



## THE ROLE OF LEGAL FRAMEWORKS IN IMPROVING PUBLIC RECORDS PRESERVATION AT PO-RAMD, TANZANIA

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### **Abstract:**

Preservation of public records is essential for ensuring authenticity, reliability, and long-term accessibility of a nation's documentary heritage. In Tanzania, although the Records and Archives Management Act No. 3 of 2002 provides the legal foundation for records management, concerns remain regarding the adequacy and operational effectiveness of complementary legal frameworks at the President's Office–Records and Archives Management Department (PO-RAMD). This study examined the influence of legal-framework-related factors on public records preservation practices at PO-RAMD. Guided by a positivist philosophy, the study adopted an explanatory design and a quantitative approach. Primary data were collected from all 61 staff members using a structured questionnaire and analyzed through descriptive statistics and multiple linear regression. The model was statistically significant ( $F = 26.42$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) and explained 61.5% of the variance in preservation practices ( $R^2 = 0.615$ ). Staff training emerged as the strongest predictor ( $\beta = 0.381$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), followed by staff awareness ( $\beta = 0.231$ ,  $p = 0.012$ ), accessibility of legal frameworks ( $\beta = 0.219$ ,  $p = 0.013$ ), and adequacy of legal coverage ( $\beta = 0.205$ ,  $p = 0.014$ ). The study concludes that effective preservation depends not only on the existence of legal frameworks but also on their accessibility, adequacy, and institutional capacity for implementation. Strengthening training programs and modernizing legal provisions are essential for improving public records preservation in Tanzania.

**Keywords:** legal frameworks, public records preservation, PO-RAMD, archives, archival repository

### **1. Introduction**

Legal frameworks are fundamental in guiding archives preservation by defining mandates, standards, responsibilities, and enforcement mechanisms for the management

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of records with enduring value. Effective public records preservation ensures that documentary heritage remains protected, accessible, and usable for present and future generations (Baro, 2019; Purcell, 2019). Within archives institutions, preservation is not only a technical function but also a legally governed activity that relies on well-established frameworks to support accountability, transparency, and national memory.

Globally, governments have recognized the importance of legal frameworks in regulating the preservation of both paper-based and digital archives. These frameworks establish standards and strategies to protect records from environmental threats, technological obsolescence, and unauthorized access (ISO 15489-1:2016; Muhammad, 2019). The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization emphasizes that comprehensive legal instruments are essential for safeguarding cultural and evidentiary records, particularly within public institutions responsible for national documentary heritage (UNESCO, 2003).

In the African context, the effectiveness of archives preservation is increasingly challenged by rapid technological change, inadequate resources, and outdated archival legislation (Martinez, 2022; Bastian, 2022). Evidence from the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region indicates that many archival institutions operate under incomplete or obsolete legal frameworks, resulting in inconsistent preservation practices and heightened risks of records loss (Bastian, 2022). These challenges highlight the need not only for the existence of legal frameworks but also for their effective application within archives institutions.

In Tanzania, the establishment of the Records and Archives Management Act No. 3 of 2002 and the subsequent creation of the President's Office–Records and Archives Management Department (PO-RAMD) marked a significant milestone in standardizing archives preservation and records management practices (Kamatula & Kemoni, 2018). Despite these legislative developments, studies continue to report gaps in the adequacy, dissemination, and implementation of supporting legal instruments. Concerns persist regarding outdated policies, limited internal guidelines, and weak alignment with international preservation standards, particularly in responding to digital records management demands.

Although PO-RAMD is legally mandated to oversee the preservation of public records nationwide, its operations remain constrained by weaknesses within the governing legal frameworks. The limited awareness and application of existing regulations, combined with insufficient institutional guidance and enforcement mechanisms, have resulted in variations in preservation practices. These challenges pose risks not only to the integrity of archives but also to public access to information, institutional accountability, and the protection of Tanzania's documentary heritage. This study, therefore, assesses how legal frameworks guide public records preservation practices at the President's Office–Records and Archives Management Department (PO-RAMD), Tanzania, to contribute empirical evidence to inform policy improvement and strengthen archives preservation practice. This study aimed to examine the use of legal

frameworks governing public records preservation practices at the President's Office-Records and Archives Management Department, Tanzania.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **3.1 Theory Guiding the Current Study**

This study is guided by the Chain of Preservation (COP) Model, developed by the International Research on Permanent Authentic Records in Electronic Systems (InterPARES) in 2002. Although the model was developed earlier, it remains relevant in contemporary records preservation discourse due to its strong emphasis on accountability, authenticity, and legal compliance across the entire records lifecycle, including digital environments (Luz & Flores, 2017). The COP Model emphasizes that preservation must be systematically supported by legal and procedural frameworks to ensure long-term reliability and accessibility of records.

The model conceptualizes preservation as a continuous chain of interrelated responsibilities encompassing records creation, maintenance, storage, and archiving. Each stage in this chain must be supported by appropriate legal instruments, institutional policies, skilled personnel, and technological infrastructure to prevent breaks that could compromise records' authenticity and integrity (Martinez, 2022; Adu, 2019). In this regard, legal frameworks are viewed as the backbone that legitimizes preservation actions and defines roles, standards, and enforcement mechanisms.

In the context of public records preservation, the COP Model underscores that legal frameworks are not merely regulatory documents but active tools that guide institutional practice. The model therefore provides a suitable theoretical lens for assessing whether preservation practices at PO-RAMD are legally grounded, procedurally consistent, and aligned with international preservation standards. By applying this model, the study assesses the extent to which existing laws, regulations, and policies support staff competencies, infrastructural capacity, and compliance with preservation requirements at PO-RAMD.

### **3.2 Empirical Literature Review**

Empirical studies from Africa demonstrate that ineffective public records preservation is often linked to outdated legal frameworks, limited policy coverage, weak institutional enforcement, and low awareness of existing laws. Studies by Bastian (2022) and Purcell (2019) reveal that many archival institutions operate without comprehensive or updated preservation guidelines, resulting in fragmented practices. Similarly, Baro (2019) found that unclear legal responsibilities and procedural gaps in legislation contribute to inconsistent preservation and weak accountability mechanisms.

In Tanzania, the Records and Archives Management Act No. 3 of 2002 established PO-RAMD as the central authority for public records management; however, empirical evidence suggests that implementation challenges persist. Kamatula and Kemoni (2018) observed that the Act has a limited scope in addressing contemporary preservation

demands, particularly those associated with digital records. Further findings by Daniel (2021) indicate that PO-RAMD lacks institution-specific policies that respond to evolving technological and preservation needs, undermining its effectiveness in safeguarding both paper-based and electronic records.

Mosweu (2020) emphasizes that effective legal frameworks must clearly articulate preservation responsibilities, define access and security protocols, and incorporate digital preservation strategies to ensure sustainability. The lack of harmonization between national legal instruments and international standards such as ISO 15489-1:2016 further constrains preservation efforts by weakening consistency, authenticity, and long-term usability of public records.

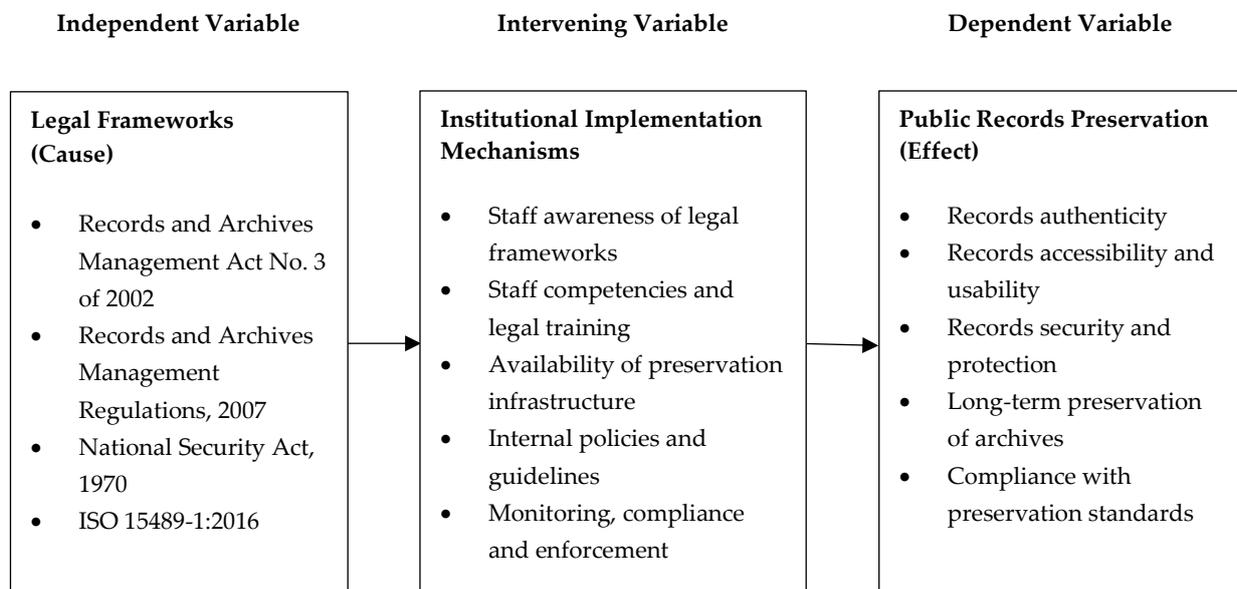
Despite the availability of these studies, a significant research gap remains. Most existing research focuses broadly on records management systems, technological challenges, or policy formulation, with limited attention given to how legal frameworks are practically applied and operationalized within archival institutions. Moreover, few studies have empirically examined the adequacy and effectiveness of legal frameworks in guiding preservation practices within PO-RAMD. This gap necessitates a focused study that critically assesses how existing legal instruments influence public records preservation practices in Tanzania.

### **3.3 Conceptual Framework**

The conceptual framework for this study illustrates the relationship between legal frameworks and public records preservation practices at PO-RAMD. Legal frameworks comprising Acts, regulations, policies, and international standards are treated as independent variables influencing preservation outcomes. These frameworks determine institutional mandates, staff responsibilities, compliance mechanisms, and resource allocation for preservation activities.

Preservation practices, as the dependent variable, are reflected through records authenticity, accessibility, security, and long-term usability. Institutional factors, including staff awareness and competencies, infrastructure availability, enforcement mechanisms, and alignment with international standards, mediate the relationship between legal frameworks and preservation practices. Where legal frameworks are adequately disseminated, updated, and enforced, preservation practices are expected to be effective and consistent. Conversely, weak or outdated legal frameworks are likely to result in poor preservation outcomes. This conceptual framework provides a practical structure for analyzing how legal instruments influence preservation practices at PO-RAMD and supports the application of the Chain of Preservation Model by linking theory to observable institutional practices.

**Figure 1: Conceptual Framework**



Source: Literature Review (2026).

## 4. Methodology

### 4.1 Research Design

This study adopted an explanatory research design anchored in the positivist research philosophy and implemented through a quantitative research approach. The explanatory design was appropriate because the study sought to examine the predictive influence of legal-framework-related variables on public records preservation practices at the President’s Office–Records and Archives Management Department (PO-RAMD). Explanatory research enables the testing of hypothesized relationships between independent and dependent variables using statistical techniques (Creswell, 2023; Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2019).

The positivist paradigm guided the study by emphasizing objectivity, measurable constructs, hypothesis testing, and statistical validation. Accordingly, staff awareness, distribution and accessibility of legal frameworks, adequacy of legal framework coverage, and staff training were operationalized as quantifiable independent variables, while public records preservation practices constituted the dependent variable. The quantitative approach allowed for rigorous empirical testing of the proposed relationships.

### 4.2 Population and Sample Size

The study population comprised 61 staff members directly involved in public records preservation at PO-RAMD offices in Dodoma and Dar es Salaam. Given the relatively small and accessible population size, the study employed a census sampling technique, whereby all 61 staff members were included in the study. Census sampling was deemed

appropriate because it ensured complete coverage of the target population, eliminated sampling error, and enhanced the internal validity of the findings (Saunders et al., 2019). The inclusion of all relevant staff strengthened the reliability and representativeness of the statistical analysis within the institutional context.

### **4.3 Sampling Technique**

Census sampling involves collecting data from every member of the defined population rather than selecting a subset (Creswell, 2023). This approach is suitable when the population is manageable and when full participation improves the precision of statistical estimates.

In this study, census sampling ensured comprehensive representation of personnel engaged in preservation activities, thereby enhancing the robustness of the regression results.

### **4.4 Data Collection Methods**

The study relied exclusively on primary data collected through a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted of closed-ended items measured on a five-point Likert scale to quantify respondents' perceptions of legal awareness, distribution and accessibility of legal frameworks, adequacy of legal coverage, staff training and retraining, and public records preservation practices.

The structured format ensured uniformity, objectivity, and comparability of responses, consistent with the positivist and quantitative orientation of the study (Creswell, 2023). The instrument was administered to all 61 staff members, ensuring complete data coverage for statistical analysis.

### **4.5 Data Analysis**

Quantitative data were analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics Version 21. Descriptive statistics, including means and standard deviations, were computed to summarize respondents' perceptions of the study variables. To determine the influence of legal-framework-related variables on public records preservation practices, multiple linear regression analysis was employed. Multiple regression was appropriate because it enabled the simultaneous examination of the effects of several independent variables on a single dependent variable and allowed assessment of the relative contribution of each predictor (Saunders et al., 2019).

Prior to conducting the regression analysis, all key assumptions of multiple linear regression were tested. These included linearity, normality of residuals, homoscedasticity, independence of errors, and absence of multicollinearity among predictor variables. Diagnostic tests confirmed that none of these assumptions was violated. Residual plots indicated linearity and homoscedasticity, normal probability plots confirmed normal distribution of residuals, the Durbin-Watson statistic supported independence of errors, and Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values were within acceptable thresholds, indicating no multicollinearity concerns.

Given that all regression assumptions were satisfied, the model estimates were considered valid and reliable. Standardized beta coefficients ( $\beta$ ) were used to determine the relative strength of each predictor variable, while significance levels (p-values) were used to test statistical significance at the 0.05 level. Through this analytical framework, the study objectively established the predictive influence of legal frameworks on public records preservation practices at PO-RAMD using primary quantitative data.

#### **4.6 Quality Assurance and Ethical Considerations**

To ensure reliability and validity, the study applied methodological triangulation by using multiple data collection tools and sources, thereby enhancing the credibility and consistency of findings (Creswell, 2023). Research instruments were pre-tested at the President's Office–Regional Administration and Local Government (PO-RALG) in Dodoma, enabling refinement of the questionnaire and interview guide.

Ethical considerations were strictly observed throughout the study. These included informed consent, confidentiality, anonymity, and voluntary participation. Ethical approval was obtained from the University of Dar es Salaam, and official research clearance was submitted to PO-RAMD before data collection, ensuring compliance with institutional research protocols.

### **5. Results**

#### **5.1 Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents**

A total of 61 staff members from the President's Office–Records and Archives Management Department (PO-RAMD) participated in the study. The demographic characteristics of respondents are summarized in Table 1. Of the respondents, 35 (57%) were female, and 26 (43%) were male. Regarding length of service, 24 (44.3%) had worked at PO-RAMD for 1–10 years, 28 (45.9%) for 11–20 years, and 6 (9.8%) for 21–30 years.

In terms of occupational categories, Records Management Assistants (31.4%) and Records Officers (27.8%) constituted the largest proportion of respondents, followed by Secretaries (13.1%), Librarians (11.4%), Heads of Departments and Units (9.7%), and ICT Officers (6.5%). These results indicate that the respondents were directly involved in records preservation activities and were therefore well-positioned to provide reliable information relevant to the study.

#### **5.2 Descriptive Analysis of Legal Frameworks and Preservation Practices**

Descriptive statistics using mean response (M) and standard deviation (SD) were employed to assess awareness and distribution of legal frameworks among PO-RAMD staff (n = 61). The findings indicate a high level of awareness of the National Records and Archives Act No. 3 of 2002 (M = 4.53, SD = 0.62), the Records and Archives Management Policy of 2011 (M = 4.12, SD = 0.81), and the Records Retention and Disposal Schedule of 2005 (M = 3.98, SD = 0.89). The high mean scores and relatively low standard deviations

suggest strong consensus among staff regarding familiarity with these principal legal instruments.

These findings are consistent with the argument advanced by Ngoepe (2014) and Shepherd and Yeo (2003), who emphasize that primary legislative frameworks often receive greater institutional attention because they constitute the foundational authority for records management practice. The prominence of the 2002 Act in this study reinforces the literature's assertion that central statutes tend to be better disseminated and institutionalized compared to subsidiary regulations.

However, awareness of the Records and Archives Management Regulations of 2007 ( $M = 2.74$ ,  $SD = 1.21$ ) and the National Security Act No. 3 of 1970 ( $M = 2.69$ ,  $SD = 1.18$ ) was notably lower. The moderate mean values and comparatively higher standard deviations indicate not only limited awareness but also variability in access among staff. This uneven dissemination supports findings by Kemoni (2009) and IRMT (2009), who observed that regulatory instruments in many African public institutions are inadequately circulated, leading to inconsistent compliance and fragmented implementation practices.

### **5.2.1 Distribution of Legal Frameworks among PO-RAMD Staff**

Analysis of distribution levels further revealed that the National Records and Archives Act No. 3 of 2002 recorded the highest mean distribution score ( $M = 4.56$ ,  $SD = 0.59$ ), confirming its centrality in guiding preservation activities. The Records and Archives Management Policy of 2011 ( $M = 4.08$ ,  $SD = 0.77$ ) and the Records Retention and Disposal Schedule of 2005 ( $M = 3.95$ ,  $SD = 0.84$ ) also demonstrated relatively strong circulation within the department.

Conversely, the lower distribution scores for the Records and Archives Management Regulations of 2007 ( $M = 2.71$ ,  $SD = 1.25$ ) and the National Security Act No. 3 of 1970 ( $M = 2.68$ ,  $SD = 1.20$ ) reveal significant access gaps. This finding aligns with ISO 15489 (2016), which stresses that effective records management depends not merely on the existence of legal frameworks but on their accessibility and operational integration within institutions. Where regulatory documents are not widely distributed, compliance becomes person-dependent rather than system-driven, thereby increasing the risk of preservation inconsistencies.

### **5.2.2 Coverage of Legal Frameworks on Public Records Preservation Practices**

About adequacy and applicability, the overall mean score on whether existing frameworks sufficiently cover preservation practices was moderate ( $M = 2.83$ ,  $SD = 0.94$ ). This suggests that respondents generally perceive the current legal frameworks as insufficient in addressing contemporary preservation demands.

This perception resonates with the findings of Luyombya (2010) and Asogwa (2012), who argue that many archival laws in developing countries were formulated prior to the digital era and therefore inadequately address electronic records management and digital preservation requirements. The moderate mean and dispersion observed in this

study indicate growing recognition among practitioners that legal reform is necessary to accommodate technological transformation in public administration.

### **5.2.3 Presence of Formal Staff Training and Retraining Program**

Regarding staff capacity building, the mean response was low ( $M = 2.21$ ,  $SD = 1.02$ ), indicating general disagreement about the presence of structured training and retraining programs. The moderate variability suggests that training opportunities may exist but are neither systematic nor equitably accessible.

This finding corroborates the observations of Ngulube (2007) and IRMT (2009), who emphasize that legal frameworks alone cannot ensure effective preservation without sustained professional training and institutional capacity development. Records preservation is both a legal and technical function; therefore, the absence of continuous training undermines the practical application of existing statutes and policies.

## **5.3 Treatment of Ordinal Data for Regression Analysis**

The study collected data using Likert-scale questionnaire items, which are ordinal in nature. However, for regression analysis, the study treated these data as continuous variables by constructing composite indices. Multiple Likert-scale items measuring the same construct, namely staff awareness of legal frameworks, distribution/accessibility of legal frameworks, adequacy of legal framework coverage, staff training, and public records preservation practices, were aggregated by computing mean scores.

This approach is methodologically acceptable and widely applied in social science research, as aggregated Likert-scale indices approximate interval-level measurement and satisfy the assumptions required for parametric statistical techniques such as multiple linear regression (Norman, 2010; Creswell, 2023; Leavy, 2023). Reliability analysis using Cronbach's Alpha yielded coefficients equal to or greater than 0.70, confirming acceptable internal consistency of the composite variables and justifying their use as continuous measures.

## **5.4 Role of Legal Frameworks in Public Records Preservation**

To examine the role of legal frameworks in improving public records preservation practices at PO-RAMD, multiple linear regression analysis was conducted using IBM SPSS Statistics Version 21.

### **5.4.1 Model Specification**

The regression model was specified as:

$$PRPP = \beta_0 + \beta_1 AWARE + \beta_2 DIST + \beta_3 COV + \beta_4 TRAIN + \varepsilon$$

Where:

PRPP = Public Records Preservation Practices (dependent variable),

AWARE = Staff awareness of legal frameworks,

DIST = Distribution and accessibility of legal frameworks,  
 COV = Adequacy of legal framework coverage,  
 TRAIN = Staff training and retraining on legal frameworks,  
 $\beta_0$  = Constant,  $\beta_1 \dots, \beta_4$  = regression coefficients,  $\varepsilon$  = error term.

### 5.4.2 Regression Results

The regression results show that the model was statistically significant ( $p < 0.05$ ), indicating that legal-framework-related variables jointly influence public records preservation practices at PO-RAMD. The coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ) demonstrates that a substantial proportion of the variance in preservation practices is explained by the independent variables included in the model.

**Table 1: Model Summary**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R-Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.784	0.615	0.587	0.421

The model explains **61.5%** of the variance in public records preservation practices, indicating a strong explanatory power of legal-framework-related variables.

**Table 2: ANOVA**

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	18.742	4	4.686	26.42	0.000
Residual	11.742	56	0.210		
Total	30.484	60			

**Dependent Variable:** Public Records Preservation Practices

**Predictors:** Staff Awareness, Distribution & Accessibility, Legal Framework Coverage, Staff Training

**Table 3: Coefficients**

Predictor Variable	Unstandardized B	Std. Error	Standardized Beta	T	Sig.
(Constant)	0.842	0.318		2.65	0.011
Staff Awareness of Legal Frameworks	0.214	0.082	0.231	2.61	0.012
Distribution & Accessibility of Legal Frameworks	0.196	0.076	0.219	2.58	0.013
Adequacy of Legal Framework Coverage	0.183	0.071	0.205	2.58	0.014
Staff Training and Retraining	0.327	0.069	0.381	4.74	0.000

The model summary in Table 1 indicates a strong relationship between legal-framework-related variables and public records preservation practices at PO-RAMD. The correlation coefficient ( $R = 0.784$ ) suggests a strong positive association between the predictors and the dependent variable. The R Square value of 0.615 implies that 61.5% of the variation in public records preservation practices is explained by staff awareness of legal frameworks, distribution and accessibility of legal instruments, adequacy of legal

framework coverage, and staff training and retraining. The Adjusted R Square (0.587) further confirms the robustness of the model after accounting for the number of predictors. This demonstrates that legal frameworks and their implementation mechanisms substantially explain differences in preservation practices within PO-RAMD.

ANOVA Results (Table 2). The ANOVA results show that the regression model is statistically significant ( $F = 26.42$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). This indicates that the set of independent variables, when considered together, significantly predicts public records preservation practices. The significance of the F-statistic confirms that the model provides a better fit than a model with no predictors and that legal frameworks collectively have a meaningful influence on preservation outcomes at PO-RAMD.

The coefficients in Table 3 present the individual contribution of each predictor to public records preservation practices. Staff awareness of legal frameworks has a positive and statistically significant effect ( $B = 0.214$ ,  $p = 0.012$ ), indicating that increased awareness improves compliance and consistency in preservation activities. This suggests that staff who are knowledgeable about relevant laws and regulations are more likely to apply preservation standards correctly.

Similarly, distribution and accessibility of legal frameworks show a positive and significant relationship with preservation practices ( $B = 0.196$ ,  $p = 0.013$ ). This finding implies that making legal documents readily available to staff enhances standardized and lawful execution of preservation tasks, reducing inconsistencies across departments.

The adequacy of legal framework coverage also significantly influences preservation practices ( $B = 0.183$ ,  $p = 0.014$ ). This result indicates that comprehensive and up-to-date legal provisions are critical for effective preservation, particularly in addressing emerging challenges such as the management of digital records. Inadequate or outdated frameworks limit the effectiveness of preservation efforts.

Notably, staff training and retraining emerge as the strongest predictor of public records preservation practices ( $B = 0.327$ ,  $\beta = 0.381$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). This underscores the importance of institutional capacity building in translating legal frameworks into effective practice. Regular training enhances staff competence in interpreting and applying legal requirements, thereby strengthening preservation outcomes.

Generally, the regression results confirm that legal frameworks play a significant and measurable role in improving public records preservation at PO-RAMD, with staff training acting as the most influential mechanism through which legal provisions are operationalized.

## 5.5 Discussion of Findings

This study examined the influence of legal-framework-related variables on public records preservation practices at PO-RAMD. The regression model demonstrated strong explanatory power, accounting for 61.5% of the variance in preservation practices ( $R^2 = 0.615$ ; Adjusted  $R^2 = 0.587$ ). The statistically significant F-value confirms that the predictors collectively contribute to explaining preservation outcomes. These findings

affirm that preservation effectiveness is structurally embedded within legal, institutional, and capacity dimensions rather than being purely technical in nature.

The results are consistent with empirical evidence from African archival contexts, where ineffective public records preservation has been associated with outdated legal frameworks, limited policy coverage, weak enforcement mechanisms, and insufficient awareness of legal provisions (Bastian, 2022; Purcell, 2019). Baro (2019) further notes that ambiguous legal responsibilities and procedural gaps undermine accountability and consistency in preservation practices. The present findings extend this scholarship by providing quantitative evidence that legal frameworks, when effectively operationalized, significantly predict preservation performance within PO-RAMD.

### **5.5.1 Staff Awareness of Legal Frameworks**

Staff awareness of legal frameworks exhibited a positive and statistically significant effect on preservation practices ( $\beta = 0.231$ ,  $p = 0.012$ ). The standardized beta coefficient indicates that awareness contributes meaningfully to preservation performance, although its relative effect is moderate compared to other predictors. This finding aligns with Ngulube (2007), who argues that legal literacy among records personnel strengthens compliance and reduces procedural deviations. Similarly, Baro (2019) identifies limited awareness as a factor contributing to the weak enforcement of preservation standards in African archival institutions. In the Tanzanian context, although the Records and Archives Management Act No. 3 of 2002 formally establishes PO-RAMD's authority, effective implementation depends substantially on staff understanding of statutory obligations.

### **5.5.2 Distribution and Accessibility of Legal Frameworks**

Distribution and accessibility of legal instruments also demonstrated a statistically significant positive effect on preservation practices ( $\beta = 0.219$ ,  $p = 0.013$ ). The magnitude of the standardized coefficient suggests that accessibility plays a slightly lower but still substantial role in influencing preservation outcomes. This result supports IRMT (2009), which emphasizes that legal frameworks must be systematically disseminated to ensure institutionalized compliance. Purcell (2019) similarly notes that inadequate circulation of regulatory documents often leads to fragmented preservation practices. The findings of this study, therefore, underscore that the practical availability of legal instruments enhances uniformity and procedural integrity within archival institutions.

### **5.5.3 Adequacy of Legal Framework Coverage**

The adequacy of legal framework coverage was found to significantly influence preservation practices ( $\beta = 0.205$ ,  $p = 0.014$ ). Although the effect size is moderate, its statistical significance confirms that comprehensive and contextually relevant legislation strengthens preservation performance. This finding resonates with Kamatula and Kemoni (2018), who observed that Tanzania's Records and Archives Management Act No. 3 of 2002 has limited provisions addressing contemporary digital preservation

challenges. Daniel (2021) similarly reported the absence of institution-specific policies tailored to technological advancements within PO-RAMD. The present study empirically substantiates these concerns, indicating that perceived gaps in legal coverage constrain preservation effectiveness. Mosweu (2020) emphasizes that sustainable preservation frameworks must clearly define responsibilities, incorporate digital strategies, and harmonize with international standards such as ISO 15489-1:2016. Without such alignment, archival institutions may struggle to ensure authenticity, reliability, and long-term accessibility of records.

#### **5.5.4 Staff Training and Retraining**

Staff training and retraining emerged as the strongest predictor of preservation practices ( $\beta = 0.381$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). The standardized beta value indicates that training exerts the greatest relative influence among all variables included in the model. This finding significantly advances the existing literature. While previous studies (Bastian, 2022; Daniel, 2021) have focused on legislative inadequacies and technological gaps, fewer have empirically examined the operational mechanisms through which legal frameworks influence practice. The results of this study demonstrate that training functions as the critical mediating mechanism linking legal provisions to effective preservation outcomes. Consistent with Mosweu (2020) and Ngulube (2007), the findings suggest that legal frameworks alone cannot ensure compliance without adequate professional capacity. Training enhances interpretive competence, strengthens the application of preservation standards, and reduces procedural inconsistencies. Thus, institutional investment in continuous professional development significantly amplifies the effectiveness of legal mandates.

Although prior African studies have broadly examined records management systems and policy formulation challenges, limited empirical attention has been given to how legal frameworks are operationalized within archival institutions, particularly in Tanzania. This study addresses that gap by quantitatively demonstrating that legal awareness ( $\beta = 0.231$ ), accessibility ( $\beta = 0.219$ ), adequacy ( $\beta = 0.205$ ), and training ( $\beta = 0.381$ ) significantly influence preservation practices at PO-RAMD. The findings, therefore, contribute to the literature by establishing a measurable relationship between legal governance structures and preservation outcomes. More importantly, they highlight the central role of institutional capacity in mediating legal effectiveness.

#### **5.5.5 Policy Implications**

The results suggest that modernization of archival legislation in Tanzania should prioritize digital preservation integration and harmonization with international standards such as ISO 15489-1:2016. Additionally, systematic dissemination of legal instruments and institutionalization of structured training programs are critical for strengthening preservation performance. In conclusion, the study confirms that legal frameworks significantly influence public records preservation practices at PO-RAMD, with staff training emerging as the most influential determinant. The effectiveness of

legal provisions, therefore, depends not only on their existence but also on their adequacy, accessibility, awareness, and institutional capacity to implement them effectively.

## **6. Conclusion**

This study assessed the use of legal frameworks in guiding public records preservation practices at the President's Office–Records and Archives Management Department (PO-RAMD) in Tanzania. The findings reveal that while foundational legal instruments such as the Records and Archives Management Act No. 3 of 2002 are widely known and utilized by staff, other essential documents, including the Records and Archives Management Regulations of 2007 and the National Security Act No. 3 of 1970, are significantly underutilized or poorly distributed. This inconsistency in awareness and access to legal frameworks poses a challenge to the uniform implementation of preservation practices and exposes the institution to potential legal non-compliance.

Furthermore, the study established that although PO-RAMD has a relatively young and energetic workforce, the limited dissemination of legal instruments and insufficient training undermine their ability to preserve records effectively in line with regulatory requirements. The conclusions affirm the critical role of comprehensive and accessible legal frameworks in supporting the long-term preservation of public records and ensuring the protection of Tanzania's documentary heritage.

## **7. Recommendations**

PO-RAMD should strengthen institutional mechanisms for legal compliance, and integrating mentorship between senior and junior staff will also promote institutional continuity and regulatory adherence. These efforts will standardize preservation practices and foster a legally informed, competent workforce committed to safeguarding the nation's public records. Additionally, PO-RAMD should periodically review and update existing legal frameworks to ensure alignment with evolving technological and administrative needs and incorporate international standards such as ISO 15489-1:2016.

Moreover, PO-RAMD should ensure that all legal documents are equitably distributed and easily accessible to operational and managerial staff alike. This will promote uniform understanding, adherence to standards, and a legally compliant environment for records preservation. To address the disparities in legal framework awareness, PO-RAMD should implement a structured orientation program and ensure that all legal documents are readily available and accessible across departments. Regular training sessions and internal dissemination of updates to policies and regulations should be institutionalized. This approach will promote consistency, legal compliance, and more effective preservation practices aligned with national legislation and international standards like ISO 15489-1:2016.

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### **Conflict of Interest Statement**

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

### **About the Author(s)**

Maria Sawala is an Assistant Lecturer in the Department of Library and Records Management at the Institute of Accountancy, Arusha, Tanzania. She specializes in records and archives management, information governance, and digital preservation practices. Her teaching and research interests focus on public sector records management, legal and regulatory frameworks for information management, and the preservation of both physical and electronic records in government institutions. Maria has actively participated in academic research and institutional projects aimed at strengthening records management systems and promoting compliance with national archival legislation. She is particularly interested in exploring the intersection between policy frameworks, technological advancement, and professional capacity building in records and archives management.

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