# THE NEED FOR RECORDS MANAGERS ADHERENCE TO ETHICAL PRACTICES

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**Abstract**

*The aim of the study was to investigate the need for records managers to adhere to ethical practices in records management sector. The study was guided by three objectives which covered issues of importance of adherence, factors behind failure to adherence and impacts of failure to adhere to ethical practices. The study was conducted in Tanzania's government ministries. The study involved three main groups of respondents namely human resource officers, records managers and registry users (information users). Data collection was done through questionnaire for information users (registry users) and records managers and interview guide was used to collect data from human resources officers. The main findings of the study first, records managers have a role to play in reduction of corruption practices in different government offices. The findings show that all records managers pointed out that adherence to ethical practices at the ministries raises the prospect of reducing corruption practices. Second respondents comment that lack of a code of conduct for records managers influence fomented unethical workplace practices among their ranks. It was observed that other professionals such as teachers, lawyers and doctors had their own code of conduct over and above the general code of conduct for public services. Third the findings suggest that through non adherence to ethical practices in records management the government can face a lot of impact such as increasing corruption and poor decision making. The study recommends that establishment of code of conduct or ethics special for records managers is required.*

**Key words**: *Adherence of records managers in ethical practices*

## Introduction and Background

Records management has grown over the years as a discipline in library and information science. The evolvement of field has also been embraced by many other disciplines. Despite the field of records management having a relatively short history, it has been progressive and has been recognised in the United States for nearly 20 years (Froehlich, 2004). Capurro (2006) asserts that ethics in the information sector focuses on confidentiality, information bias, and quality

control. Hauptman (1998) focuses on ethical challenges in librarianship such as censorship, privacy, access to information, balance in collection development, copyright, fair use, code of conduct and the problem of patrons. Ethical conduct and practice is a prerequisite to being called a professional. Sabina *et el*. (2005), on their part, observe that records managers ought to be persons worthy of public trust, experts who mediate between readers and information and/or registry users.

In fact, records managers as information professionals play a critical role in fighting corruption, protecting the rights of citizens, and ensuring that transparency, accountability and good governance prevail. However, African governments generally face major challenges when it comes to records management. Ndenje (2010) observed that the management of public sector records is critical because records help to enhance efficiency and effectiveness in the public service; and yet, records management practices in Tanzania's government ministries are not well-managed, let alone given the priority they deserve. Cases of record-keeping violations have been reported in the mass media, often under circumstances involving improper political pressure and corruption (Tweve, 2008). These cases result from ethical lapses of one kind or another or which pose ethical problems for records managers. Chachage (2006) pointed out that the challenges records managers face in Tanzania are associated with lack of specific budgets, trained personnel and appropriate records management policies.

Chachage (2006), Tweve (2008) and Ndenje (2010) observe that records management in Tanzania is an established profession and yet little efforts have been made to improve its services in the public sector. The authors also underscore the fact that records managers in Tanzania require not only knowledge and skills but also ethics to perform their duties effectively. Even in other developing countries such as Zimbabwe, lack of professionalism and ethical practices in records management remains a problem that is not well-recognised (Ngulube, 2000). On the whole, records management in Tanzania has received little attention, particularly in scholarly discourse. Indeed, not much has been published so far on how information professionals, particularly records managers, comply with ethical requirements. In fact, ethics and a code for information professionals in Tanzania have yet to be established as for other professionals in the country. Loss of files by misplacement or gross negligence and destruction of documents because of irresponsibility and lack of accountability remain a common practice, which persists in courts of law and different public offices (Tweve, 2008). Said (2013) in *Mwananchi* reported that the Ministry of Lands, Housing and Human Settlements Development had terminated the services of two Lands officials in Morogoro for taking files out of the Registry without complying with laid-down procedures and regulations. There are many similar cases, which have been reported in the mass media. However, researchers have yet to take keen

interest in this area of ethics in records management and its implications for the management of public records.

## *Statement of the Problem*

The majority of scholars comment that a good record management system needs to have certain characteristics (Lipchak, 2002, p.3). These characteristics include determining information needs, creating and acquiring information, distributing and sharing records and information, evaluating and using information to solve problems and documenting activities and actions. Other characteristics are determining responsibility for managing and protecting records, identifying, organising, storing and disposing records, providing sufficient staff, training and other resources and evaluating the performance of the records system (Kemoni, 2007, p.18). Generally, the issue of ethical practices has not been considered as one of important elements in records management. For example, an organisation can have sufficient staff but who are not working ethically.

On the whole, unethical professional conduct in the records management sector or simply non-adherence to records management remains a source of grave concern in Tanzania's public sector. Some of the problems resulting from such practices include lack of democracy, increased corruption, lack of integrity, respect and trust (Kemoni, 2007). Therefore, there was a need to investigate the state and attendant problems associated with (un)ethical practices of records managers in Tanzania's government ministries.

## *Objectives*

The study was guided with three specific objectives; the first objective aimed at determining the importance of records managers to adhere to ethical practices. Second objective covered factors behind failure to adhere to ethical practices. Third objective identified the impact of records managers failure to adhere to ethical practices.

## Review of related Literature

During the 1990s, in many countries, particularly in developing countries in Africa, offices and corridors were piled high with closed files and filing cabinets were crammed with files that had ceased to be active (Kemoni, 2007; Thurston & Cain 1995). Classification systems were breaking down and unsatisfactory systems existed for managing the creation, use and storage of these records. This dire situation had adverse consequences not only for officers who depended on the files to define and implement policy but also for the Records Managers in their bid to work ethically and professionally. Thurston and Cain's (1995) findings regarding the poor state of record-keeping in many developing countries

are consistent with the observations made by the (IRMT, 1999, 2002) and Mnjama, 2004).

Kemoni (2007) points out that in many countries, particularly in developing countries, the public sector record-keeping systems were not just weak, but also had collapsed and did not function at all (IRMT, 1999c). This total collapse had been particularly evident in countries that had once been part of the European-dominated colonial regimes. The International Records Management Trust [IRMT] (1999c) observes that, following independence in these countries, this situation deteriorated progressively, as part of a general decline in public administration. People employed in the registries had limited training or experience with records management work. As a result, file classification and indexing systems originally designed to meet the records management requirements of the colonial period became unwieldy and ultimately unmanageable. Over the last several decades, there had been a significant deterioration in the management of official records in developing countries, which compromised issues of efficiency, effectiveness, accountability, the protection of human rights, provision of service to citizens, poverty reduction strategies and the rule of law (IRMT 2005). Inevitably, ethical malpractices in this field were a nagging problem that demanded urgent measures.

Poor management of records as a resource was evident in many African and Central American countries (Mnjama, 2004). Based on some of the records management projects this author participated in and which were funded by the IRMT and the WB, among other donors, in Kenya and Botswana and from visits to Tanzania, Ghana, the Gambia, Sierra Leone, Guyana and Belize, Mnjama (2004) concluded that the management of records was plagued by many problems. These problems included poor layout of, and untidiness in, the records storage area, regular loss of files and information, lack of file indexes and registers and lack of control of file movements. Other problems were lack of retention and disposal schedules, poor supervision of records staff and lack of knowledge of the importance of information. But the issue of ethical practices in records management as one of problems facing records managers was not considered.

Examining the practice of records management in the public sector in Zimbabwe and the extent to which records management in Zimbabwe could be regarded as a profession, Ngulube (2000) in Kemoni (2007) found that records were mishandled and abused, suggesting a lack of ethics. Records managers did not have training in records management and lacked a code of conduct. The findings prompted Ngulube (2000) to conclude that records management had yet to be professionalised in Zimbabwe. Thus, the author called for the development and adoption of a records management code of ethics. A decade later since the call

the situation in Zimbabwe had not changed much. In Tanzania, things are not much better: records managers face the same dilemma.

Kemoni (2007) and Ombati (1999) note that the state of records management in Kenya was generally poor. In this regard, Mnjama (2003) decries the inadequate state of record-keeping in Kenya, stating that the factors contributing to the current state of recordkeeping included failure by senior management to establish acceptable records management goals and practices, as well as the non-implementation of various recommendations dealing with improvement of records management in Kenya's public sector including compliance or adherence to ethical practices. The inadequate state of record-keeping in Kenya and its impact on public service delivery might be similar to the situation obtaining in Tanzania. This situation creates a need for conducting an in-depth investigation on the issues by academicians, administrators and researchers.

**Professional Ethics for Records Managers**

A professional ethics for a particular field addresses the moral responsibilities of a member of a profession for field practice (Quinn, 2011). These responsibilities are based in part on the particular role the professional plays; they are also based on the defining aspects of a given professionalism: knowledge, trust, authority, and autonomy. These professional ethics provide guidance on ethical issues confronting a given profession. For records management, the climate of ethical crisis presents challenges and opportunities (Cox, 2006). It presents challenges because the types of unethical acts perpetrated by organisations usually implicate information and records in some way.

Thus, Records Managers (*ibid.*) often get implicated in improper destruction, disclosure, alteration or withholding of records. Also, Records Managers face the risk that they might be caught up in the wrong doing if they do not have a clear understanding of how to manage information and records ethically. In the face of these challenges and opportunities, the time is right for the records profession to develop a distinctive ethics to deal with the emerging problems in information management. In fact, records management as profession should have professional ethics, particularly a code of conduct. Professional ethics for records managers will share many issues with other areas of business and professional ethics, but will place the perspectives of records at its centre.

Why is it important for records managers to have their own professional ethics? Davis (1996) responds to the question by indicating that, there are number of reasons justifying the development of a professional ethics for records managers. To begin with, records professionals play a distinctive role in advancing the ethical management of organisations by providing authentic records of its activity. Second, having a professional ethics is one of the standards of

competence and building a community. On the other hand, records professionals need to manage the ethical challenges they face in their roles; they need to know how not to violate someone's right to privacy or someone else's right to information. They also need to know when they have a conflict of interest and be ethically competent.

**Research Methodology**

This study investigated the importance of adherence to ethical practices among Records Managers in Tanzania's government ministries. Specifically, the study was concerned with investigating importance of adherence to ethical practices, factors behind failure to adherence and impacts of failure to adhere to ethical practices. The study was conducted in Tanzania's government ministries. The study involved three main groups of respondent namely human resource officers, records managers and registry users (information users). Data collection was done through questionnaire for 250 information users (registry users) and 15 records managers and interview guide was used to collect data from 4 human resources officers. Four ministries were selected purposely to represent other ministries.

The study employed a mixed methods research design as it made use of both the quantitative and qualitative approaches to research in a complementary fashion. The use of mixed research approaches helped to bring together the strengths of both approaches to corroborate and validate the data collected. The deployment of the combined research methods approach allows for multi-methods, convergence approach, triangulation, complementary purpose, and it can help to neutralise or cancel out biases inherent in the use a single research method as proposed by (Creswell, 2003).

**Findings**

*Importance of Records Managers' adherence to ethical practices*

Generally, employee adhering to ethical practices contributes to enhanced integrity and reputation of the particular institution. In this regard, the respondents were asked to rank the importance of Records Managers' adherence to ethical practices in their information services provision. Apart from the listed items in the questionnaire on the importance of records managers' adherence to ethical practices, the respondents were also requested to add other important aspects. The findings of this aspect of the importance of records managers' adherence to ethical practices are presented in the subsequent sub sections.

*Records Managers' views on importance of ethical adherence*

Records Managers were asked to identify the importance of ethical adherence in their information services delivery. The itemised variables on the importance of adherence to ethical practice produced the following results. Table 1 presents the summary of the findings.

**Table 1: Importance of Records Managers' adherence to ethical practices**

| Importance of ethical practices | Not sure | | Moderate | | High | | Very high | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Frequency | % | Frequency | % | Frequency | % | Frequency | % |
| Promote trust in Records Managers | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0.0 | 5 | 33.3 | 10 | 66.7 |
| Increase number of users | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0.0 | 4 | 26.7 | 11 | 73.3 |
| Increase user satisfactions | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0.0 | 8 | 53.3 | 10 | 66.7 |
| Attainment of ministry objectives | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0.0 | 5 | 33.3 | 10 | 66.7 |
| Keep/maintain standards of services | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0.0 | 4 | 26.7 | 11 | 73.3 |
| Build an information society | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0.0 | 3 | 20.0 | 12 | 80.0 |
| Reduce corruption practices | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0.0 | 15 | 100.0 |
| Promote ethical decision making | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0.0 | 5 | 33.3 | 10 | 66.7 |
| Control bribe | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0.0 | 3 | 20.0 | 12 | 80.0 |
| Maintain integrity of the ministry | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0.0 | 2 | 13.3 | 13 | 86.7 |
| Control misunderstanding among employees | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0.0 | 5 | 33.3 | 10 | 66.7 |
| Maintain peace at work place | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0.0 | 3 | 20.0 | 12 | 80.0 |

Source: Field Data (2015)

Data in Table 1 illustrates different importance of records managers adherence of ethical practices in their information service delivery at their work places. The data suggest the following observations:-

First, records managers have a role to play in reduction of corruption practices in different government offices. The findings show that all 15 (100%) the records managers pointed out that adherence to ethical practices by Records Managers at the ministries raises the prospect of reducing corruption practices. During data collection, the researcher witnessed many people at the Ministry of Education spending more than two days waiting for their employment files to be found. Indeed, many teachers, particularly those who have retired, were found looking for their records or documentations to help them get their pensions. Such desperate situations have proven over the years to create conditions and loopholes for corruption in many public offices that dishonest Records Managers might exploit.

Second, in different government offices lack customer care services; the data suggest that through proper records keeping might increasing user satisfaction. Generally, when professionals offer their services accordingly, clients or customers get satisfaction. Thus, all professionals are reminded to work ethically, as the data indicates many 10 (66.7%) of the Records Managers rated highly customer satisfaction as a product of ethical practices amongst their ranks. Indeed, information services provision is the same as other professional services given to clients in different ministries. The downside of ineffective information provision is that decision-making can be reached on ad hoc basis in the absence of enough and quality information. It is in this regard that the respondents called for ministries to ensure that records managers are given enough training and other motivational factors to provide relevant, accurate and timely information to the management of different levels and facilitate proper decision-making. Such proper decision-making for different cadres and client resulting from effective records management tends to increase user satisfactions.

Third, findings suggest that through proper records management the nation can build an information society. Findings indicate that many 12 (80%) of the respondents ranked highly importance of building an informed society to ensure Records Managers comply with ethical practice at the ministries. Information ethics insists on the duty of all information professionals (records managers, librarians, archivists and information officers) to make sure the society is informed. Indeed, an informed society increases the prospects of making informed decisions in day-to-day activities. The same is true with Records Managers as they have a potential role of making sure all clients in their ministries are informed.

Information and/or registry users' were asked to point out importance of ethical adherence among Records Managers' in provision information services. The summary of their responses have been summarised and presented in Table 2 below:-

**Table 2: Registry users' views on importance of adherence to ethical practices**

| Importance of ethical practices | Not sure | | Moderate | | High | | Very high | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Frequency | % | Frequency | % | Frequency | % | Frequency | % |
| Promote trust in Records Managers | 0 | 0.0 | 54 | 21.6 | 117 | 78.4 | 79 | 31.6 |
| Increase number of users | 0 | 0.0 | 46 | 18.4 | 54 | 21.6 | 133 | 53.2 |
| Increase user satisfactions | 0 | 0.0 | 31 | 12.4 | 66 | 26.4 | 153 | 61.2 |
| Attainment of ministry objectives | 0 | 0.0 | 42 | 16.8 | 72 | 28.8 | 136 | 54.4 |
| Keep/maintain standards of services | 40 | 16.0 | 48 | 19.2 | 63 | 25.2 | 99 | 39.6 |
| Build an information society | 0 | 0.0 | 46 | 18.4 | 67 | 26.8 | 137 | 54.8 |
| Reduce corruption practices | 15 | 6.0 | 43 | 17.2 | 66 | 26.4 | 126 | 50.4 |
| Promote ethical decision making | 0 | 0.0 | 47 | 18.8 | 96 | 38.4 | 136 | 54.4 |
| Control bribe | 26 | 10.4 | 55 | 22.0 | 79 | 31.6 | 90 | 36.0 |
| Maintain integrity of the ministry | 20 | 8.0 | 29 | 11.6 | 74 | 29.6 | 127 | 50.8 |
| Control misunderstanding among employees | 12 | 4.8 | 25 | 10.0 | 97 | 38.8 | 116 | 46.4 |
| Maintain peace at work place | 19 | 7.6 | 42 | 16.8 | 90 | 36.0 | 99 | 39.6 |

Source: Field Data (2015)

The data presented in Table 2 presents a clear picture that there are many aspects attached to the importance of Records Managers' adherence to ethical practices in their information services provisions that lead to the following observation:-

To start with, ethical adherence among records managers in government offices contribute to reduction of corruption practices. It is evidently shown by

respondents that adherence to ethical practices by Records Managers at the ministries raises the prospect of reducing corruption practices. For example, files get lost or are hard to trace. As a result, Records Managers are given bribes to as an inducement for extra efforts to be made to trace the file or to expedite the availing of the files to the client.

Another observation is that ethical adherence among records managers it adds value to user satisfaction in government offices. Generally, many 153 (61.2%) of the information and/or records users rated highly the importance of increasing user satisfaction through Records Managers' ethical practices in different ministries. Indeed, information services provision is the same as other professional services given to clients in different ministries. The downside of ineffective information provision is that decision-making can be reached on ad hoc basis in the absence of enough and quality information.

Apart from the above, many citizens in different occasions complain about the decreasing of integrity of the government offices in different ministries. About half 127 (50.8%) of the respondents in the current study pointed out that the adherence to ethical practices by Records Managers maintains the integrity of a given ministry. The integrity of any organisation or institutions depends on many factors, with providing services ethically being one of the most crucial.

In the addition to the above, findings suggest that records managers contribute a lot in promoting ethical decision-making among government officials in different ministries. The majority 136(54.4%) of the information and/or registry users said that, by working ethically Records Managers may promote ethical decision-making at the ministry for different levels of the ministry.

All in all, the findings in the Table 2 portray a general picture that records managers are very important to facilitate day today activities. This facilitation can be only achieved if they adhere to ethical practices. This observation call upon all records managers professionals, human resources offices, directors, and other main stakeholders to make sure records are managed properly. To support this, all the Human Resources officers during interview argued that registry is like a reception of an organisation, which makes Records Managers play a key role in serving clients properly to ensure the integrity of the ministry is safeguarded. Time spend by clients to get services is one way of measuring the efficiency of a particular organisation. In this regard, Records Managers are supposed to work hard to comply with ethical practices as one way of maintaining the integrity of their profession and the ministry at large. Also, during the interview, Human Resources officers insisted that, any decision-making process cannot be reached at the ministry if there is no information at hand. Thus, Records Managers have to provide information on time to different managers at the ministry so that they make informed decisions for different activities.

## Factors behind Failure to Adhere to Ethical Practices

Another issue which the study investigated was the reasons or factors behind the records managers' failure to adhere to ethical practices. In this regard, the respondents were asked to suggest reasons behind the records managers' failure to adhere to ethical practices. The list of reasons or factors behind such failure was provided in the questionnaire and the respondents were asked to tick their occurrence of the items. Also, they were asked to add other reasons (factors) to those suggested. The subsequent sub sections present views of factors or reasons behind the records managers' failure to adhere to ethical practices.

### Records Managers' views on failure to adhere to ethical practices

Records managers were asked to point out factors led them to fail to adhere to ethical practices. The itemised variables on the failure factors and the extent to which record managers fail to adhere to ethical practice produced the following results and Table 3 presents the summary of the findings.

**Table 3: Records managers' views on factors behind failure to adhere to ethical practices**

| Failure factors | Not sure Frequency | % | Moderate Frequency | % | High Frequency | % | Very high Frequency | % |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Lack of code of conduct | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0.0 | 6 | 40.0 | 9 | 60.0 |
| Individual behaviour | 0 | 0.0 | 1 | 6.7 | 2 | 13.3 | 12 | 80.0 |
| Poor supervision | 0 | 0.0 | 5 | 33.3 | 5 | 33.3 | 5 | 33.3 |
| Lack of knowledge | 0 | 0.0 | 4 | 26.7 | 5 | 33.3 | 6 | 40.0 |
| Poor management | 1 | 6.7 | 4 | 26.7 | 5 | 33.3 | 5 | 33.3 |
| Low salary | 0 | 0.0 | 3 | 20.0 | 3 | 20.0 | 9 | 60.0 |
| Registry infrastructure | 0 | 0.0 | 4 | 26.7 | 6 | 40.0 | 5 | 33.3 |
| Lack of respect to Records Managers | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0.0 | 6 | 40.0 | 9 | 60.0 |

Source: Field Data (2015)

The finding in the Table 3 above suggests the following observations. First, records managers in the ministries surveyed noted that there several factors which led them to fail to adhere to ethical practices in different levels of extent. Second, it shows that records managers have been affected with individual behaviour to operate adhere to ethical practices. Third, lack of respect and low salary are another features motivate or influence them to adhere to ethical practices which call upon the Government to make sure rectify these aspects. Fourth, lack of code

of ethics for records managers also contribute to failure of records managers to adhere to ethical practices at work places.

### Registry users' views on factors behind failure to adhere to ethical practices

Information and/ or registry users were asked to point out factors which led records managers to fail to adhere to ethical practices. The itemised variables on the failure factors and the extent to which record managers fail to adhere to ethical practice produced the following results and Table 4 presents the summary of the findings.

**Table 4 Registry users' view on factors behind failure to adhere to ethical practice**

| Failure factors | Not sure | | Moderate | | High | | Very high | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Frequency | % | Frequency | % | Frequency | % | Frequency | % |
| Lack of code of conduct | 23 | 9.2 | 58 | 23.2 | 104 | 41.6 | 65 | 26.0 |
| Individual behaviour | 33 | 13.2 | 99 | 39.6 | 71 | 28.4 | 109 | 43.6 |
| Poor supervision | 50 | 20.0 | 113 | 45.2 | 55 | 22.0 | 32 | 12.8 |
| Lack of knowledge | 25 | 10.0 | 33 | 13.2 | 83 | 33.2 | 47. | 18.8 |
| Poor management | 35 | 14.0 | 123 | 49.2 | 47 | 18.8 | 45 | 18.0 |
| Low salary | 29 | 11.6 | 75 | 30.0 | 80 | 32.0 | 66 | 26.4 |
| Registry infrastructure | 77 | 30.8 | 114 | 45.6 | 35 | 14.0 | 24 | 9.6 |
| Lack of respect to records managers | 23 | 9.2 | 54 | 21.6 | 89 | 35.6 | 84 | 33.6 |

Source: Field Data (2015)

Data in Tables 3 and 4 illustrate different failure factors and the extent to which records managers fail to adhere to ethical practices in their information service delivery at their work places. The data suggest the following observations:-

**Individual behaviour:** Many 12(80%) records managers reported that individual behaviour was a leading factor in inducing records managers towards failure to adhere to ethical practices. In this regard, a few 109(43.6%) of the information and/or registry users noted individual behaviour to be a low level factor in influencing records managers towards not adhering to ethical practices. Human resources officers, on the other hand, noted that individual behaviour was not only one of the leading factors behind the records managers' failure to adhere to ethical practices but also for other employees. They further pointed out that generally there was moral decay among employees that made them to ignore ethics at the workplace as an important issue. The human resources officers explained during interviews that not following the 1967 Arusha Declaration, whose code of ethics

insisted on strict adherence to ethics among public servants, was behind the drastic slump in ethical conduct at the work place.

**Lack of code of ethics:** A few 65(26%) numbers of the information and/or registry users suggested that lack of a code of conduct for records managers influence fomented unethical workplace practices among their ranks. It was observed that other professionals such as teachers, lawyers and doctors had their own code of conduct over and above the general code of conduct for public services. In this regard, the human resources officers said during interviews that records management in Tanzania was a relatively new field with a few highly qualified personnel at the level of bachelor's or master's degree. These few individuals had been employed in different sectors in the ministry, particularly in the Department of Records and Archives Management. As a result, the most highly educated records managers in many of the governmental ministries were diploma holders. The implication is that the low level of education among records managers could contribute to delays in developing a code of conduct specifically for records managers.

**Lack of respect for records managers:** A good number 9(60%) of records manager and a few 84(33.6%) information and/or registry users pointed out that records managers were not respected compared to other employees. It was observed that other officers just called on or summoned records officers to take to them documents or files like they were house-helpers or house-servants. It was noted and observed that, it was also common practice for other employees to use harsh language with the records officers, particularly when the heads of department or section were in need for service. In this regard, the human resources officers confirmed that there were many cases reported by the records officers regarding the use of harsh or uncouth language and of lack of respect for them as professionals. It should be noted that many records managers or officers were female with low educational and professional qualifications. In the face of patriarchal system that still dictate how workers relate to one another, respecting young women who also happen to have low education appears to be out of the question for many patriarchal males. Indeed, data from the field show that more than a half of information and/or registry users are male; this situation creates a potential area for the largely female records managers to be disregarded or not accorded the respect they deserve. As a result, some of the records managers demoralised and failed to work hard and adhere to ethical practices.

**Low salary:** Many 9(60%) of the records managers and a few 66(26.4%) of the information and/or registry users noted that the records managers were generally paid low salary which might influence them not to work ethically. It should be noted that one of the suggestions or strategies for enforcing compliance with ethical practices among records managers was to increase their salaries. Indeed, the salary is one of the positive motivations for employees. In this regard, human

resources officers confirmed that due to their low level of education the salaries of the records managers were also low. Initially, there were no university or college offering bachelor's degrees in records management in the country. As a result, records management was populated by low cadre marked by their limited educational and professional credentials. Recently, Mzumbe University had introduced bachelor's degrees in records management. This stage in one way or another would contribute towards strengthening the records management profession.

**Lack of knowledge:** Few 6(40%) records managers and information and/or registry users indicated that records managers have little or lacked knowledge on their information service provisions. It has been reported in previous sections that records managers faced a shortage of appropriate and relevant education to improve records management sector and foster professionalism. The Tanzania government in this regard has to make sure that records managers in public employment are trained to attain higher level educational qualifications such as bachelor's or master's degree as well as acquire other professional credentials so that they could be better placed to adhere to and comply with professionalism. Presently, the few well qualified records managers were not employed the registries but have been placed in different sections in different sectors. In this regard, the human resources officers observed that the majority of the records managers did not have qualifications that would allow them to embark on further studies in records management as they were recruited with low passes at the certificate levels.

*Impact of failing Adhering to Ethical Practices*

The study also sought to establish the impact of records managers' failure to adhere to ethical practices in their information service provision. In this regard, the respondents were requested to rank the impact for records managers' failure to adhere to ethical practices in their information service provision. The respondents were given items that they were supposed to rank accordingly (1 = not at all, 2 = slightly high, 3 = high, 4 = very high). Indeed, the respondents were also requested to consider other impacts not listed in the questionnaire. The subsequent sub sections present views of the impact of records managers' failure to adhere to ethical practices.

*Records Managers' views on impact of failing adhering to ethical practices*

This part of the data focused on data derived from records managers on the impact of failing to adhere to ethical practices among records managers. The itemised variables on the impact and extend of failure to adherence to ethical practice produced the following results. Table 5 presents the summary of the findings.

**Table 5: Records managers' views on the impact of failing to adhering to ethical practices**

| Impact of unethical practices | Not sure | | Moderate | | High | | Very high | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Frequency | % | Frequency | % | Frequency | % | Frequency | % |
| Lack of integrity of Records Managers | 0 | 0.0 | 5 | 33.3 | 10 | 66.7 | 0 | 0.0 |
| Miss understandings among employees | 0 | 0.0 | 3 | 20.0 | 4 | 26.7 | 8 | 53.3 |
| Failure of ministry to achieve its objectives | 3 | 20.0 | 3 | 20.0 | 4 | 26.7 | 5 | 33.3 |
| Un-satisfaction of registry users | 2 | 13.3 | 3 | 20.0 | 4 | 26.7 | 9 | 60.0 |
| Mistrust of Records Managers | 0 | 0.0 | 2 | 13.3 | 4 | 26.7 | 9 | 60.0 |
| Increase corruptions and bribe | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0.0 | 2 | 13.3 | 13 | 86.7 |
| Lack of transparency | 0 | 0.0 | 1 | 6.7 | 2 | 13.3 | 12 | 80.0 |
| Lack of reliability of information | 1 | 6.7 | 2 | 13.3 | 3 | 20.0 | 9 | 60.0 |
| Poor decision making | 0 | 0.0 | 1 | 6.7 | 1 | 6.7 | 13 | 86.7 |
| Lack of timely promotion | 0 | 0.0 | 3 | 20.0 | 3 | 20.0 | 9 | 60.0 |
| Lack of security at work place | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0.0 | 3 | 20 | 12 | 80.0 |
| Decrease justice and fairness | 0 | 0.0 | 3 | 20.0 | 6 | 40.0 | 6 | 40.0 |
| Reduces accountability | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0.0 | 3 | 20.0 | 12 | 80.0 |
| Decrease working morale among employees | 1 | 6.7 | 2 | 13.3 | 3 | 20.0 | 9 | 60.0 |

Source: Field Data (2015)

Data from Table 5 illustrates different impact of failure to adhere to ethical practices among Records Managers in information service delivery at their work places. The data suggest the following observations:-

First, findings suggest that through non adherence to ethical practices in records management the government can face a lot of impact; findings indicate that many of the respondents ranked highly impact of increasing corruption and poor decision making. Records Managers have a role to play in order to control corruption and facilitate to improve decision making in the Government

ministries. Second, accountability and transparency at government ministries are in danger if records managers do not adhering to ethical practice in the provision of services. Information ethics insists on the duty of all information professionals (records managers, librarians, archivists and information officers) to make sure accountability and transparency are observed. Indeed, an informed society through transparency increases the prospects of making informed decisions in day-to-day activities. Third, it is true with Records Managers as they have a potential role of making sure justice and fairness is done to all clients in all government ministries only if adhere to ethical practices.

*Registry users' views on impact of failing adhering to ethical practices*

Respondents were asked to identify and rank into levels of the impact which might occur if records managers could not adhere to ethical practices. The summary of their responses are summarised and presented in Table 6.

**Table 6: Registry users' views on impact of failing adhering to ethical practices**

| Impact of unethical practices | Not sure | | Moderate | | High | | Very high | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Frequency | % | Frequency | % | Frequency | % | Frequency | % |
| Lack of integrity of Records Managers | 16 | 6.4 | 37 | 14.8 | 92 | 36.8 | 105 | 42.0 |
| Miss understandings among employees | 10 | 4.0 | 32 | 12.8 | 102 | 40.8 | 106 | 42.4 |
| Failure of ministry to achieve its objectives | 38 | 15.2 | 64 | 25.6 | 68 | 27.2 | 80 | 32.0 |
| Un-satisfaction of registry users | 36 | 14.4 | 45 | 18.0 | 75 | 30.0 | 94 | 37.8 |
| Mistrust of Records Managers | 46 | 18.4 | 61 | 24.4 | 67 | 26.8 | 76 | 30.4 |
| Increase corruptions and bribe | 16 | 6.4 | 32 | 12.8 | 76 | 30.4 | 126 | 50.4 |
| Lack of transparency | 20 | 8.0 | 33 | 13.2 | 77 | 30.8 | 120 | 48.0 |
| Lack of reliability of information | 21 | 8.4 | 39 | 15.6 | 74 | 29.6 | 116 | 46.4 |
| Poor decision making | 13 | 5.2 | 14 | 5.6 | 77 | 30.4 | 146 | 58.4 |
| Lack of timely promotion | 3 | 1.2 | 23 | 9.2 | 101 | 40.4 | 123 | 49.2 |
| Lack of security at work place | 49 | 19.6 | 55 | 22.0 | 50 | 20.0 | 96 | 38.4 |
| Decrease justice and fairness | 20 | 8.0 | 33 | 13.2 | 77 | 30.8 | 120 | 48.0 |
| Reduces accountability | 42 | 16.8 | 58 | 23.2 | 59 | 23.6 | 91 | 36.4 |
| Decrease working morale among employees | 39 | 15.6 | 42 | 16.6 | 78 | 31.2 | 91 | 36.4 |

Source: Field Data (2015)

Data in the Table 5 and 6, above suggest the following observations in the current study which leads to the following explanation:-

**Increment in corruption and bribery:** A good number 13(86.7%) of the records managers and a few 126(50.4%) information and/or registry users suggested that corruption and bribery may increase if records managers failed to work ethically in their information service provision. In this regard, the human resources officers

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noted that the records managers play a significant role in controlling or abetting corruption. It was reported that records managers were the ones who knew all the information circulating in a particular institution or organisation. In fact, records managers also concurred that if they hid some of the important documents informed decision-making might be compromised. In other words, records managers should facilitate access to and acquisition of all necessary requirements by working ethically in their information service provision.

**Abetting poor decision-making;** Records managers in any sector can abet poor decision-making if they fail to adhere to ethical practices. In this regard, many 13(86.7%) records managers and 146(58.4%) information and/or registry users agreed that this was the case. During the study, it was observed that records managers played a significant role in facilitating decision-making in different levels of management. Similarly, human resources officers agreed that records managers helped to provide accurate information to facilitate decision-making. They argued that all the important decisions regarding, for example, budgeting, transportation and any other issues require information at the finger tips for informed decisions to be made. Indeed, effective decisions cannot be reached if records managers or officers cannot provide accurate and timely information. After all, records managers facilitate decision-making when they know the value of the information they have, an understanding requiring ample professional education.

**Lack of transparency:** Records managers or officers help to ensure that transparency is maintained in their respective ministries. In this regard, the majority 12(80%) of the records managers and about half 120(48%) of the information and/or registry users pointed out that records managers can undermine transparency if they failed to work ethically. Human resources officers agreed that there are some problems which occurred when information was not provided on time. It was reported that the office of human resource cannot make any decision regarding the transfer, promotion and disciplinary measures if there was no requisite information on the table. Records managers or officers are the ones who can provide such information from personal files of an employee. Note that in the second objective it was reported that if records managers adhere to ethical practices will facilitate transparency of any activity at the ministry or any other organization or institutions. The important issue is to make sure records managers are trained, facilitated and motivated enough to make sure they work ethically.

**Erosion of accountability:** Generally, without facts or evidence no one can be held accountable. The study findings show that many 12(80%) records managers and a few 91(36.4%) information and/or users agreed that records managers can reduce accountability if they fail to work ethically. In this regard, records play a significant role in necessary in the provision of evidence for any unethical

activities that require stern action. Also, the human resources officers in all ministries surveyed commented that without accurate records there could be no accountability of any officer or employee. There was a general consensus that records managers contribute a lot to making sure that officers and other employees were held accountable for their actions. Indeed, both types of registries—open and confidential—contribute a lot to providing information that is vital in the decision-making process. On the whole, accountability becomes elusive in the absence of key data and information.

**Lack of timely promotion:** Ethical practices in the records keeping sector tend to increase provision of accurate data and information in any organisation necessary for effecting promotions when they were due. In this regard, many 9(60%) of the records managers and about half 123(49.2%) information and/or registry users agreed that if records managers failed to adhere to ethical practices there would be lack of timely promotions. Indeed, the human resources officers reported that personnel records located in the registry constituted basic information for effecting promotions. They further commented that when records managers keep the records well them and availed them when needed on timely basis, then there would be few complaints. In this regard, it was observed that, apart from at the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training (MoEVT), in other ministerial departments there were few people who complained about delays of their promotions.

## Conclusion

The findings of the study have indicated that records managers have a role to play in reduction or control of corruption practices in different government offices. This call upon human resources officers in government ministries to make sure records managers adhere to code of conduct available. Apart from code of conduct records managers are required to comply to all rules, regulations and procedure guiding records management. Second respondents comment that lack of a code of conduct for records managers influence fomented unethical workplace practices among their ranks. All ministries through Directorate of Archive and Records management formulate or introduce code of conduct specific for records managers; this will help or guide them to work ethically. It was observed that other professionals such as teachers, lawyers and doctors had their own code of conduct over and above the general code of conduct for public services. Third the findings suggest that through non adherence to ethical practices in records management the government can face a lot of impact such as increasing corruption and poor decision making. The study recommends that

establishment of code of conduct or ethics special for records managers and further training for them is required.

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