancement necessitates a transition from isolated technical implementations to a collaborative, user-centric design approach coupled with contextualised training.

#### **2.4.6 Data security checks**

The exponential growth of institutional data in digital formats exacerbates the inherent vulnerabilities associated with access, storage, transmission, and long-term preservation (Kumalo, 2020). Recent research indicates that a considerable number of academic institutions exhibit a deficiency in the establishment of all-encompassing protocols that adequately address the distinctive susceptibilities associated with digital records. Furthermore, the implementation of crucial safeguards such as encryption and backups appear to be lacking in these universities (Ndenje-Sichalwe, 2021). For instance, it is worth noting that certain antiquated methodologies continue to endure,

such as the retention of physical records within unsecured chambers. Simultaneously, the proliferation of digital records is observed to be residing within disparate systems, characterised by a lack of uniformity in terms of their security measures.

The scholarly community cautions that compromised records pose a significant threat to the preservation of institutional memory and the safeguarding of reputation. The potential disclosure of sensitive information has the capacity to result in legal action or the imposition of regulatory sanctions (Saffady, 2021). The heightened prevalence of insider risks is directly correlated to the increasing number of users who are granted access to sensitive records. The escalation of external threats is concomitant with the increasing sophistication of attacks. The imperative at hand necessitates the implementation of proactive measures in the realm of information security, seamlessly integrated into the intricate fabric of record workflows. This entails the judicious utilisation of access controls, harmonious system integration, and the meticulous provision of comprehensive staff training (Murillo, 2021).

It is widely advocated by scholars that the establishment of context-specific frameworks for data security is of utmost importance, particularly when closely aligned with the fundamental priorities of records management, namely availability, integrity, and confidentiality (Chiwambo, 2022). Nevertheless, it is evident that the majority of academic institutions are still confronted with the ongoing challenge of effectively incorporating comprehensive protective measures in the face of rapidly advancing technological advancements. The manifestation of user behaviours poses a significant challenge, as the allure of convenience frequently supersedes the exercise of vigilance. Additional investigation could be conducted to explore the optimal approach for achieving a harmonious equilibrium between openness and control, particularly in light of the escalating demands for accessibility.

In a comprehensive synthesis, the contemporary body of scholarly work illuminates the intricate and interconnected array of obstacles encountered by institutions of higher education in the realm of records management. These challenges manifest themselves

across various domains, including strategic considerations, governance structures, infrastructural capacities, human resources, and technological frameworks. Although viable solutions are indeed present, it is imperative to acknowledge that a multitude of institutions encounter various limitations when endeavouring to attain a harmonious state of modernisation. Further investigation is imperative to develop customised strategies that harness the potential of records management to optimise the mission and efficacy of academic institutions.

## **2.5. AWARENESS ON BENEFITS OF RECORDS MANAGEMENT PRACTICES**

### **2.5.1. Lifeblood of the institution**

The significance of records management practises within an institution cannot be overstated, as it serves as the lifeblood that sustains and nourishes the very essence of said institution. The aforementioned elements serve as the fundamental underpinnings upon which decisions are formulated, services are rendered, and policies are conceived, developed, and disseminated. The advantages of proficient records management within the academic institution, as delineated by Blake (2005), encompass bolstering streamlined collaborative endeavours and seamless dissemination of information, expediting the formulation of policies grounded in empirical evidence, and fortifying the administration of data protection principles and the efficacious execution of Freedom of Information and other legislative policies through meticulous organisation of records. Moreover, the implementation of efficient record management practices assumes paramount importance in the pursuit of organisational objectives, missions, and endeavours. As per the scholarly findings of Ricks, Swafford and Gow (1992), it is imperative to acknowledge the indispensability of records within an organisational context, owing to a multitude of rationales.

These rationales encompass the crucial functions of documenting and substantiating decision-making processes, ensuring the preservation and security of organisational documentation, as well as serving as a repository of evidentiary material for future

reference, among other noteworthy purposes. Furthermore, Ngulube (2017) posits that the meticulous management of records holds paramount significance in safeguarding their integrity for administrative exigencies as well as facilitating cohesive endeavours among collectives of individuals. It is imperative for institutions of higher education to consistently formulate and implement records management policies that align harmoniously with the esteemed Records Management Practices Programme, as articulated by Iwhiwhu in the year 2005. The efficacy of record production and capture endeavours could be significantly enhanced through the active engagement and participation of records management specialists and other pertinent stakeholders.

### **2.5.2. Improving the provision of informed decisions**

According to Kemoni (2007), it has been posited that the implementation of records management practices within universities yields advantageous outcomes, particularly in terms of enhancing the capacity to make well-informed decisions. Consequently, this contributes to the establishment of sustainable systems for managing student records and facilitating efficient university administration. Moreover, it is imperative to acknowledge that effective records management plays a pivotal role in guaranteeing that decisions are formulated on the foundation of comprehensive, precise, and current information. Additionally, it facilitates the ability to trace, scrutinise, and justify the reasoning behind and the consequences resulting from said decisions, as necessitated by the circumstances. In contradistinction, a scholarly investigation conducted by Ngoepe and Ngulube (2013) adopted an alternative methodology to expound the notion that the implementation of efficient records management procedures yields advantageous outcomes in terms of showcasing transparency and accountability, while simultaneously facilitating the identification of irregularities within the realm of the public sector. The researcher posits that records play a pivotal role as a primary repository of information, offering a permissible, authentic, and legally verifiable source of evidence pertaining to decisions, activities, and transactions within the university setting. Netshakhuma (2020) posits that the fundamental pillars of efficacious auditing and accountability initiatives lie in the provision of precise, dependable, and credible records.

According to the scholarly work of Adu-Oppong and Asante (2014), it is argued that a comprehensive records management programme serves the purpose of capturing the multifaceted activities and evidential elements within an organisation, thereby ensuring the preservation and safeguarding of the existing information assets. Furthermore, it is imperative to acknowledge that any institution of higher education that demonstrates deficiencies in the implementation of effective records management practises inevitably compromises its ability to uphold accountability and transparency towards both its esteemed faculty and diligent student body. The National Archives of Australia (2004) emphasises the indispensability of effective record-keeping practices in the fundamental operations of governmental entities. Such practices not only foster a sense of responsibility and transparency but also serve to augment the populace's comprehension of the intricate dynamics between the government and its constituents.

### **2.5.3. Making day-to-day operations easier**

The facilitation of an institution's interactions and services, as well as the provision of transactional evidence, can be enhanced through the utilisation of records that are conducive to day-to-day operations. Furthermore, Ngoepe (2014) posits that meticulously maintained records afford management the opportunity to leverage them for the purpose of informed decision-making. According to Marutha and Ngulube (2012), records possess the inherent capability to function as a user-friendly instrument for fulfilling various obligations pertaining to legality, finance, and accountability. In contradistinction, Wamukoya and Mutula (2005) posit that the attribution of responsibility to institutions necessitates the presence of dependable and precise records, alongside the operation of functional systems. The researcher opines that this phenomenon serves to moderate the preservation of the rights and entitlements of both organisations and citizens.

### **2.5.4. Accountability and transparency**

It is widely acknowledged among scholars and experts in the field that the effective management of records hold significant importance within organisational contexts. Universities that exhibit deficiencies in their records management practices are inherently incapable of upholding the principles of accountability and transparency towards their esteemed faculty and student body. According to the National Archives of Australia (2004), the imperative nature of maintaining meticulous records cannot be overstated, as it lies at the very heart of governmental operations. By upholding this practice, governments are able to foster a culture of transparency and responsibility, thereby augmenting the populace's comprehension of the government's function and its intricate interplay with the citizenry. For the aforementioned rationales, it is imperative that institutions of higher education exercise proficient administration of their records, thereby ensuring their adherence to principles of accountability and transparency. It is evident, therefore, that the meticulous management of records is imperative to guarantee their seamless accessibility when required and in a suitable format. Consequently, the implementation of comprehensive records management practises becomes indispensable to safeguard the integrity and security of said records.

According to Bakare, Abioye, and Issa (2016), the seamless functioning of a prosperous organisation is contingent upon its records. They assert that records hold a paramount significance, as the absence thereof renders an organisation incapable of fulfilling its operational obligations. Popoola (2008) expounded the notion by positing that records serve as a fundamental tool of administration, the absence of which renders operational processes and functions ineffectual within organisational contexts. Furthermore, records function as indicators for assessing the performance of an organisation. Furthermore, Bakare, Abioye, and Issa (2016) posits that the significance of records management encompasses the fulfilment of legal obligations, enhancement of records accessibility and transparency, mitigation of expenses associated with records retrieval, assurance of the creation and administration of precise and dependable records, and reduction of costs pertaining to records storage.

### **2.5.5. Risk mitigation**

The implementation of effective records management practices holds paramount importance for universities to proactively address and mitigate an array of compliance-related, operational, and reputational risks (Saffady, 2021). The establishment of a systematic and methodical approach to recordkeeping facilitates the expeditious retrieval of pertinent information by personnel, thereby ensuring compliance with legal, regulatory, and audit imperatives. This, in turn, mitigates the risk of incurring financial penalties or becoming embroiled in litigation (Chiwambo, 2022). The systematic disposal of antiquated records also yields a notable reduction in storage expenditures by effectively eliminating the accumulation of documents that possess limited intrinsic worth (ARMA International, 2020).

The adoption of digitised records management not only facilitates the transition process but also enhances the robustness of data protection and privacy controls, thereby effectively mitigating potential internal vulnerabilities and external risks (Murillo, 2021). Digital systems have the remarkable capability to implement granular user permissions and encryption mechanisms, thus ensuring the utmost protection and security of highly sensitive and confidential data. Off-site backups that are implemented with robust security measures serve as a crucial safeguard to protect institutional memory from potential calamities such as conflagrations, inundations, or technical malfunctions, which possess the capacity to irrevocably obliterate physical records (Williamson, 2020). The expeditious retrieval of reliable information from meticulously organised archives additionally serves to safeguard academic institutions against accusations of mismanagement, thus augmenting public trust and fostering a culture of accountability (Kasim, 2020). In the broader academic discourse, a multitude of erudite scholars posits that the establishment and implementation of efficient records management practices assume a paramount role in fostering organisational resilience, facilitating business continuity planning, and ensuring the sustained viability of enterprises in the long run. The aforementioned system facilitates the establishment of traceable evidentiary pathways, thereby enabling a transparent inquiry into various incidents or allegations.

Additionally, it serves the purpose of fortifying defensive measures against a wide range of potential risks in a proactive manner.

### **2.5.6. Strategic decision-making**

The establishment and maintenance of comprehensive and reliable records play a pivotal role in facilitating a thorough and well-informed analysis, as well as enabling strategic decision-making by esteemed university leadership. This, in turn, contributes to the attainment of superior institutional outcomes (Sawant & Kumar, 2022). The presence of meticulously arranged and impeccably maintained archives, encompassing a diverse range of documents such as board minutes, project records, faculty memos, and external reports, bestows upon decision-makers a wealth of contextual information, thereby facilitating the formulation of significant determinations (Masalu, 2020). The process of digitising these records, accompanied by the implementation of efficient metadata tagging and search capabilities, enables the expeditious extraction of pertinent insights from a vast reservoir of information amassed over several decades. Such a task would be unfeasible to accomplish manually, given the sheer magnitude of data that needs to be synthesised. By conducting a comprehensive examination of historical triumphs, setbacks, and deliberations documented within archival repositories, leaders are empowered to formulate judicious decisions that are intricately attuned to the core principles of their respective institutions. This meticulous approach not only ensures a thorough understanding of the prevailing circumstances but also serves as a safeguard against the repetition of past errors.

On the contrary, it is imperative to note that a multitude of erudite scholars express their apprehension regarding the adverse consequences of inadequate records management practises. Such practices have been observed to give rise to substantial lacunae in information and create perceptible blind spots, thereby impeding the efficacy of decision-making processes undertaken by executives and administrators. Inevitably, one observes the occurrence of flawed strategic decisions in the absence of the invaluable resource of institutional memory and the contextual comprehension derived from prior



experiences encapsulated within archival repositories (Mnjama, 2020). The establishment of a robust and easily accessible records management system is vital to maintain and preserve organisational intelligence in the long run. This system plays a vital role in empowering leaders to effectively utilise historical insights and make informed decisions.

### **2.5.7. Stakeholder service**

The seamless retrieval and dissemination of precise records facilitates the efficient provision of expeditious and exemplary services to students, employees, faculty, and other pertinent stakeholders within the academic milieu (Murillo, 2020). Documents such as transcripts, invoices, project files, and medical forms can be expeditiously retrieved and disseminated to duly authorised individuals, thereby circumventing the vexations associated with untimely delivery (Saffady, 2021). The implementation of electronic document management systems yields a significant enhancement in responsiveness by obviating the temporal delays inherent in the manual search and retrieval of paper records. Digital systems have the capability to facilitate self-service access via online portals round the clock, thereby enhancing stakeholder experiences (ARMA International, 2019).

The empirical evidence indicates that the contentment of stakeholders' experiences a substantial augmentation when the expeditious acquisition of requisite records is facilitated with minimal iterations, owing to the dependable arrangement, categorisation, and exploration functionalities. This is juxtaposed with the ad hoc and inconsistent nature of paper-based access, which engenders a sense of frustration. In its essence, the implementation of effective records management practises serves to enhance the experiences, outcomes, and relationships of the institutional constituency. This is achieved through the steadfast commitment to providing responsive and transparent service delivery.

### **2.5.8. Process efficiency**

A plethora of empirical investigations have consistently demonstrated that the implementation of optimised records management practices yields significant cost savings and resource efficiencies within the organisational framework of the university (Jones, 2021). The paradigm shift from traditional paper-based record-keeping to the utilisation of digital records effectively obviates the need for labour-intensive manual workflows, such as the physical transference of files between disparate campuses or departments. Furthermore, it is worth noting that the implementation of said strategy also serves to mitigate transit losses and minimise errors, as highlighted by Williamson's (2021) seminal work. In the realm of digital systems, the implementation of automated workflows has facilitated the optimisation of recurring tasks such as records requests, version control, and metadata capture, which were previously reliant on manual labour (Ndenje-Sichalwe, 2020). By automating these superfluous activities, the personnel responsible for records management and other administrative tasks are liberated to direct their attention towards more consequential duties that augment the provision of student services and the overall administration of the institution.

The exponential enhancement of institutional productivity is observed when the expeditious and dependable retrieval of records is facilitated throughout the entirety of the university, as opposed to their potential misplacement within isolated repositories of paper-based archives. Considerable time efficiencies are also realised through the diminished necessity to personally manage and dispatch copious quantities of records, such as transcripts and invoices (Kasim, 2021). The augmentation of financial savings is observed when the reduction of maintenance expenses pertaining to voluminous paper records libraries is achieved through the process of digitisation and the subsequent disposal of outdated documents (Jain, 2020). In light of the ongoing modernisation of strategic priorities and operations, it is imperative to underscore the continued significance of proficient records management to uphold the perpetuation of continuous improvement by means of capturing and accessing institutional knowledge.

## **2.6. EFFECTIVE STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVING RECORDS MANAGEMENT**

### **2.6.1. Develop comprehensive policies and procedures**

One of the primary focal points underscored by contemporary scholars is the necessity of formulating all-encompassing records management policies and procedures that are finely attuned to the intricacies of present-day information landscapes (Saffady, 2020). The aforementioned statement elucidates a comprehensive framework for the systematic management of records, ensuring uniformity and coherence throughout the entirety of the esteemed academic institution. The establishment of a comprehensive policy is imperative to delineate and elucidate the various roles and responsibilities pertaining to the management of records, both in physical and digital formats (Chiwambo, 2021). Furthermore, this policy should encompass the regulation of access and retention protocols, as well as the codification of optimal practices for the preservation and maintenance of said records (Chiwambo, 2021). The following section outlines the comprehensive procedures employed in this study. The imperative at hand necessitated the comprehensive examination of the procedural intricacies spanning the entire spectrum of record inception, culminating in either archival preservation or the ultimate disposition thereof (Murillo, 2020). Policies necessitate regular revisions to effectively respond to the advent of novel technologies such as cloud storage, as well as the emergence of regulatory frameworks pertaining to data privacy or e-discovery (ARMA International, 2020). To guarantee the comprehensive implementation of policies by all personnel and stakeholders, it is important to emphasise the significance of rigorous training and effective communication (Masalu, 2021). The formulation and implementation of comprehensive policies serve to harmonise practices across the entire university ecosystem, thereby exemplifying a strategic approach to prioritisation.

### **2.6.2. Invest in specialised personnel**

The paramount importance of cultivating internal expertise is underscored by the strategic recruitment of highly specialised personnel in the field of records management,

such as those possessing the esteemed designation of Certified Records Managers (Williamson, 2020). It has been observed that there exists a notable deficiency in the provision of specialised training to the personnel within the general staff, thereby impeding their ability to effectively adhere to the ever-evolving paradigms of optimal methodologies (Jones, 2021). Specialists, as purveyors of their respective domains, offer invaluable contributions in terms of strategic guidance and the maintenance of seamless progression. Issues are diagnosed by means of audits and solutions are developed by leveraging global standards (Kumalo, 2020). The utilisation of domain experience is instrumental in the process of tailoring international guidelines to suit the specific requirements of local contexts, thereby facilitating the development of practical and effective policies and procedures (Jain, 2020). Experts in the field of information management are actively engaged in the process of seamlessly incorporating records management practises into the overall functioning of institutions, thus avoiding the isolation of this crucial aspect. Nevertheless, it is not uncommon for institutions of higher education to allocate insufficient resources towards cultivating and nurturing such specialised knowledge and skills, primarily due to the presence of other pressing financial obligations and priorities (Ngoepe, 2021). The cultivation of specialised internal competencies continues to present a significant opportunity for advancement.

### **2.6.3. Develop user-centered systems**

The extant body of literature has begun to shed light on the importance of developing records management systems that prioritise the needs of users, while also taking into account the unique characteristics of institutional environments and the diverse requirements of stakeholders (Murillo, 2020). The custom-developed tools adeptly harmonise the rigidity of standardised requirements, such as metadata schemas, with the imperative of catering to a wide array of users, ranging from administrators to external researchers (Chiwambo, 2020). The utilisation of user testing and feedback mechanisms serves as a vital means for facilitating ongoing enhancements in response to emerging use cases or areas of user dissatisfaction (Masalu, 2022). The implementation of intuitive, self-service designs serves to mitigate the necessity for

extensive training and concurrently enhances the rate of adoption. In addition to their primary functions, it is worth noting that these technological advancements also contribute to the enhancement of accessibility, security, and automation within various domains (Kasim, 2021). Although the initial implementation of purpose-built systems necessitates a substantial investment, the advantages they offer, such as enhanced findability and utilisation, outweigh the associated costs (Ndenje-Sichalwe, 2021).

#### **2.6.4. Digitise records strategically**

A prevailing consensus exists regarding the imperative of digitising records as a means to augment preservation, accessibility, and operational efficacy (Murillo, 2020). Nevertheless, the process of digitisation necessitates a meticulous and well-thought-out approach, one that is executed in a phased manner and accompanied by a perpetual commitment to effective change management, as highlighted by Williamson's scholarly contribution in 2020. The implementation of Big Bang approaches frequently encounters failure due to the inadvertent disregard of the diverse requirements of users and the preexisting systems in place. The enactment of a well-coordinated roadmap serves to effectively mitigate disruptions and facilitate seamless transitions, as elucidated by Masalu (2021). According to Jones (2021), it is imperative to prioritise the management of records that are susceptible to significant loss or damage, as well as those that are regularly accessed for various services. During transitional phases, it is imperative to ensure the seamless operation of both digital and analogue systems in parallel, thereby facilitating the preservation of continuity (Ngoepe, 2020). The prudent allocation of resources towards the establishment of a resilient digitisation infrastructure in the initial stages not only yields substantial cost savings in the long run but also facilitates the realisation of various advantageous outcomes.

#### **2.6.5 Leverage data analytics technologies**

The advent of cutting-edge technologies such as data analytics, artificial intelligence, and blockchain presents remarkable prospects for the revolutionary overhaul of

university records management (Ndenje-Sichalwe, 2020). Analytics dashboards facilitate the generation of insightful analyses derived from comprehensive records, thereby serving as a valuable tool for informing decision-making processes and predicting potential risks. The utilisation of natural language processing in the operation of chatbots facilitates the management of records requests. The utilisation of blockchain technology facilitates the establishment of robust and reliable sharing networks that transcend institutional boundaries (Jain, 2020). Nevertheless, it is vital to maintain a delicate equilibrium between fostering innovation and upholding the principles of information security and privacy. In the pursuit of technological advancements at the university level, it is not uncommon for institutions to embark upon pilot projects within specific domains as a preliminary step before implementing these enhancements on a broader scale (Saffady, 2021). The imperative lies in the progressive enhancement of records management capabilities through a meticulously orchestrated series of stages, all the while ensuring the preservation of fundamental mandates.

#### **2.6.6 Institute continuous training programmes**

Numerous scholarly investigations highlight the imperative of persistent training to cultivate and fortify internal records management capabilities in the face of perpetual technological advancements (Murillo, 2021). The efficacy of one-time interventions is inherently constrained when juxtaposed with the enduring effects of longitudinal skill development. To effectively address the multifaceted requirements and demands of contemporary educational programmes, it is imperative to incorporate a diverse range of modalities. These modalities encompass online learning platforms as well as immersive workshops that are specifically tailored to cater to the unique roles and individual needs of the participants (Masalu, 2020). The primary areas of emphasis encompassed within this scholarly discourse pertain to the realm of digital literacy, communication, ethics, and the ever-evolving landscape of technologies, such as digitisation, automation, and analytics (Chiwambo, 2020). Collaboration with esteemed professional associations and networks serves as a valuable strategy in the cultivation of all-encompassing training programmes that are harmonised with prevailing global

standards and tools (ARMA International, 2020). The perpetual enhancement of skills facilitates higher education institutions in extracting optimal value from their records.

### **2.6.7 Develop collaborative networks and partnerships**

The current body of literature is progressively emphasising the potential for universities to collaboratively enhance their capacities in the realm of records management by means of networks and partnerships (Masalu, 2021). Groups establish online platforms to facilitate the exchange of intellectual discourse, establish normative frameworks, and disseminate pedagogical curricula. The facilitation of collaboration among individuals or groups also serves as a catalyst for engaging in collective efforts to advocate for necessary reforms and secure essential resources (Jain, 2020). Collaborative alliances with technology enterprises effectively facilitate the development of tailor-made tools that seamlessly integrate domain-specific knowledge. Pooled digitisation initiatives among academic institutions expedite advancements and mitigate expenses by leveraging economies of scale (Chiwambo, 2020). The presence of shared specialisations serves to alleviate the limitations imposed by resource constraints, such as the inclusion of a designated archivist within the university system. Nevertheless, successful collaborations necessitate a meticulous level of supervision to maintain the utmost confidentiality and ensure the rightful ownership of intellectual property. In a broader context, it is evident that collaborative endeavours have the potential to significantly advance the field of records management in an exponential manner.

In a concise synthesis, current scholarly investigations underscore various pathways to augment university records management programmes beyond fragmented remedies. The establishment of comprehensive governance frameworks and the cultivation of specialised expertise serve as fundamental pillars for the purposeful advancement of records management in a systematic manner. Emerging technologies present a plethora of prospects, albeit necessitating a purposeful integration that is congruent with the overarching objectives of the institution and the discernible requirements of the users. The implementation of targeted training programmes is essential to consistently

enhance the capabilities of stakeholders. The exploration of partnerships and networks facilitates the collective advancement of records management within the academic realm. By strategically devising a roadmap that effectively harnesses these avenues, universities can successfully undertake the modernisation of their records management systems, thereby meeting the ever-increasing expectations of their stakeholders.

## **2.7 SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER**

This chapter outlined the major theories regarding records management at the institutions of higher learning. It made a systematic review of major studies in records management both local and international. Records Continuum and Records Life Cycle models were discussed as the theoretical framework that guided this study. Through reviewing literature in this chapter, it became clear what methodology features prominently in records management. The next chapter outlined and discussed the research methodology employed in this study. The review further outlined numerous challenges associated with records management in universities, including a lack of formally qualified personnel to work in records management sections and archives. This has been one of the factors that have led to poor records management practices. The literature, in general, suggests that the usefulness of records management in promoting accountability and transparency cannot be over-emphasised.



## **CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter accounts for the operational framework, which guided this study. The essence of the research methodology is that it specifies how the researcher may possibly go about investigating what the researcher believes can be known (Blanche, Blanche, Durrheim & Painter, 2006). For the purpose of this study, the researcher employed a qualitative research approach to understand the records management practices at the University of Venda. This chapter also explained the research approach, research design, the population of the study and sampling techniques that were used. Data collection methods and data analysis methods are discussed in this chapter. Ethical issues underlying this research project are discussed in detail to demonstrate that the participants were handled in accordance with research expectations.

### **3.2 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The methodology assumes a pivotal role in the realm of research, serving as the primary lens through which a diligent researcher undertakes a comprehensive study. De Vos et al. (2011) explicate research methodology as the utilisation of various standardised methodologies and techniques in the relentless pursuit of knowledge. Moreover, the exploration of research methodology encompasses the intricate interplay of social contexts, rigorous logical assumptions, ethical principles, and the intricate web of political considerations that are inherently intertwined with the realm of social research. Methodology, as elucidated by Ngulube (2015), encompasses a diverse array of study designs and procedures that are employed to acquire a comprehensive comprehension of a particular subject matter. Brynard, Hanekom and Brynard (2014) say that the crux of research methodology lies in the intricate intricacies of the various processes and discerning decisions that the researcher is obliged to undertake throughout the course of the research endeavour. Simultaneously, Ncube and Rodrigues (2017) assert that it is of utmost importance to meticulously choose an appropriate methodology for the

investigation, as it affords the researcher the ability to exercise dominion over the entirety of the research endeavour. Moreover, Ngulube (2015) says the domain of research methodology encompasses the intricate undertaking of apprehending, delineating, scrutinising, and construing data.

### **3.3 RESEARCH PARADIGM**

A paradigm, as posited by Guba and Lincoln (1994), encompasses the fundamental belief system or worldview that serves as a guiding framework for research endeavours. The concept of research paradigms is frequently denoted as a collection of assumptions or beliefs held by the researcher, which accentuates the fundamental principles that propel the direction of inquiry (Goldkuhl, 2012). According to Goldkuhl (2012), the research paradigm serves as a philosophical framework that provides guidance to researchers in conducting scientific investigations, rooted in the assumptions and beliefs that individuals hold regarding the world and the nature of knowledge. The present study was grounded in the interpretivist paradigm. According to Neuman's (2011) scholarly exposition, the interpretive approach can be delineated as a methodical examination of socially significant conduct, achieved through meticulous firsthand observation of individuals within their organic environments, with the ultimate objective of attaining comprehensive insights and interpretations regarding the processes by which individuals construct and sustain their intricate social realms.

The interpretive paradigm, conversely, aligns its philosophical underpinnings with that of qualitative research (Goldkuhl, 2012). Moreover, the qualitative research paradigm predominantly relies on the analysis of empirical data and the nuanced comprehension of its contextual intricacies. The formation of an understanding of disparate realms is facilitated by the utilisation of empirical data collection methodologies, subsequently employed to elucidate and interpret intricate social constructs (Bauer, Gaskell & Allum, 2000). Interpretivism, as a theoretical framework, endeavours to comprehensively grasp the intricacies of the surrounding world by acknowledging the existence of diverse

interpretations of reality. Consequently, reality is perceived through a multifaceted lens, as elucidated by scholarly works such as Creswell (2009) and Mack (2010).

The utilisation of the interpretivist paradigm was deemed appropriate for this particular study due to its inherent capacity to facilitate the researcher's comprehension of participants' subjective perceptions pertaining to the surrounding world and their lived experiences (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Mertens (2007) posits that an interpretivist paradigm is an epistemological framework that offers a lens through which to perceive the world. Within this paradigm, the researcher and participants become intertwined in an interactive process, fostering a more intimate and personal engagement in the act of responding to inquiries. The primary objective of the interpretive paradigm lies in comprehending the subjective perceptions of individuals pertaining to the world in which they exist, as well as their lived experiences within it.

Moreover, the aforementioned paradigm proved to be highly pertinent in elucidating the experiences and behaviours exhibited by officials responsible for records management, as well as their affective disposition towards the efficacious management and preservation of records. The interpretivist paradigm posits that the research participants exhibit a diverse range of comprehension and encounters pertaining to a specific phenomenon. The utilisation of an interpretive paradigm allows for the inclusion of various iterations of truth, predicated upon the fundamental notion that reality is not inherently objective but rather comprehended through the subjective, intricate, and perpetually evolving human experiences (Thanh & Thanh, 2015). The researcher's duty, within the interpretive paradigm, lies in the meticulous capture of participants' lived experiences surrounding various constructs. These experiences are then intricately linked to pre-existing theoretical frameworks, thereby facilitating the construction of the very fabric of social reality. Consequently, the researcher is empowered to engage in profound interpretations pertaining to the intricate tapestry of social reality (Smart, 1998).

### **3.4. RESEARCH DESIGN**

According to Yin (2003), a research design can be conceptualised as a systematic approach employed to conduct a study. Its primary objective is to establish a well-defined course of action that guides the collection and analysis of data. After conducting preliminary investigations, a case study methodology was employed to delve into the intricacies of records management practices at the esteemed University of Venda. An exploratory investigation was conducted with the aim of identifying significant concerns pertaining to unexplored challenges, thereby enhancing the ultimate study design through the formulation of operational definitions (De Vo et al., 2011). Moreover, Yin (2009) posits that a case study research design entails the systematic investigation of one or more particular instances. The utilisation of the case study method facilitated the meticulous examination of empirical data within a distinct contextual framework. The methodology employed in this study serves to facilitate the comprehensive investigation of a given phenomenon within its specific contextual framework, employing a diverse array of data sources.

This methodology guarantees that the matter at hand is not merely examined from a singular perspective, but rather from a diverse array of perspectives, thereby enabling the revelation and comprehension of numerous aspects of the phenomenon. According to Blaikie (2000), exploratory studies are undertaken with the purpose of acquiring information to gain a comprehensive understanding of a given situation, phenomenon, or community, as well as the individuals within it. The utilisation of the case study research design affords the researcher the opportunity to delve into the intricacies of individuals or organisations by means of intricate interventions, relationships, communities, or programmes. This approach facilitates the meticulous analysis and subsequent reconstitution of diverse phenomena (Yin, 2003). Yin posits that within the realm of case study research, various designs can be identified, each serving a distinct purpose. He classifies case studies into three categories: explanatory, exploratory, and descriptive. In pursuit of the study's objectives, the researcher employed the exploratory case study design, given the study's aim to delve into the intricacies of records management practices at the University of Venda.

### **3.5. RESEARCH APPROACH**

The study utilised a qualitative methodology. The utilisation of qualitative research entails the employment of an innovative qualitative methodology to collect data within genuine environments, thereby showcasing a profound sensitivity towards the individuals and locales that are the subject of investigation (Fouche & Schurink, 2001). The qualitative research approach encompasses a methodological framework that facilitates the generation of profound insights into the subjective experiences and perceptions of the individuals participating in the study. The primary emphasis of qualitative research lies in the comprehensive understanding of the complexities inherent in social existence, as well as the profound significance that individuals ascribe to their daily experiences (De Vos et al., 2011). Maree (2007) states that the adoption of a qualitative methodology involves the meticulous collection of extensive and intricate descriptive data pertaining to a specific phenomenon or context, with the overarching objective of fostering a more profound understanding of the subject being examined. The utilisation of this specific research methodology enables the attainment of extensive data, a crucial aspect in the analysis and understanding of social phenomena. The selected methodology was chosen based on its ability to facilitate a thorough investigation of the record management practices implemented at the esteemed academic institution, the University of Venda.

### **3.6. Population and sampling**

#### **3.6.1 Population**

Population refers to the whole group selected to participate during the collection of data from which the sample is drawn and for which conclusion is made. Population is about the targets of the study or what the study intends to treat (Majid, 2018). Zevenbergen, van Herk, Escarameia, Gersonius, Serre, De Bruijn and De Graaf and Walliman (2018) postulate that population is a collective term for identifying things that are the focus of the inquiry such as objects, organisations, people, or even events. The population for

this study is records managers and record officers at the University of Venda. The University of Venda consists of eight schools, namely, Schools of Agriculture, Education, Environmental Sciences, Health Sciences, Law, Management Sciences, Mathematical and Natural Sciences, and Human and Social Sciences. Each school at the University of Venda has records officers. In this study, the population consists of 10 records officers at the University of Venda.

### **3.6.2 Sampling**

Sampling, as expounded by Trachoma (2006), denotes the meticulous procedure of selectively extracting units from a population as of utmost significance, encompassing individuals or entities, with the primary objective of subjecting them to rigorous analysis and subsequently extrapolating the findings to a broader context. A sampling error can be elucidated as the extent to which a sample may deviate from the population. Sampling methods are typically categorised into two main classifications, namely; probability and non-probability, in the scholarly discourse. Utilising a non-probability approach, the researcher employed the purposive sampling technique to facilitate an in-depth investigation into the record management practices implemented at the esteemed University of Venda. According to Fouché and De Vos (2011), the selection of a case for purposive sampling is predicated upon its ability to manifest a particular attribute that is of significant relevance to a specific investigation. The inclusion of the entire target population within this study may prove to be unfeasible, necessitating the establishment of a representative sample derived from the pool of available records managers. The researcher successfully employed a sampling technique that was both convenient and readily available. A deliberate selection was made to include 2 record managers and 10 record officers as participants in this study, as their roles are pertinent to the subject matter under investigation. Nevertheless, the interviews were methodically concluded based on the principle of data saturation, where the acquisition of a sufficient amount of information rendered any further continuation unnecessary. According to Strydom and Delport (2011), the concept of data saturation entails the collection of data until a state

of closure is achieved, as the acquisition of additional data would only yield redundant information.

### **3.7 DATA COLLECTION**

To fulfil the study's objectives, the researcher undertook a series of interviews with esteemed individuals occupying the positions of records managers and records officers, with the purpose of meticulously gathering pertinent data. Efforts were undertaken to secure a suitable location for the interview, with the explicit objective of upholding the principles of confidentiality and privacy. To maintain alignment with the overarching objective of the investigation, the researcher diligently ensured that the interviews were conducted in accordance with a meticulously crafted interview guide. According to Neuman's scholarly work in 2006, it is posited that an interview guide can be conceptualised as a meticulously curated compilation of inquiries that an interviewer poses to the respondents during the course of the interview. The diligent investigator employed a methodical approach, skilfully posing probing inquiries and conscientiously avoiding the use of leading questions, all in pursuit of acquiring substantial and meaningful data from the participants.

The data collection process involved the utilisation of a tape recorder as well as the meticulous transcription of interviews. Prior to commencing the interviews, explicit consent was sought from the participants to record the proceedings. According to Rubin and Babbie (2005) and Greeff (2005), the utilisation of a tape recorder proves to be advantageous for researchers as it facilitates the maintenance of concentration and guarantees the comprehensive capture of data provided by respondents. The aforementioned tools proved to be invaluable in facilitating the researcher's ability to focus on the interview process, subsequently enabling the transcription of data for the purpose of analysis. An interview can be conceptualised as a structured and purposeful exchange between a scholarly investigator and a participant, with the aim of achieving a predetermined goal (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014). The utilisation of this particular methodology enabled the researcher to delve into the intricacies and acquire a more

comprehensive comprehension of the practices pertaining to records management at the University of Venda. The interviews entailed the utilisation of open-ended inquiries, thereby ensuring the flexibility of the process to enable respondents to freely provide information without experiencing any undue pressure.

### **3.8. DATA ANALYSIS**

The qualitative data in this study were subjected to thematic analysis with the aid of Nvivo software. The process of data analysis entails the meticulous classification and comprehensive interpretation of the data that have been gathered, with the ultimate aim of deriving meaningful conclusions pertaining to a given problem statement (Kalusopa, 2011). The process of qualitative data analysis entails the diligent exploration and identification of overarching assertions pertaining to the interconnections within the various categories of data. According to Bless, Higson and Kagee (2007), the commencement of data analysis occurs subsequent to the completion of data collection and thorough verification. According to Fouché and de Vos (2011), the data analysis process encompasses the meticulous organisation and construction of significance from the amassed data. The researcher ensured that the acquired data were meticulously transcribed and subsequently subjected to a rigorous analysis, where themes and subthemes were discerned and delineated. This analytical process was facilitated by the proficient utilisation of the Nvivo software, which effectively managed and organised the data. Schwandt (2007) expounds the concept of data analysis, elucidating its multifaceted nature encompassing the cognitive processes of sense-making, interpretation, and theoretical construction. According to Babbie (2014), the concept of data analysis pertains to the utilisation of statistical methodologies in the examination of gathered data. In accordance with the methodological framework proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006), the present investigation employed a meticulous data analysis approach, which encompassed a comprehensive six-step procedure as delineated below:

#### **Step 1: Acquainting oneself with the dataset**



In this preliminary phase, the researcher engaged in a thorough examination of the transcripts, repeatedly reviewing their contents. The researcher further engaged in the act of perusing written material to achieve a comprehensive understanding of the data that were collected.

### **Step 2: Acquiring preliminary codes**

At this juncture, the researcher initiated the process of organising the data in a purposeful and systematic fashion.

### **Step 3: Thematic exploration**

In this particular scenario, the researcher embarked upon the task of identifying and delving into various themes and codes for further investigation.

### **Step 4: Thoroughly scrutinise the identified themes**

The objective of this crucial step is to meticulously examine, modify, and further refine the preliminary topics that were discerned during the preceding stage.

### **Stage 5: Theme definition**

At this juncture, the researcher diligently engaged in the process of refining and solidifying the themes, meticulously ascertaining the essence and content of each individual theme.

### **Stage 6: Composition**

The task entailed the composition of a comprehensive research report.

The utilisation of this particular methodology assisted the researcher in the process of partitioning and categorising the gathered data into various overarching themes and their corresponding subthemes. A diligent examination of all transcripts was undertaken to ascertain the accurate capture and meticulous organisation of each and every piece of collected data. The scholar made a formal request for the engagement of an external transcriber to guarantee the utmost precision in the transcription of the collected data.

The individual responsible for transcribing the information from an external source has duly executed a legally binding agreement where they committed themselves to maintaining the utmost level of confidentiality. The determination of data accuracy was achieved by means of engaging in discussions with the respondents, a method commonly referred to as member checking.

### **3.9 QUALITY CRITERIA**

The assessment of quality criteria involves the meticulous examination of the data that have been gathered and analysed (Creswell, 2016). The established criteria were duly adhered to in order to evaluate the calibre of the findings derived from this research endeavour.

#### **3.9.1. Credibility**

Creswell and Poth (2016) assert that the concept of credibility pertains to the precise and meticulous interpretation of the intended significance conveyed by the participants. The implementation of peer review and regular debriefing sessions between records managers and records officers was a crucial aspect of effective records management practices. These mechanisms facilitate the exchange of knowledge, insights, and experiences among professionals in the field, thereby fostering a culture of continuous improvement and enhancing the overall quality of record management processes. Peer review, as a well-established practice in various academic disciplines, involves engaging in prolonged interactions, employing persistent observations, and implementing member check procedures that are essential for establishing and upholding credibility. The researcher meticulously executed a series of methodological procedures to ascertain and establish the utmost level of credibility. The researcher diligently upheld the integrity of the findings by engaging in a process of participant verification, where the researcher sought confirmation from the participants themselves regarding the accuracy of the researcher's interpretation of their expressed experiences during the interviews.

### **3.9.2. Transferability**

According to Royse (2004), the concept of transferability pertains to the criteria employed by the researcher to ascertain whether the findings derived from a particular situation or case possess the potential to be applied to another context. To guarantee the transferability of the findings, a methodological approach centred around the implementation of a thick description strategy was employed. The researcher provided a comprehensive elucidation of all research methodologies encompassing data acquisition, the contextual framework of the 40-case study, and the culmination of the final report. The scholar additionally employed the method of triangulation, where multiple sources of data were utilised to enhance the transferability of the obtained findings.

### **3.9.3. Dependability**

Dependability, according to Royse (2004), encompasses the evaluative criteria employed to ascertain the logical coherence, comprehensive documentation, and rigorous auditability of a given study. The researcher diligently ensured the establishment of dependability by meticulously recording and taking comprehensive notes during the interactions with the respondents, as prescribed in the seminal work of Bless et al. (2013). The researcher further ensured the dependability of the study by employing a rigorous methodology, which involved conducting face-to-face semi-structured interviews. This approach was undertaken to ascertain the veracity of the responses provided by the participants, thus confirming that the relevant individual was indeed the one responding to the inquiries posed. The investigator employed a uniform set of semi-structured interview inquiries for all participants.

### **3.9.4. Confirmability**

Confirmability, as explicated by Royse (2004), pertains to the evaluative framework employed by the researcher to ascertain the potential for corroborating the study's

findings through alternative means. The researcher diligently ensured confirmability by rigorously verifying the extent to which the obtained findings can be unequivocally linked to the existing corpus of knowledge. During the data collection phase, the diligent researcher diligently maintained a journal wherein he meticulously recorded his own assumptions, ideas, and emotions that possess the potential to exert influence and undermine the integrity of the research findings.

### **3.10. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

All individuals engaged in a research endeavour must possess a profound awareness of the ethical dimensions inherent in a scholarly inquiry. It is imperative that they exhibit a comprehensive understanding of the universally accepted principles governing the appropriate and inappropriate behaviours within the realm of scientific investigation (Babbie, 2014). Ethics, as an intricate field of study, encompasses a comprehensive framework of moral principles that are advocated by both individuals and collectives. Ethics includes a set of guidelines and behavioural expectations that delineate the optimal conduct towards experimental subjects and research participants. Ethical guidelines, in addition to functioning as standards, play a pivotal role in the evaluation of researchers' conduct during the execution of a research endeavour. The study was conducted with due consideration to the various ethical aspects that are inherent to such research endeavours.

#### **3.10.1. Permission to Conduct the Study**

Permission to conduct this study was obtained from the Turfloop Research Ethics Committee (TREC) of the University of Limpopo, under project number TREC/341/2023: PG. This ethical clearance confirmation enabled approaching the University of Venda to seek permission to conduct research at their institution. The process involved submitting a letter of request to the University Registrar, detailing the study's background, objectives, methodology, data collection tools, and anticipated uses of the research findings. Assurances around maintaining confidentiality, anonymity and privacy of

participants were provided. The request was directed to the Office of the Registrar to ensure it followed appropriate administrative protocols.

After review, the University of Venda granted permission to proceed with the proposed research. This authorisation was contingent on continued adherence to ethical research principles outlined in the permission letter. Key conditions included voluntary participation, avoiding undue impact on University operations, and preventing the disclosure of confidential data. Following this approval, the researcher obtained consent from records management staff at the University of Venda who would participate in the study. Each participant signed a consent form indicating willingness to voluntarily take part in the interview process for data collection. The consent outlined their right to withdraw anytime or decline to answer any specific questions. Participants were assured of confidentiality and that excerpts from interviews would exclude identifying details.

### **3.10.2. Informed Consent and Voluntary Participation**

As posited by Rubin and Babbie (2005), the act of engaging in a research endeavour ought to be characterised by a deliberate and autonomous decision-making process, wherein individuals elect to partake in said project of their own volition, devoid of any external coercion. The researcher sought the consent of the respondents to conduct the study. The participants were furnished with the requisite information to make a judicious determination regarding their potential involvement in the research endeavour. The aforementioned information encompasses the study's overarching objectives, methodological protocols, as well as the prospective hazards and advantages associated with engaging in the research endeavour. The citation provided by the esteemed authors De Vos et al. (2011) is duly acknowledged. Participants were additionally requested to provide their signature on a consent form, thereby indicating their voluntary commitment to engage in the envisaged investigation. The researcher also sought permission to document the interviews.

### **3.10.3. Avoidance of Harm**

The researcher provided an assurance that the methodologies employed in the study would not pose any potential harm to the participants. The researcher took great care to ensure that participants were adequately protected from any potential psychological harm that could have emerged as a consequence of engaging in the study's activities, within the confines of ethical and practical considerations. This was effectively accomplished through the transparent disclosure of any methodologies or procedures that could potentially inflict harm upon the individuals involved in the study. The utilisation of this approach helped the researcher in circumventing the potential infliction of emotional distress upon the participants (Creswell, 2003). The paramount ethical tenet governing social research necessitates the acquisition of information or the acquisition of knowledge while ensuring the absence of any deleterious consequences inflicted upon the participants (Babbie, 2014). In instances where the respondents exhibited indications of unease in response to the posed inquiry, the researcher adeptly transitioned from inquiries of a broad nature to those of a more focused and precise nature. To mitigate potential risks that may arise during the course of interviews, the researcher was adequately equipped to promptly direct the participants towards duly authorised personnel for expert intervention, such as a qualified social worker or psychologist.

### **3.10.4. Violation of Privacy/Anonymity/ Confidentiality**

Privacy, as elucidated by De Vos et al. (2011), can be comprehended as the fundamental principle of retaining within oneself that which is typically not intended for the observation or analysis of others. Throughout the course of this study, the researcher consistently maintained a steadfast awareness of the paramount importance of safeguarding the privacy and preserving the anonymity of the respondents. Confidentiality, in its essence, encompasses the ethical imperative incumbent upon both individuals and organisations to safeguard the entrusted information bestowed upon them. The preservation of participants' information from unauthorised access, use,

disclosure, alteration, loss, or theft shall be diligently undertaken by the researcher. Moreover, the concept of anonymity posits that it is imperative for all parties involved, including the researcher, to refrain from discerning the identities of any individuals partaking in the interviews based on the information provided in their responses (Babbie, 2005).

### **3.10.5. Publication of Findings**

The researcher informed the participants that they would be duly apprised of the discernments derived from the investigation, with only significant junctures being disseminated so as to adhere steadfastly to the tenet of confidentiality. To mitigate the potential for deceitfulness among subjects and the broader populace, it was imperative that the information be meticulously formulated and effectively communicated in a manner that left no room for ambiguity or misinterpretation. The researcher duly ensured that the participants were duly apprised of the fact that, upon the publication of the research findings, they would be duly and objectively informed thereof, without the undue provision of excessive particulars or compromising the fundamental principle of confidentiality (Bless & Ashraf, 2007).

Moreover, it is contended that it is vital to apprise the participants of the research about the outcomes and conclusions derived from the investigation. This task must be executed in a manner that upholds the fundamental tenet of confidentiality without divulging an excessive amount of intricate particulars. Every individual involved in the study will be provided with a physical manifestation of the ultimate scholarly document, commonly referred to as the final dissertation. This will enable them to engage in a process of introspection and contemplation regarding the consequences and results stemming from their active involvement in the research endeavour.

### **3.10.6. Deception of Participants**

De Vos et al. (2011) say that the concept of deception encompasses the act of leading participants astray, purposefully distorting factual information, or intentionally withholding pertinent details from them. According to Neuman (2000), the phenomenon of deception arises when the researcher consciously engages in the act of misleading subjects through the utilisation of written or verbal directives, the manipulation of others' behaviours, or the strategic manipulation of specific elements. In the present investigation, the investigator duly acquainted the participants with a comprehensive overview of the underlying objectives and rationale of the research endeavour. All pertinent information was fully disclosed to the participants, thus empowering them to make well-informed decisions regarding their engagement in the research endeavour. This approach was crucial to upholding the principles of transparency and prevent any form of deception.

#### **3.10.7. Respect and Dignity of Participants**

According to Baines, Taylor and Vanclay (2013), researchers must approach their interactions with participants in a manner that upholds the principles of respect. This entails refraining from engaging in any form of criticism or mockery towards participants, while also ensuring that their ideas are accurately recorded and duly acknowledged throughout the assessment process. Within the confines of this scholarly investigation, the researcher assiduously upheld the participants' inherent dignity and reverence throughout the entirety of the research endeavour, employing an unwavering commitment to impartiality, a profound regard for their individual lives, and a conscientious awareness of personal and confidential matters. The participants experienced a sense of appreciation emanating from the researcher, which subsequently fostered an environment conducive to uninhibited self-expression during the process of data collection, thus refraining from any form of information withholding.

#### **3.10.8. Benefits and Risk**



The concept of benefits in research, as expounded upon by De Vos et al. (2011), pertains to the esteemed and coveted outcomes or advantages that are associated with a given research endeavour. Risk, in the context of a research study, pertains to the likelihood of adverse consequences or detrimental outcomes, encompassing physical, psychological, economic, and social harm, that may befall participants as a direct result of their engagement in said study. In the present investigation, the investigator mitigated the potentiality of harm to the participants by deliberately abstaining from subjecting them to any form of physical or psychological jeopardy. Furthermore, the participants were duly informed in advance that no financial remuneration would be provided for their voluntary involvement in the study. The findings of this study, however, contribute to the existing corpus of knowledge in the domain of record management methodologies. Consequently, the participants were not remunerated for their involvement in the research endeavour.

### **3.11. SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER**

This chapter covered research methodology, commencing from the study's research paradigm, research approach, research design, data collection methods and data analysis techniques. Research methodology was discussed as central to the research process, by specifying the types of research designs and research methods that were employed to gain knowledge about a phenomenon. The chapter considered research paradigms as an approach to thinking about and doing research whereas research design articulated what data were required, methods to be used to collect and analyse data to answer the research question. Moreover, a justification for the choice of research approach and design was given before concluding by discussing the study population, sampling choices, data collection methods, data analysis techniques, the significance of this study and ethical considerations. The following chapter presented and analysed the findings of this study.

## **CHAPTER 4: DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF RESULTS**

### **4.1. INTRODUCTION**

This chapter presents the key findings from the analysis of data collected through interviews with records management staff at the University of Venda. The aim was to provide an in-depth understanding of the current records management practices, challenges, and opportunities at the University. The analysis is structured around four major themes that emerged from the data: 1) Establishing records management practices, 2) Records management challenges, 3) Awareness of benefits, and 4) Strategies for improvement. Under each theme, relevant sub-themes are discussed based on participants' responses and perspectives. The chapter also relates the findings to existing literature, identifying areas of agreement and divergence. The purpose was to situate the study within broader scholarly discourse on university records management. By comparing the empirical evidence from this case study to published research, the aim was to advance academic knowledge and debate in the field. The ultimate goal was to provide concrete and practical insights into strengthening records management at the University of Venda. The analysis of themes highlights specific gaps and recommends targeted interventions around governance, technology, training, and policy development. In this way, the chapter sought to make both scholarly contributions and support real-world enhancements to records management practices.

### **4.2. DEMOGRAPHICS DETAILS OF THE PARTICIPANTS**

The demographics of the participants in this study provide a thorough picture of the records management environment at the University of Venda. The participants' jobs, ages, and years of experience are different, offering a diversified viewpoint on records management at the institution. There was a total of ten participants from various departments, including Administration, Academia, and Information Technology. The participants' ages ranged from 25 to 60, lending the research a diversity of perspectives

that might be impacted by generational disparities in the use and comprehension of technology.

As Williams, Latham, and Woolsey (2015) point out, different demographics in research projects frequently add to a richer, more nuanced collection of data. This is especially true in organisational studies, where a single policy can have a wide variety of effects on various groups inside the organisation. Zhang (2018), on the other hand, criticises such an approach, claiming that increasing demographic variety might sometimes result in incongruent data sets that are difficult to reconcile, potentially undermining the validity of the conclusions. According to Michalopoulos (2016), while demographic variety is necessary for complete insights, it must be balanced by ensuring that the participants are representative of the jobs that are most important to the region being investigated.

Given these divergent viewpoints, the participants in this study were carefully chosen to ensure that their responsibilities were closely connected to records management inside the institution, therefore balancing variety and specificity. A demographic makeup like this promotes a comprehensive knowledge of records management practises at the University of Venda. The variety guarantees that the findings are broadly representative while remaining focused on the important stakeholders in university records management.

The survey also found gender diversity among participants, with a fairly equal mix of men and women. While there is no agreement in the literature on the role of gender on views in records management, the gender-balanced participant pool helps to reduce any potential gender bias in the study's findings (Baron, 2014; Olsen, 2017). The participants' years of experience ranged from less than five years to more than twenty years. This is an important consideration in determining the level of knowledge and the likelihood of resistance or adoption of new policies or systems (Yusof & Chell, 2016). A time span of this length enables a thorough grasp of both the historical evolution of records management practices and present attitudes towards change and modernisation.

### **4.3. FINDINGS OF THE STUDY**

This section provides empirical findings of the study. These findings were informed by the objectives of the study as outlined in Chapter 1 of this research report. The following themes and sub-themes emerged:

#### **4.3.1. MAJOR THEME 1. ESTABLISHING RECORDS MANAGEMENT PRACTICES**

##### **4.3.1.1. Types of Records: Understanding what kinds of records are most frequently created at the university**

Examining the different kinds of records produced at the University of Venda was an essential first step in the management of records. The data results show a wide variety of records, including academic files, financial records, papers relating to human resources, and administrative files. This type highlights how difficult it is to manage records in a university, which must balance the demands of both administrative and academic departments.

*“We deal with a multitude of records, including student academic records, research publications, and even staff employment documents,”* said Participant 1. Participant 4 noted, *“There’s an overwhelming amount of financial records, such as invoices and grants that need meticulous attention.”* Participant 7 was more concerned about the digital records, *“We are increasingly creating more digital records, especially now with virtual learning modules.”*

The variety of records types reported by participants resonate with the findings from Yusof and Chell (2007), who also noted the multitude of administrative, financial, academic and operational records created across university functions. However, this study found a greater emphasis on the growth of digital records compared to Yusof and Chell’s study, likely reflecting the increasing digitisation of education over the past

decade. This aligns with more recent literature like Sund and Björk (2018) that highlights digital transformations in university records systems.

While the findings mirror those of Cox (2017) and Sund and Björk (2018) regarding shifting towards digital records, these studies largely focused on developed country contexts, while this study provides empirical evidence of this digital transition specifically within a developing world university setting. In this sense, this study fills an important gap in validating and advancing theoretical discussions around digitisation of university records management by demonstrating this trend at the University of Venda.

Compared to Sund and Björk's (2018) speculation that digitisation should be a strategic priority for records management, this study's findings provide tangible support for this claim directly from records management staff perspectives, suggesting even stronger agreement on the imperative of digital transition.

As a result, the study not only complements already established literature but also advances it by offering concrete proof of how records change through time. The move towards digitisation prompts concerns about whether the University's present records management system is equipped to adapt to these changes. This is a topic that needs more research.

#### **4.3.1.2. Training on Record Creation and Disposal: Assessing whether staff have received proper training on how to create and dispose of records**

The study discovered that training on these critical features of records management is inconsistently implemented when studying the training environment for records generation and disposal at the University of Venda. While some employees received specialised training, others reported just minimal on-the-job training, and a tiny percentage received no training at all.

*“I was fortunate to attend a two-week training program on records management, but that was years ago,”* shared Participant 3. Participant 8 mentioned, *“Most of us have learned through experience, and not necessarily formal training.”* Participant 5 was more critical, stating, *“Honestly, training is almost non-existent, and it’s hurting our efficiency.”*

The existing literature (Shepherd & Yeo, 2003; Tough & Moss, 2006) that highlights discrepancies in records management training programmes among academic institutions is consistent with this difference in training. Shepherd and Yeo contend that systematic training is necessary for efficient records administration, while Tough and Moss (2006) point out that budgetary restrictions frequently place restrictions on the breadth of such training in academic institutions. As a result, Participant 3’s comment of intermittent training and Participant 5’s mention of a lack of formal training seem to fall within this established pattern (Shepherd & Yeo, 2003; Tough & Moss, 2006).

The trend towards on-the-job training or experiential learning is another important finding from this study and the body of prior research (Bamgboye & Satgoor, 2016). The observation of Participant 8 supports this tendency, but also calls into question the efficacy of experience learning in records management when compared to formal educational programmes (Bamgboye & Satgoor, 2016). Similar to other academic institutions, it appears that the University of Venda is stuck in a loop where the value of records management training is acknowledged but not consistently put into practice. The efficient handling of various and increasingly digital documents is affected by this. Thus, by highlighting real practices and inadequacies in records management training inside an academic institution, the research serves as both a confirmation and a critique of the body of current literature.

#### **4.3.1.3. Staff Expertise: Examining whether all staff involved in records management are sufficiently trained**

The study discovered that the level of staff knowledge in records administration at the University of Venda varies significantly. While some employees are well-trained and competent, others do not receive adequate training, resulting in an uneven approach to records management across departments.

*“I’ve had some training sessions, but they weren’t consistent. And they didn’t touch on digital records,”* said Participant 2. In a more disheartening tone, Participant 6 mentioned, *“The training feels like a box-checking exercise. We’re not skilled enough to adapt to new forms of records.”* Participant 9, who has over a decade of experience, claimed, *“I think the problem lies in management’s understanding of what proper records management is. Some of us are well-trained, but we’re a minority.”*

The body of literature already in existence supports the conclusions of this investigation. According to Penn, Pennix and Coulson (1999), successful records management starts with sufficient training, particularly in an educational setting where records are varied. In contrast, Williams, Brien and Sprague (2012) assert that a company’s capacity to provide thorough training to every employee is frequently constrained by budgetary considerations. This line of reasoning is consistent with the viewpoint of Participant 6, who claims that training appears to be a “box-checking” chore. Penny and Duff (2014) emphasise the significance of continual professional development in addition to initial training to stay up with the rapidly evolving records management landscape. Participant 2’s comment concerning uneven training and omitting important topics like digital records resounds with this argument.

While the findings concur with established literature in terms of the inconsistency and insufficiency of staff training in records management, the study exposes the risk of such inconsistency within an educational institution. This risk lies in jeopardising the integrity and usability of records, which are crucial for decision-making and accountability in academic environments. The observed variation in staff expertise levels echoes but also complicates the arguments made by Penn, Pennix, Coulson and Williams, Brien and

Sprague by revealing that even when training is provided, it may not be comprehensive or up to date to meet the needs of modern records management. This supports Penny and Duff's proposal for continual professional development, implying that ad hoc staff training is insufficient for the shifting needs of academic records administration.

#### **4.3.1.4. Standard Operating Procedures: Investigating the presence of SOPs or guidelines that assist in records management**

The study's conclusions about the existence and efficacy of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for records management at the University of Venda were conflicting. Although some departments have adopted SOPs, their thoroughness and use vary greatly throughout the organisation.

*"We do have an SOP, but I'm not sure everyone reads it,"* said Participant 1. On the other hand, Participant 7 expressed, *"I was not even aware there were SOPs in place until recently."* Meanwhile, Participant 3 was more optimistic, stating, *"The SOPs are good, but there's room for improvement; they should be updated more frequently to match technological advancements."*

The existing literature emphasises the significance of SOPs in efficient records management. Shepherd and Yeo (2003) accentuate the importance of well-designed SOPs in ensuring the integrity of records. Bennett and McRobb (2008), on the other hand, argue that SOPs may occasionally become merely cosmetic papers that fail to direct practice, as Participant 7 observed. Adams (2016) underscores the significance of regular SOP updates, echoing Participant 3's point that SOPs should adapt to technology advances.

The study's findings mostly agree with previous studies. While SOPs are widely acknowledged to be important, poor execution and variable levels of understanding among workers pose issues. These reservations are consistent with Bennett and McRobb's (2008), contention that SOPs might be ineffectual if they are not generally



understood and implemented. Furthermore, Participant 3's emphasis on the necessity for regular revisions to SOPs reinforces Adams' thesis concerning the development of records management processes. It becomes evident that while SOPs are in place, their effectiveness is compromised by inconsistencies in staff awareness and updates, thus leaving room for potential breaches in records management. The study reinforces that having SOPs is not an end in itself but requires consistent adaptation and robust institutional buy-in.

SOPs are difficult to apply, as seen by the University of Venda's conflicting comments about their knowledge and efficacy. They support not just Shepherd and Yeo's support for SOPs but also Bennett and McRobb's, (2008) doubt Adams, (2006) demand for evolutionary practices by providing empirical support. The study therefore completes the discussion by saying that while SOPs are important, their use depends on staff knowledge and constant updating.

#### **4.3.2. MAJOR THEME 2: RECORDS MANAGEMENT CHALLENGES**

##### **4.3.2.1. Infrastructure: Challenges related to physical and digital infrastructure for storing records**

According to the data, the University of Venda confronts significant hurdles in terms of both physical and digital infrastructures for record-keeping. The problems range from a lack of physical storage space to insufficient technology solutions for digital data.

*"We're literally running out of physical storage,"* lamented Participant 4. *"The digital systems we have are painfully slow and not user-friendly,"* added Participant 6. Meanwhile, Participant 9 contended, *"There's a lack of coordination between the physical and digital realms; they should be seamlessly integrated but they're not."*

These findings are supported by current research, which both supports and elucidates earlier findings. According to Bearman (1993), reliable physical and digital infrastructure, including enough storage capacity and user-friendly software solutions, are necessary for successful records administration. McKemmish et al. (1999) contend that technical issues like sluggish systems might jeopardise the reliability and usability of digital data. On the other hand, Duranti and Rogers (2019) contend that these infrastructure problems could be signs of more serious organisational problems, including a lack of finance or bad management.

The available evidence appears to corroborate the central assertions posited by Bearman (1993) and McKemmish et al. (1999) about the indispensability of infrastructure, including suitable storage facilities and information systems, in facilitating efficient records management. The data further substantiate the idea proposed by Duranti and Rogers (2012) that issues pertaining to infrastructure could potentially indicate underlying organisational deficiencies. The situation at the University of Venda exemplifies a complex problem, where the lack of infrastructure not only poses a challenge on its own, but also signifies underlying issues in resource allocation and strategic priorities.

The lack of seamless integration between the physical and digital storage systems, as noted by Participant 9, highlights the absence of a comprehensive approach to records management at the University. This lack of coordination is indeed a complex challenge that extends beyond mere technological and spatial limitations. As a result, the findings give a complex viewpoint that both verifies and builds on previous research. The University of Venda's infrastructure problems are more than just a lack of storage space or technology shortcomings; they show fundamental difficulties of resource distribution, systematic organisation, and administrative control. As a result, tackling these difficulties would need a holistic approach that goes beyond simple infrastructure upgrades.

#### **4.3.2.2. Administrative Support: Understanding the level of support from the administrative staff and upper management**

The results of the data reveal a nuanced picture of the administration's and top management's degree of support at the University of Venda. The research shows that administrative assistance varies and is frequently reliant on personal connections rather than institutional policies.

*"I can't really rely on upper management to understand the importance of records management,"* stated Participant 1. *"Some administrative staff are really committed, while others are just clocking hours,"* added Participant 3. *"When it comes to financial support for records management, we often have to scrape the bottom of the barrel,"* lamented Participant 7.

The findings reflect current research that emphasises the need of administrative assistance in good records management. According to Shepherd and Yeo (2003), administrative assistance can have a considerable impact on the efficacy of records management practises. Cox (2015) agrees, claiming that a lack of awareness and support from high management frequently leads to inadequate records management. Dearstyne (1992), on the other hand, contends that administrative staff support can occasionally be sufficient in the absence of higher management approval.

The situation at the University of Venda appears to reinforce Shepherd and Yeo's as well as Cox's views, suggesting that the lack of consistent administrative support serves as a barrier to effective records management. At the same time, the findings show glimpses of Dearstyne's contention, indicating that individual commitment from some administrative staff helps to sustain certain aspects of records management. The data also suggest a financial component to the lack of assistance, which Participant 7 noted. A cyclical issue is created because a lack of financial support can be seen as both a cause and a consequence of a lack of administrative support. Current literature does not fully address this perspective, suggesting a potential subject for further study.

In light of these factors, the University of Venda's results add levels of intricacy in addition to correlating previous work. The need for a more dependable, institution-wide strategy is further highlighted by the inconsistent nature of administrative assistance. It also emphasises the possible influence of monetary factors on administrative attitudes towards records management.

#### **4.3.2.3. Compliance and Regulation: Examining issues related to legal compliance and regulations affecting record management**

Data suggest that compliance and rules in records management are a major source of worry among the University of Venda's workforce. Participants showed a lack of awareness and grasp of the legal obligations for recordkeeping. This ignorance might result in accidental legal violations and jeopardise the institution's proper records management.

*"We are always on edge about what we should or shouldn't keep, especially concerning legal matters,"* noted Participant 4. *"I feel there are so many rules, but no real guidance,"* mentioned Participant 8. *"The university's compliance framework seems patchy and inconsistent,"* concluded Participant 10.

Compliance is regarded as the bedrock of efficient records management in the literature. Cunningham (2005) asserts that a crucial component of the institutional governance framework is constant legal compliance in records management. Williams (2006) echoes this idea when he claims that a failure to comply with the law may have negative effects on an institution. Over-compliance, however, can occasionally be just as troublesome as non-compliance, according to Pederson (2011), since it might result in needless storage expenses and complicate records retrieval.

At the University of Venda, the research data generally aligns with the views of Cunningham and Williams. The institution faces challenges in maintaining compliance, a condition which could expose them to legal risks. However, as Participant 8 alluded,

the issue of 'over-compliance' or the confusion it might generate, as highlighted by Pederson, also rings true. While the current literature emphasises the necessity of compliance, the issues of managing compliance in a decentralised institutional environment such as a university are not as thoroughly examined. Given Participant 10's comments concerning the "patchy and inconsistent" character of the University's compliance structure, this gap in the literature is especially important. Such discrepancies may compound the difficulties associated with both compliance and over-compliance.

#### **4.3.2.4. Accessibility and Retrieval: Discussing Challenges around Accessing and Retrieving Records When Needed**

The data gathered from the 10 participants showed that a major barrier to the University of Venda's records management system is the accessibility and retrieval of documents. The difficulties included things like lost files and poorly functioning computer systems intended for record retrieval.

*"Sometimes, I spend an entire day looking for one document. It's frustrating,"* lamented Participant 1. *"I find the electronic system to be cumbersome; the search function doesn't always work as it should,"* claimed Participant 6. *"We are still grappling with the transition from paper to digital. It's a mess,"* stated Participant 9.

The topic of accessibility and retrieval in records management has received significant attention in the literature. A successful records management system, according to Shepherd and Yeo (2003), should allow for the speedy and correct retrieval of records. However, according to Bantin (2016), while electronic records systems have greatly increased access speed, they also pose new issues, particularly when bad metadata practices are in place. These contradictory viewpoints are muddled further by Cox (2004), who claims that both paper-based and digital systems have distinct record retrieval challenges.

The experiences at the University of Venda echo the complexities highlighted in existing literature. While the transition to electronic systems should ideally ease the retrieval process, it has ironically compounded the issue, consistent with Bantin's observations. Nevertheless, Shepherd and Yeo's emphasis on quick and accurate retrieval as a hallmark of effective records management stands as a benchmark, the university has yet to meet. When the findings are taken into account alongside the current institutional records management frameworks, an additional level of complexity is added. The guidelines for producing, capturing, and maintaining records set out in ISO 15489-1:2016 place a strong emphasis on the value of accessibility. It is clear that the University of Venda falls short of this quality, and this discrepancy between professional standards and practice makes it the more urgent to resolve these issues.

The data illustrate that the issues of accessibility and retrieval are not solely technological but are intertwined with human factors such as training and adaptability to new systems, areas that have been underexplored in the current literature. The findings from the University of Venda not only confirm current research on the difficulties of record retrieval, but also provide nuanced insight into the issue. It is not just a matter of selecting between paper and digital; rather, the human factor, including training and comfort with various technologies, is critical, which the literature has yet to adequately address.

### **4.3.3. MAJOR THEME 3: AWARENESS OF THE BENEFITS OF RECORDS MANAGEMENT PRACTICES**

#### **4.3.3.1. Operational Efficiency**

Participants' perspectives of how records management influences University of Venda operations differ, according to data gathered from them. While some participants agreed that the institution's records management system has helped operations run more smoothly, others had doubts about its effectiveness.

*“When the records are in order, everything else seems to fall in place,”* noted Participant 2. *“The benefits of a good records system can’t be overstated. It saves time and reduces bottlenecks,”* argued Participant 5. In contrast, Participant 7 opined, *“The idea that a records system can streamline operations is a myth, at least in our case. It hasn’t made much of a difference.”*

Several academics have debated the significance of competent records management to operational efficiency. Saffady (2019), for example, says that an effective records management system may greatly enhance organisational workflow, although Bearman (1994) is more sceptical, claiming that the advantages are frequently overstated and context dependent. Sundqvist (2015) is even more critical, claiming that the influence of records management on operational efficiency is frequently insignificant, particularly in larger organisations with more complicated bureaucracies.

At the University of Venda, the data reveal a nuanced picture. While some participants felt that record management had improved operational efficiency, echoing Saffady’s argument, others felt that the impact was either exaggerated or negligible, consistent with Bearman and Sundqvist. This variance suggests that factors such as departmental practices, employee training, and available technology could be influencing these mixed opinions. Additionally, there are currently adopted standards like ISO 15489-1:2016 that imply records management should increase operational effectiveness in addition to accountability. According to the statistics from the University of Venda, though, a more determined effort would be needed to meet this criterion.

The results show that operational efficiency does not always follow from good records management. This is consistent with the nuanced viewpoints in the body of literature. The participants’ varied perspectives and experiences highlighted the need for further context-specific study in the area, maybe even concentrating on specific departments within bigger institutions to better understand the dynamics. Because of this, both in actual practice at the University of Venda and in academic research, the operational efficiency component of records administration is still a contentious topic. To properly

comprehend the extent and influence of records management on operational efficiency, one must take into account both the potential for greater efficiency and the restrictions based on many variables, including human resistance and systemic problems.

#### **4.3.3.2. Management Support**

The data findings from the University of Venda's management support for records management activities provide a jumbled image. While some respondents claimed good support from senior management, others reported a lack of full support.

*"I feel that our higher-ups only pay lip service to records management. There's no real commitment,"* lamented Participant 3. On the other hand, Participant 6 said, *"Our management is quite responsive; they have funded some of our projects that aim to improve records management."* Participant 9 struck a balanced note: *"It's not a matter of them not caring, but perhaps a lack of understanding of how crucial proper records management is to the functioning of the University."*

Divergent viewpoints can be found in the literature on the subject. For records management programmes to be successful, Smallwood (2014) emphasises the need for upper management's cooperation. Bennet and Gabriel (2017) contend, however, that rather than a lack of willingness on the part of senior management, development is frequently hampered by a lack of knowledge. These opinions concur with those of Williams (2012), who contends that a strategic communication plan may close the communication gap between records managers and upper management. While a degree of managerial support was acknowledged by some participants, paralleling Smallwood's assertions, the lack of consistent commitment flagged by others aligns more closely with Bennet and Gabriel's argument about the management's knowledge gap. This raises questions about the effectiveness of existing communication strategies within the University of Venda, underscoring the need for enhanced internal advocacy as suggested by Williams.



Both the statistics from the University of Venda and previous scholarly discussions show a contradiction between administrative support and efficacy in records management. Importantly, neither the scholarly literature nor the field data provide a unified picture. Rather, they hint to a complicated and multi-layered link between managerial attitudes and effective records management system adoption. The data from the University of Venda add a new academic layer to the existing research, suggesting that a combination of managerial willingness and capacity, along with focused internal communication, may be the most successful strategy for facilitating meaningful records management. This complication is an important concern for future scholarly discourse and practical applications.

#### **4.3.3.3. Compliance and Risk Mitigation**

The results of the data show that participants are generally aware of the need of efficient record management for compliance and risk reduction. All participants agreed that it was important; however, there appeared to be variation in the level of comprehension and actual practice at the University of Venda.

*“We know we need to manage records to stay within legal frameworks, but I think we’re still learning how to do it best,”* expressed Participant 2. Participant 5 had a more proactive viewpoint: *“Records management is our first line of defense against compliance risks. You mess that up; you’re looking at potential lawsuits and fines.”* Participant 8, however, seemed disconnected, stating, *“It’s someone else’s job, probably legal or compliance units. We just keep the files.”*

The literature on records management’s function in risk mitigation and compliance is extensive. Shepherd and Yeo (2003), for example, suggest that competent records administration is critical for an organisation’s legal protection. In contrast, Park and Lam (2009) contend that records management is frequently sacrificed to immediate operational concerns, putting compliance at risk. Furthermore, Cunningham (2005) contends that, while records management is crucial for compliance, many organisations fail to properly recognise this link.

The findings from the University of Venda seem to corroborate all three scholarly perspectives to some degree. While there is awareness, akin to Shepherd and Yeo's argument, there is also an operational subordination pointed out by Park and Lam. Most significantly, Cunningham's notion of a gap in appreciating the importance of records management for compliance seems to be validated by some of the participants' responses. The evidence indicates a clear gap between comprehension and actual application. This recommends that the University should focus its teaching and training efforts, more specifically to ensure that the theoretical knowledge is translated into practical actions that safeguard the organisation's moral and legal standing. It is evident that just awareness is insufficient given the fact that the participants realised the significance yet exhibited various degrees of participation. The results show that the University of Venda urgently needs a workable plan that goes beyond awareness to achieve robust compliance and risk reduction in records management.

#### **4.3.3.4. Long-term Benefits**

The data findings indicate that participants had various levels of awareness of the long-term benefits of excellent records management, such as ease of retrieval and decision-making assistance. While some were acutely aware of the advantages, others regarded them as secondary, if even tertiary, concerns.

*“Effective records management is like an insurance policy; you don't appreciate its value until you actually need it,”* noted Participant 1. *“I can't imagine trying to make strategic decisions without historical data to lean on,”* said Participant 7. However, Participant 9 appeared less convinced, stating, *“Well, I know theoretically it helps, but I can't say I've seen drastic changes in decision-making because of it.”*

A wide range of perspectives on the long-term advantages of records management are presented in the available literature. Saffady (2017) asserts that effective records

management procedures support strategic decision-making by providing readily available, well-maintained historical data. On the other hand, Yeates (2000) contends that it can be difficult to promote effective records management since the long-term advantages are sometimes not apparent right away and might not be until a crisis scenario develops. Further, Penn, Pennix and Coulson (1999) assert that many businesses overlook the benefits over the long run in favour of short-term gains like cost savings. In light of the University of Venda's scenario, the findings seem to both corroborate and contradict existing literature. The awareness of benefits for decision-making and ease of retrieval aligns with Saffady's arguments. However, the somewhat skeptical view held by some participants reflects Yeates' and Penn et al.'s perspectives, suggesting that the long-term benefits are either not fully understood or appreciated. These multiple viewpoints within the same institutional setting highlight the complexity and multifaceted nature of records management.

It may be concluded that the University of Venda might do more to increase students' comprehension and enjoyment of long-term advantages. The participants' various levels of awareness highlight the need for more extensive training and awareness initiatives that can help to translate theoretical knowledge into practical, everyday usage. The various points of view expressed by participants indicate that the University of Venda is at crossroads where it can either capitalise on some of its staff's awareness to build a strong records management culture or risk diluting the potential long-term benefits due to a lack of universal understanding and implementation. The findings highlight the significance of including records management within the University's overall organisational plan.

#### **4.3.4. MAJOR THEME 4: EFFECTIVE STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVING RECORDS MANAGEMENT**

##### **4.3.4.1. Strategic Recommendations**

The data results for this subject show that the participants agreed that strategic measures are needed to improve records management at the University of Venda. It is interesting that the suggestions included everything from technical investments to changes in organisational culture.

*“There should be a unified system that is user-friendly and maintains all records in one place,”* articulated Participant 3. Participant 6 emphasised the human element, stating, *“Training and continuous professional development for those in charge of records management cannot be overlooked.”* On the other hand, Participant 10 stressed accountability: *“There should be regular audits and evaluations to ensure compliance.”*

When compared to existing literature, the replies mostly confirm well-established ideas and best practices. Smallwood (2014) contends that technology solutions are necessary for modern records management, which Participant 3 concurs with. Furthermore, Shepherd and Yeo (2003) emphasised the value of training, echoing Participant 6. Williams (2011), on the other hand, says that an over-reliance on technology might take focus away from other key factors like as policy and compliance, aligning more with Participant 10’s perspective on frequent audits and responsibility. Given these various perspectives, the University of Venda appears to be at a pivotal moment. With a mosaic of recommendations that reflect both technological and human-centered strategies, the institution has the opportunity to develop a holistic approach to records management. The collective wisdom from participants generally aligns with existing scholarly perspectives but offers a richer, context-specific insight that is deeply embedded in the unique challenges and opportunities that the University faces.

Significantly, several participants emphasised how important senior management’s responsibility is in carrying out these strategic recommendations. This is consistent with Sundqvist’s (2009) assertion that top management support is frequently necessary for records management initiatives to be successful. The participants’ varied but related comments reveal a multifaceted perspective of what constitutes efficient records

management. This concept implicitly supports a comprehensive approach that integrates technology, ongoing learning, and accountability measures. Such a complex strategy may very well serve as a model for organisations with comparable records management issues.

#### **4.3.4.2. Governance Impact**

The data findings under the ‘Governance Impact’ sub-theme indicate that participants saw excellent records management practices as a cornerstone for stronger governance at the University of Venda. The findings provide light on the complex interaction between records management and organisational governance, with an emphasis on openness, accountability, and decision-making.

*“Effective records management is fundamental for transparency. It ensures that there is a clear paper trail for administrative decisions,”* said Participant 1. Participant 7 highlighted another facet, stating, *“Proper records management promotes accountability. Without it, anyone can alter or misplace important documents, and that’s a governance risk.”* Participant 9 took a broader view: *“Records are essentially the DNA of any institution. They form the basis for strategic planning and decision-making.”*

The aforementioned viewpoints are strongly supported by previous research, and they also highlight fresh, subtle insights. Effective records management may promote organisational openness and accountability, which are essential components of governance, according to Montaa, Piattini and Pino’s (2015) argument. John (2010) emphasises, however, that while records management may support governance, its effects are frequently constrained by other organisational factors, including culture and leadership. Finally, Choksy (2016) supports Participant 9’s perspective by asserting that effective record keeping has a direct impact on decision-making.

The findings demonstrate a collective awareness among participants of the interconnectedness between records management and governance, thereby reinforcing existing scholarly debates. However, the emphasis on the multi-dimensional impact, particularly on strategic decision-making, brings a specific focus that is less evident in generalised theories. Therefore, this offers a unique opportunity for the University of Venda to capitalise on a well-rounded records management strategy that does more than maintain records, it enhances governance. The focus on governance in the replies appears to match the ideas of the ISO 15489 standard, which specifies governance as an essential component of records management. Nonetheless, while the findings support the core arguments of Montaa et al. and Choksy (2016), they also raise concerns about the feasibility of accomplishing governance goals purely through records management, a point raised by John.

#### **4.3.4.3. Technology Utilisation**

The finding of the study on the 'Technology Utilisation' sub-theme point to participants' strong interest in integrating contemporary technology into records management at the University of Venda. The agreement emphasises how technology simplifies procedures while simultaneously providing improved record security and accessibility.

*"The manual system is outdated; we're in a digital age. Modern technologies can help us manage records more efficiently,"* stated Participant 3. *"Security of records is critical. With advanced technology, we can secure them better than locking up paper in a cabinet,"* mentioned Participant 5. Participant 8 opined, *"The ability to retrieve records quickly with a simple search query would revolutionise our operations. Digitalisation is the way forward."*

These viewpoints complement and enhance previous scholarly work. Saffady (2019) emphasises the advantages of digital records management solutions, such as faster retrieval and greater space utilisation. Smallwood (2014), on the other hand, warns that while technology improves records management, it also introduces new hazards, such

as cybersecurity concerns. Yeo (2018), on the other hand, contends that, while technology is useful, it is not a panacea for all records management difficulties, emphasising the relevance of managerial and procedural components.

Participants' testimony largely supports the assumption that technology solutions are required for modern records management. This strengthens Saffady's arguments while also lending validity to Smallwood and Yeo's concerns. The focus on security and rapid retrieval in the comments of participants adds a subtle element to the broader issue, making it important for the University of Venda to not merely adopt technology but to do it carefully. Interestingly, the focus on technical usefulness for records management is consistent with ISO 27001 standards, which suggest employing technology to improve information security—a point that also supports Participant 5's security concerns. The findings support the premise that technology should be seen as a crucial instrument in the armoury of major institutions like the University of Venda for successful records management. Nonetheless, the collective knowledge from both the literature and participant observations implies that technology should be one component of a more holistic approach to records management, balancing efficiency and security.

#### **4.3.4.4. Training and Development**

The data from participants in this study indicated inconsistent training in records management at the University of Venda. There is a critical need at the University of Venda for more focused, regular, and skill-based training in records management. Participants emphasised a discrepancy between the desired skill set needed for efficient record management and the present competences.

*“I feel like we're operating on outdated knowledge; some of the younger staff are more digitally inclined, but we don't get formal training,”* pointed out Participant 2. *“We have no choice but to rely on our previous job experience or even intuition,”* said Participant 7. Participant 9 emphasised, *“Continuous learning isn't a luxury; it's a necessity. The institution should invest in our professional development.”*

These discoveries are being discussed in current academic circles. According to Hutchinson (2019), proper training programmes may increase the abilities and efficiency of records management professionals, resulting in more effective records management. According to Shepherd and Yeo (2003), without professional growth, records management may become stagnant and fail to satisfy changing demands. Tough and Moss (2006) contend that spontaneous development within an organisation may occasionally substitute for conventional training.

The data suggest a strong alignment with the views of Yeoman and Shepherd and Yeo, advocating for regularised training. The voice of Participant 9, stressing the necessity of ongoing training, particularly magnifies the arguments of these scholars. This casts doubt on the efficacy of relying solely on 'natural evolution,' as proposed by Tough and Moss, within the context of the University of Venda. Additionally, the ARMA International Guidelines (2017), which advocate consistent training and re-evaluation for records management professionals, and which reflect the opinions of the majority of participants, emphasise the necessity for ongoing training. The collective insights from both the participants and the existing literature underscore the critical need for not just training, but continual training. It becomes imperative for the University of Venda to institutionalise such practices as a commitment to both the employees and the institution's operational excellence.

#### **4.4. GENERAL DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS**

The data analysis reveals a major gap between current records management practices and desired standards at the University of Venda. This chapter analysed key areas like Governance Impact, Technology Utilisation, and Training and Development to provide a holistic perspective and recommend concrete improvements. The findings definitively indicate that robust records management is imperative for enhanced university governance, aligning with Weir's (2011) link between records and modern corporate governance. Participants overwhelmingly connected better records practices to higher governance ideals like openness and accountability. Unlike McKemmish et al. (2010) who contend records and governance can be detached, this study evidences their



inextricable ties in higher education. These results reinforce conclusions by Hutchinson (2019) and Park (2020) on the role of records management in enabling transparency, accountability, and informed decision-making.

The widespread lack of technical infrastructure compromising record security and efficacy signals urgent needs for technology investments and strategic upgrades. This aligns with Bearman (1994), who emphasised technology's importance for long-term preservation. However, isolated tech solutions are insufficient, as Saffady (2017) warns; hence, the need for comprehensive integration as participants advocated. The findings reflect arguments by scholars like Ifeolu (2016) that outdated systems inhibit universities' governance, operations and service delivery. Meanwhile, companies integrating emerging technologies like AI and cloud storage into records management report vast improvements in areas like efficiency, security and analysis (Deloitte, 2021). The University of Venda can similarly modernise through strategic adoption of technologies tailored to its needs.

Continuous training programmes are pivotal to keep pace with evolving best practices per Corral (1998) and Stephens and Scheetz (2014). Participants widely critiqued existing training as inconsistent, lacking key competencies like digital records management. Literature echoes this skills gap, for instance Osei (2021) found limited expertise in digitisation and preservation of records. Conversely, studies of dedicated training interventions show positive outcomes. For example, after tailored workshops at Kenyan universities, Mazinga (2018) documented significant self-reported improvement in skills like e-records, metadata, preservation, etc. This highlights the potential positive impact formalised training could have at the University of Venda.

Many participants prioritised unified systems for efficiencies. This strategy finds wide support in literature as facilitating seamless records access, movement and security (Saffady, 2020). However, scholars like Kilonzo (2018) warn that technology alone cannot solve records challenges without wider organisational commitment. Hence, while systems unification is beneficial, it must be part of holistic reforms. The Institute of

Corporate Administration (2020) provides a model “excellence framework” integrating digital systems, training, and clear accountabilities to optimise records management. Adapting such a multidimensional approach can help the University of Venda close existing gaps.

In surmising the disparate evidence, participants widely echoed scholars highlighting modern records management as pivotal for governance, risk management and competitive advantage (Corporate Governance Institute, 2022). Neglecting records management not only creates institutional vulnerabilities but also forfeits strategic opportunities. Consequently, elevating its importance institutionally is an urgent imperative. Scholars propose appointing dedicated senior-level positions like Chief Records Officers to coordinate programmes (ARMA International, 2022). The University of Venda creating such a role could provide vital leadership and oversight.

This empirical evidence reinforces existing literature on the vital significance of records management for higher education institutions. While frameworks are available, the University of Venda case reveals execution gaps that still inhibit many universities from realising the full governance and performance potential of records management. However, with strategic investments, training and oversight, the benefits evidenced globally can be unlocked. records management.

#### **4.5. SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER**

The administration of records at the University of Venda may have a considerable influence on governance, technological flexibility, and ongoing professional growth, as this chapter explains. Records management is not only a routine administrative task. It is clear that there is tremendous room for improvement in the existing state of records management from the diverse viewpoints of the relevant parties. There are obvious opportunities for development and advancement, whether it be in the area of governance, where improved records management might strengthen transparency and accountability, or within the framework of technical utility, where digital transformation could revolutionise data retrieval and security. Moreover, by overlaying the empirical

data on the already-published academic literature, this chapter aimed to enhance the conversation. Such a comparative examination has uncovered intriguing overlaps and differences, broadening the conversation beyond the University's particular context to a more comprehensive grasp of records management ideas and practices.

The chapter presented a convincing argument in favour of a methodical, technologically advanced, and skilled approach to records administration by combining these several factors. The useful advice and strategic suggestions provided here should operate as a road map for the University of Venda, promoting both short-term initiatives and long-term planning to raise the bar for records management. In doing so, the chapter sought to significantly advance institutional practises as well as the academic community, with the intention that the stories and data presented will enlighten and spur change.

## **CHAPTER 5: SUMMARIES; CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **5.1. INTRODUCTION**

The final chapter of this study provides a summary of the significant results, conclusions, and suggestions that have emerged from the research. The chapter provides a comprehensive overview of the empirical findings pertaining to records management practises at the University of Venda. It further examines the extent to which these findings align with, challenge, or contribute to the current body of research. The study's findings and conclusions support the proposal of practical recommendations that draw upon both the empirical evidence gathered and existing scholarly knowledge. These recommendations aim to improve records management practices at the University. The study also provides an overview of the consequences for institutional reforms. The study concludes by acknowledging its limitations and proposing avenues for future research to overcome these limitations and further expand upon the findings. To summarise, this final chapter provides a condensed version of the study's core findings and offers practical recommendations for the University of Venda and the wider academic community.

### **5.2. SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS**

#### **5.2.1. Establishing records management practices at the University of Venda**

The study revealed major deficiencies in the records management framework at the University of Venda. Despite existing policies, their dissemination and implementation across different departments lacks uniformity and coordination. This results in inconsistent operational practices and protocols for records management across the university's faculties, schools, and administrative units. There are discernible fragmentation and discrepancies rather than an integrated structure. These findings align with conclusions by Matemo (2018), who found variability in records practices across different departments within a South African university. However, contrasting

findings were noted by Mnjama (2014) who found standardised records systems within a Kenyan university. The present study's discoveries reveal gaps in oversight and strategic control, leading to the divergence in records management implementation.

An ongoing dependence on legacy paper-based records systems was discovered across many departments. While there is recognition that digital records are growing exponentially, manual paper records still dominate. This indicates the university is still in the early transitional stages towards digitisation. However, efforts to digitise records thus far appear ad hoc, experimental, and uncoordinated rather than systematic and comprehensive. This underscores that the digital transformation is still nascent, contrasting with more mature electronic records management systems implemented at some other South African universities. The persistence of extensive paper archives and archives despite exponential digital growth points to a lack of holistic strategy. The absence of a coordinated transition to modern electronic systems indicates records digitisation has not been elevated as an institutional priority or goal. While digitisation is acknowledged as imperative, this has not yet translated into concrete action. The lack of mature digital systems also contrasts with global trends towards automation and smart electronic records management ecosystems.

### **5.2.2. Awareness of benefits of records management practices**

Perspectives on the benefits arising from sound records management practices varied extensively among participants. Some staff demonstrated awareness of tangible benefits like improved operational efficiency, signifying consciousness of the positive impacts proper records management could enable. However, others were more doubtful or skeptical of any discernible advantages arising from enhanced records systems. This spectrum of opinions mirrors the divergent perspectives found in scholarly discourse. Regarding management support, the study found inconsistent experiences among university staff. This points to potential knowledge deficiencies among senior leadership around records management's importance. It indicates records management may not be adequately positioned as a strategic priority at the executive level currently.

Compliance awareness was moderately high among respondents. However, this did not necessarily translate into tangible compliance actions and behaviors. This reflects a common compliance-practice divide, where awareness exists but practical implementation lags behind. Finally, perceptions of long-term value from records management also differed. Some recognised less visible but vital benefits like informed decision-making and minimising risks. However, others held more skeptical views on whether records management has tangible impacts. The multiplicity of views indicates varied internalisation of records management's lasting benefits. Positive perceptions need to be mainstreamed to drive cultural shifts.

### **5.2.3. Records management challenges at the University of Venda**

Inadequate infrastructure was identified as a foremost challenge, including insufficient physical storage space and lack of user-friendly digital systems. Despite some modernisation attempts, gaps persist. This indicates larger systemic and strategic limitations around resources allocation and priorities for records management. The lack of holistic infrastructure upgrades points to records management not being seen as a mission-critical activity. Widespread uncertainty around legal compliance obligations was another major issue discovered. This underscores records management's vital role in maintaining sustained regulatory compliance, an interdependency currently undermined by gaps in knowledge and oversight. Here again, the lack of emphasis on compliance points to records management not being sufficiently elevated as a priority area from a risk mitigation perspective. Poor accessibility and retrieval capabilities pose significant obstacles to finding and utilising records efficiently. Participants indicated major difficulties locating records, which affects operational effectiveness. This non-compliance with established best practice standards undermines the University's records management performance. Moreover, problems transitioning from legacy paper-based systems to modern digitised environments further exacerbate access and findability challenges. This dual medium complexity points to the transitional stage of evolution.

#### **5.2.4. Strategies for improving records management**

Proposed strategies by participants widely validated known solutions like policies, technology upgrades, training, and governance reforms. Integrated systems were highly endorsed as crucial for improving security, accessibility, and interoperability of records across the sprawling university. This underscores the need to unify the extensively fragmented records landscape. However, purely technology-centric solutions are inadequate. Holistic integration of policies, procedures, people and systems is vital for modernization success. Establishing centralised, dedicated governance mechanisms was widely advised to elevate the strategic focus on records management. Creating specialised oversight roles can signal priority from the top-down. Overall, tailored, contextual strategies were recommended rather than one-size-fits-all solutions. The university's unique needs and gaps call for customised and targeted interventions.

### **5.3. CONCLUSIONS**

The primary objective of this study entailed the evaluation of records management procedures, with a particular focus on discerning the potential impact of proficient records management practises on governance and operational efficacy within the esteemed academic institution, namely the University of Venda. One of the primary objectives of this study was to examine the existing institutional framework pertaining to records management. The findings reveal the presence of notable lacunae in policy formulation and communication practises across various ministries. Shepherd and Yeo (2003) posit that the efficacy of records administration may be significantly impeded due to the absence of a coherent institutional framework. Despite the presence of established policies at the esteemed institution known as the University of Venda, the implementation of said policies remains largely inconsistent and rudimentary in nature.

The examination of the role and efficacy of technology in the realm of records management constituted an additional objective of the present study. Based on the findings of the report, it is evident that the institution predominantly relies on archaic

paper-based methodologies, which are deemed obsolete and ineffectual within the contemporary digital epoch. As posited by Saffady (2017), the integration of electronic records management systems is imperative for contemporary organisations to ensure compliance with global standards pertaining to data security and governance. The aforementioned conclusion posits a strong implication that the University of Venda, through its disregard for state-of-the-art technological apparatus, is exhibiting a notable deficiency in keeping pace with contemporary methodologies in the realm of records management.

The primary focal points of this research encompassed the domains of professional development and continuous training initiatives. The present investigation has revealed a conspicuous insufficiency in the realm of personnel development and training initiatives. The participants consistently articulated concerns regarding the dearth of training, mirroring the sentiments espoused by Millar (2017) regarding the indispensability of endowing personnel with contemporary knowledge and competencies. Within the scholarly milieu, the dearth of such comprehensive instruction engenders suboptimal practices in the realm of record manipulation and administration, thus compromising both the precision and efficacy thereof.

The present study also sought to examine the potential facilitation of enhanced university governance through the implementation of efficient records management practices. In accordance with extant scholarly literature (Cox, 1994; McKemmish et al., 2005), it is evident that the efficacious management of records and the establishment of robust governance mechanisms are intrinsically interconnected. The investigation further revealed that the governance frameworks at the esteemed University of Venda are experiencing significant ramifications due to the prevailing deficiencies in the management of records. The temporal duration of decision-making procedures often surpasses initial projections, while the unfortunate misplacement of pivotal documents occurs with notable frequency, thus engendering an adverse impact on the efficacy of governance.



The research objectives have been adequately addressed. The comprehensive analysis undertaken in this study not only elucidated the significant deficiencies inherent in the extant records management system at the esteemed University of Venda, but also shed light on the far-reaching implications for governance and the overall efficacy of operational processes. The imperative for an exhaustive overhaul of records management procedures, encompassing policy standardisation, technological assimilation, and perpetual professional development, is unequivocally evident. The findings substantiate the broader academic discourse surrounding the pivotal role that a robust records management system plays in enhancing institutional efficacy and governance.

### **5.3. RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **5.3.1. Strategic Policy Development**

The University of Venda should prioritise developing a comprehensive records management policy covering both physical and digital records across all departments. This policy should clearly delineate roles, access protocols, retention schedules, and optimal practices for managing records throughout their lifecycle. Experts should be consulted to ensure the policy integrates current standards and best practices. Once formulated, the policy must be effectively communicated to all stakeholders through training and made easily accessible. It should be reviewed periodically to keep updated with technological advancements, legal changes, and institutional needs. A uniform policy will provide the necessary foundation to standardise and improve records management practices university-wide.

#### **5.3.2. Investment in Technology Infrastructure**

It is recommended that the University of Venda invest in acquiring or building an Electronic Records Management System (ERMS) tailored to its specific needs. As Yeo (2007) outlines, an ERMS can streamline recordkeeping processes and strengthen

security, accessibility, and regulatory compliance. The system should have user-friendly interfaces to ensure adoption yet be robust enough for university-wide implementation. A phased, strategic approach should be taken to digitisation beginning with high-risk or high-value records. Legacy digital systems and paper records should run in parallel during transition to maintain continuity. Comprehensive assessments must be ongoing to monitor and address any technology or user issues. While initial costs are substantial, the long-term efficiencies and risk reduction from ERMS make it a wise investment.

### **5.3.3. Training and Development Programmes**

Continuous training and development must be institutionalised to build staff capabilities in evolving records management needs. As Penn, Pennix and Coulson (2010) advocate that regular training is key to keep pace with changing technologies, regulations, and competency requirements. The training should move beyond one-time workshops to sustained professional education. It should foster both general literacy and specialised technical skills based on roles. Partnerships with professional associations can facilitate developing comprehensive, accredited training programmes. Incentives should be provided to personnel who complete training milestones. Internal training departments could also be established. By making training mandatory and central to career progression, the University can ensure the workforce maintains cutting-edge expertise.

### **5.3.4. Centralised Governance System**

It is recommended that the University of Venda constitute a high-level records management committee to provide oversight. As Williams (2013) proposes, such focused governance can elevate the strategic importance of records management. The committee should have senior management representation to signal priority but also include records professionals and IT staff. It can be tasked with formulating the records management policy, liaising between departments, monitoring compliance, evaluating technologies, and driving continuous improvement. Central authority is essential to bring cohesion, accountability, and effectiveness to the currently fragmented records system.

Designating a Chief Records Officer to coordinate the committee would provide further leadership.

### **5.3.5. Compliance Audits**

Annual audits by both internal and external reviewers must be instituted to gauge the health of records management practices. As Duranti and Rogers (2012) note, regular audits are indispensable for identifying issues and maintaining regulatory compliance. Audits should cover the full spectrum of information governance, including policy awareness, staff competencies, technological readiness, effectiveness of training, and risk exposures. Detailed logs must track audit findings and corrective actions. Senior management must review audit reports and ensure findings are addressed. In addition to driving remedial measures, audits reinforce accountability across the University system. Integrating compliance into day-to-day operations rather than as an afterthought is the optimal approach.

## **5.4. SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH**

### **5.4.1. Cost-Benefit Analysis**

Future research could conduct a detailed cost-benefit analysis of implementing proposed records management improvements at the University of Venda. As margins in higher education are often constrained (Marginson, 2016), quantifying the financial viability of interventions will support decision-making and strategic planning. A cost-benefit analysis would weigh projected expenses of upgrades like technology systems or training programmes against expected benefits such as enhanced efficiency, reduced risks, and avoided costs. Comparing scenarios of maintaining status quo versus progressing reforms would further highlight the value proposition.

### **5.4.2. Customised Digital Systems**

With the rising digitisation of records, an area for future study is developing customised systems incorporating emerging technologies like machine learning and blockchain for academic records management. As Janssen et al. (2012) note, such technologies are revolutionising industries. Tailored digital systems could optimise findability, automation, security, and analytics to transform university records management. Designing interfaces aligned to institutional workflows and stakeholder needs is key. The growth of virtual learning underlines the need for agile, integrated systems (Cukier et al., 2009).

#### **5.4.3. Longitudinal Assessment**

Given this study's limited time frame, longitudinal research tracing the progression of records management practices over extended periods could uncover crucial insights. As Creswell and Creswell (2017) suggests, longitudinal studies assess changes and developments over time. Examining the University of Venda's records management trajectory over multiple years could identify turning points, causal factors, and long-term impacts. It can highlight reform efforts and pinpoint persistent challenges. This could supplement the current snapshot study.

#### **5.4.4. Multi-institutional Comparative Studies**

Further research could replicate this study across multiple higher education institutions within and beyond South Africa. As Creswell and Creswell (2017) note, comparative analysis highlights contextual factors shaping records management. Comparing practices across universities with different structures, resources and cultures can identify best practices and differentiated needs. Broader samples could confirm findings or reveal variability. It can enable developing tailored, yet transferable recommendations.

#### **5.4.5. Interdisciplinary Research**

Given records management's multidisciplinary nature, future studies could take an interdisciplinary approach engaging IT, legal, administrative and other departments, as

suggested by Pemberton and Nugent (1995). This holistic lens can provide unique operational and strategic insights complementary to the current records management focus. Moreover, it would fulfill the growing scholarly emphasis on integrative research, as outlined by Strang (2015).

## **5.5. FINAL CONCLUSION**

The research on “Assessing records management practises and the contribution of effective records management to enhancing records management at the University of Venda” has made a diverse contribution to the existing academic literature and provides practical insights of significant importance. Perhaps most importantly, the research addresses a substantial vacuum in the literature by concentrating on a specific institution of higher education in South Africa, a setting that has hitherto been neglected in the scholarly debate on records management (Shepherd & Yeo, 2003). The research amplifies the perspectives and experiences that are frequently marginalised in global academic dialogues by offering an in-depth assessment of the University of Venda’s unique problems and potential.

This study has the potential to impact genuine, significant changes in administrative practises not just at the University of Venda, but also in higher education institutions in general. The recommendations given in this study are both pragmatic and practical, with the goal of being adaptable to a wide range of institutional situations (Duranti & MacNeil, 1996). As a result, the practical consequences are extensive. Implementing these guidelines might result in more simplified, effective records management operations, improving overall institutional efficiency. The study’s focus on the importance of continual professional growth and training in records administration is particularly topical, fitting well with current field movements towards more digitisation and technology integration (Bearman, 1994). If followed, the ideas might help to accelerate the creation of more robust, technologically sophisticated records management systems. This is especially important in today’s fast changing digital world, when remaining current is not only desirable but also required for survival (Cox, 1992).

The possible societal implications of this discovery are significant. Increased accountability and governance have been related to effective records management (Wallace & Van Fleet, 2004). As a result, by improving the University of Venda's records management system, the institution can position itself as a leader in transparent and accountable governance, which will benefit its reputation and trustworthiness among stakeholders such as students, faculty, and the general public. This study also presented important concerns that may prompt future scholarly investigation. The intricate interplay of technology improvement, professional growth, and administrative efficiency in records management necessitates a multidisciplinary approach to future study (Tyagi, 2010). Furthermore, this study may be used as a methodological model for comparable research endeavours in other situations, thus enhancing the field in terms of both content and methodology.

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## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

#### INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Topic: Record management practices in institutions of higher learning in South Africa:  
The case of University of Venda.

#### INTRODUCTION

My name is Singo G, and I am an information studies master's student at the University of Limpopo. I am conducting a study on "Record management practices in institutions of higher learning in South Africa: The case of University of Venda" under the supervision of Prof LA Makgakhela. The purpose of the study is to help me to complete my Master of Information Studies. Take note of the fact that your details will be kept confidential and that your names will be addressed anonymously. Your participation in this study is therefore highly appreciated.

Interview questions for collecting data about record management practices in university of Venda.

#### BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR RECORD MANAGER AND RECORD OFFICERS

#### SECTION A: BIOGRAPHICAL PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS

##### 1.1 Please indicate your gender

1.	Male	
2.	Female	

##### 1.2 Please indicate your age category

1	25 years and below	
2	26-30 years	
3	31-35 years	
4	36-40 years	
5	41 years and above	

**1.2 What is your current job title?**

1	Record manager	
2	Registry officer	
3	Admin cleck	
4	Archivist	
5	Senior Registry Clerk	
6	other(specify) ..... .....	

**A. How many years have you been working for university of Venda?**

1	0 – 3 years	
2	4- 7 years	
3	8 -10 years	
4	10 – 12 years	

5	13 years and above	
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**SECTION B**

**Establishing record management practices**

1. What types of records does your university create more?

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2. Did you receive training on records creation and disposal?

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3. Does all staff in the record management section or registry have sufficient training in record management?

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**SECTION C**

**Record management challenges.**

1. What are main challenges that you face in managing records in the university?

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2. What suggestions can you recommend to help improves record management practices in the university?

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3. Is the university taking any step towards addressing the challenges faced in the management of records?

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**SECTION D**

Benefits of record management practices.

1. what benefits of record management practices do you get?

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2. Do you receive full support from top management?

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3. What are benefits that contribute to the current record management practices?

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**SECTION E**

**Effective strategies for record management**

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What recommendations do you have regarding effective strategic for university record management?

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2. Does effective strategies contribute to good governance in the university?

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**Thank you for your cooperation and participation in this study.**

## APPENDIX B: TREC CERTIFICATE



**University of Limpopo**  
Department of Research Administration and Development  
Private Bag X1106, Sovenga, 0727, South Africa  
Tel: (015) 268 4713, Fax: (015) 268 2306, Email: moore.hutamo@ul.ac.za

**TURFLOOP RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE**  
**ETHICS CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE**

**MEETING:** 20 June 2023

**PROJECT NUMBER:** TREC/341/2023: PG

**PROJECT:**

**Title:** Record management practices in institutions of higher learning in South Africa:  
The case of University of Venda  
**Researcher:** G Singo  
**Supervisor:** Prof LA Makgahlela  
**Co-Supervisor/s:** N/A  
**School:** Languages and Communication Studies  
**Degree:** Master of Information Studies

**PROF D MAPOSA**  
**CHAIRPERSON: TURFLOOP RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE**

The Turfloop Research Ethics Committee (TREC) is registered with the National Health Research Ethics Council, Registration Number: REC-0310111-031

**Note:**

- i) This Ethics Clearance Certificate will be valid for one (1) year, as from the abovementioned date. Application for annual renewal (or annual review) need to be received by TREC one month before lapse of this period.
- ii) Should any departure be contemplated from the research procedure as approved, the researcher(s) must re-submit the protocol to the committee, together with the Application for Amendment form.
- iii) PLEASE QUOTE THE PROTOCOL NUMBER IN ALL ENQUIRIES.

*Finding solutions for Africa*



## APPENDIX C: PERMISSION LETTER

Research and Innovation  
Office of the Director

Date: 26<sup>th</sup> July 2023

Mr G Singo (201711384)  
Departments of Media, Communication, and Information Studies  
University of Limpopo

Email: [givenmulo@gmail.com](mailto:givenmulo@gmail.com)

Dear Mr. Singo

### Permission to conduct Research at the University of Venda

You are hereby granted permission to conduct research at the University of Venda.

The research will be based on your master's research title: "*Record management practices in institutions of higher learning in South Africa: The case of University of Venda.*" registered at the University of Limpopo.

Approval period: July 2023 – July 2024

Supervisor: Prof LA Makgahlela

The conditions are that all the data pertaining to the University of Venda will be treated in accordance with the Ethical Principles and that will be shared with the University upon completion of the project. In addition, consent should be sought by you as a researcher from participants.

Attached is our policy on ethics.

Thank you.



Prof VO Netshandama

Chairperson: UREC

Cc: Prof N Faza (DVC Research and Postgraduate Studies)  
Cc: Prof JC Makhubele (Director Research and Innovation)  
Cc: Prof TS Mashau (Chairperson RESSC)



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"The University of Venda produces graduates that are locally relevant and globally competitive"

## APPENDIX D: LANGUAGE EDITORIAL LETTER

### UNIVERSITY OF LIMPOPO

Faculty: Humanities  
School: Languages and Communication Studies  
Department: Languages



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09 November 2023

#### TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

This letter serves to certify that I have edited a research dissertation titled: **“Records management practices in institutions of higher learning in South Africa: A case of University of Venda”** by Singo Geven. A version of the manuscript with the evidence of my editorial interventions has been sent to the author. Such a version can be forwarded to you upon request.

I trust you will find the editing quality in order.

Best regards

*Sebola, M*

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DR MOFFAT SEBOLA

## APPENDIX E: PERMISSION REQUEST LETTER

P.O BOX 05

MUTALE

0958

12 June 2023

The University of Venda Management

University of Venda

Dear Madam/Sir

### APPLICATION LETTER FOR PERMISSION TO COLLECT DATA

I'm Singo Geven student registered for master's Programme in Information Studies at the University of Limpopo. Record managers and record officers of the University of Venda have been chosen as participants in this research. The research topic of my study is: Record management practices in institutions of higher learning in South Africa: The case of University of Venda

I hereby request for permission to collect data from record manager and record officers at the university of Venda. I believe that the results of this study will assist the university records department in developing future interventions for record-keeping. Data will be collected through open-ended questionnaires. Furthermore, you will be informed about what you will be asked, what you will be requested to do during the study, the risks and benefits involved by participating in this research project, and your rights as a participant in this study. Should you agree to participate, you would be requested to participate in a face-to-face interview that will be conducted at a place and time that will be convenient to you. With your permission, the interviews will be digitally recorded. The recorded interviews will be transcribed word-for-word. Your responses to the interview, both the taped and transcribed versions, will be kept strictly confidential. The audiotapes and the transcripts of the interviews will be destroyed two years after the completion of the study. Please note that participation in the research is completely voluntary. You are not obliged to take part in the research. Your decision to participate, or not to participate, will not affect you in any way now or in the future and you will incur no penalty and/ or loss to which you may otherwise be entitled to.

Regards



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## APPENDIX F: CONSENT FORM

### INFORMED CONSENTS

**Topic: Record management practices in institutions of higher learning in South Africa: The case of University of Venda**

Consent to take part in research.

I..... voluntarily agree to participate in this study.

I understand that even if I agree to participate now, I can withdraw at any time or refuse to answer any question without consequences of any kind.

I understand that I can withdraw permission to use data from my interview within two weeks after the interview, in which case the material will be deleted.

I have had the purpose and nature of the study explained to me in writing and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the study.

I understand that I will not benefit directly from participating in this research and I agree to my interview being audio-recorded.

I understand that all information I provide will be treated confidentially.

I understand that in any report on the results of this research, my identity will remain anonymous.

I understand that if I inform the researcher that myself or someone else is at risk of harm, they may have to report this to the relevant authorities. They will discuss this with me first but may be required to report with or without my permission.

I understand that signed consent forms and original audio recordings will be retained at the University of Limpopo Department of information studies until the department confirms the results of the study.

I understand that I am free to contact any of the people involved in the research to seek further clarification and information.

\_\_\_\_\_ / /

Signature of respondent

I believe the respondent is giving informed consent to participate in this study

\_\_\_\_\_ / /