



Records Management Strategies and Transcripts Delivery Speed in South-South Nigerian University

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.16916778>

Citation: Ereh, C. E., & Iwok, M. S. (2025). Records Management Strategies and Transcripts Delivery Speed in South-South Nigerian University. *Global Journal of Modern Research and Emerging Trends*, 1(4).

Abstract

This study examined the influence of records management strategies on transcript delivery speed in South-South Nigerian universities. Two research questions and two null hypotheses were formulated to guide the investigation. A survey research design was adopted. The study population comprised 610 records staff drawn from six federal universities in the South-South geopolitical zone of Nigeria. Using a simple random sampling technique, 305 staff were selected as the sample. Data were collected using two researcher-developed instruments: the Records Management Strategies Questionnaire (RMSQ) and the Transcript Delivery Speed Questionnaire (TDSQ). The instruments underwent face validation by experts, and their reliability was established using Cronbach's alpha, yielding coefficients of 0.71 and 0.78 respectively. Data were analysed using simple linear regression and the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient. Findings revealed that both records skills and records continuum management strategies had a significant positive relationship with transcript delivery speed in South-South Nigerian universities. The study concluded that professionalism and adherence to prescribed records management strategies are essential for improving the speed of academic transcript delivery. It was recommended, among other measures, that the National Universities Commission and university administrations should implement policies that enforce the professionalisation of records staff and promote the



*continuity of records management to enhance competence
and efficiency in transcript delivery.*

Keywords: Record Management, Strategies, Transcript, Skill, Continuum, Delivery

Introduction

Records management, an age-old practice, is widely recognised as a vital component and lifeline of any organisation. It is indispensable for achieving organisational objectives. Records management involves the storing, preserving, safeguarding, capturing, tracing, archiving, and producing of information relevant to an organisation's operations. It may be defined as the systematic coordination of resources and personnel to ensure the proper creation, maintenance, use, and disposal of accurate information in pursuit of organisational goals. The viability of any organisation depends largely on its capacity to create and dispose of records efficiently (Bearman, 1996).

Every organisation generates records that are essential to achieving its operational aims and objectives. Universities, in particular, produce a wide range of records, among which the academic transcript is of critical importance. This document provides a comprehensive record of a student's performance from admission to graduation. As a prerequisite for admission into postgraduate programmes both within and outside Nigeria, the academic transcript is a vital document that must be managed by competent professionals to ensure accuracy and prompt delivery.

The origins of records management can be traced to ancient civilisations such as Egypt, Babylon, Mesopotamia, and parts of Asia, where records were stored on materials such as stone, bone, leather, scrolls, and clay tablets (Kalu, 2001). Over time, the strategies and techniques for managing records have evolved. Dhan (2004) describes strategy as a procedure for accomplishing tasks in an orderly manner to achieve set goals. Traditional records management methods, however, could not withstand the demands of the modern information and technology age, and by the 1980s and 1990s they had largely been replaced. The advent of computers, the Internet, and database technologies brought about dramatic changes in records management practices.

The importance of effective records management cannot be overstated. In any organisation, a significant number of records are created to maintain accurate and comprehensive information on its functions and activities. Bailey (2008) asserts that records management is critical for maintaining institutional memory and ensuring the smooth functioning of operations. Records management also involves compliance with statutory, regulatory, and policy requirements that govern the creation, retention, and disposal of records. Various organisational functions, such as payroll, budgeting, auditing, billing, recruitment, and performance appraisal, depend heavily on records

management for effective service delivery. Michael (2008) further notes that proper records management protects an organisation's legal and fiscal rights, preserves institutional memory, and provides the evidence necessary for informed decision-making.

Management in general entails the planning and coordination of resources and personnel to direct organisational processes towards the attainment of set goals. Records management, specifically, refers to the systematic control of the creation, receipt, maintenance, use, and disposal of records, including processes for capturing and preserving evidence of organisational activities and transactions. Key strategies in records management include:

- **Records Skills Strategy:** This requires that records management be handled by qualified professionals to ensure accuracy. Skilled records managers are essential for expediting tasks and delivering services efficiently.
- **Records Continuum Strategy:** This emphasises that records management should be consistent, coherent, and dynamic from creation to disposal, ensuring there are no breaks, distortions, or losses in the process. The continuum approach seeks to maintain complete and sequential records for efficient task completion.

However, in many Nigerian universities, records management strategies often diverge from these best practices. Commonly used approaches include traditional hand-sorting and paper filing, reliance on postal or manual delivery services (e.g., NIPOST), and stacking student records in a single cabinet. These methods can lead to misplaced transcripts, delays, and errors in the information provided.

Transcript delivery speed refers to the time taken between a transcript request and its successful delivery to the specified destination for purposes such as postgraduate admission. Delays—whether due to inefficiency, poor record handling, or other administrative bottlenecks—can discourage applicants and tarnish institutional reputation.

The problem of delayed transcript delivery has been a concern to scholars and practitioners, prompting several studies aimed at finding solutions. For example, research conducted in California explored various methods of records management, while Ghering (2001) investigated records retention in New Delhi. McDonald (2006) examined records management strategy and policy at the University of Glasgow, revealing that effective practices facilitate administrative efficiency, preserve evidence for decision-making, and ensure operational continuity. In Nigeria, Eni (2010) studied records management in universities, concluding that effective management enhances decision-making, ensures accuracy, and informs sound policy formulation.

Despite these contributions, none of the studies reviewed provided a comprehensive solution to the specific challenge of transcript delivery. Moreover, with the exception of Eni (2010), most were conducted outside Nigeria, and none focused on the South-South geopolitical zone or directly examined the relationship between records management strategies and transcript delivery speed.

It is against this backdrop that the present study titled *Records Management Strategies and Transcript Delivery Speed in South-South Nigerian Universities*, was undertaken. The central question is: *Can the adoption of effective records management strategies significantly improve transcript delivery speed in South-South Nigerian universities?*

Statement of the Problem

Persistent delays in the issuance of academic transcripts; the inability to trace students' records, including results and files; selective and preferential treatment of transcript requests; outright denial of transcript delivery; and the unprofessional conduct of some records personnel have created a state of frustration and uncertainty for many transcript applicants. These delays can result in the forfeiture of admission offers for candidates seeking entry into postgraduate programmes, the loss of scholarship opportunities, missed job placements, failed visa or passport applications, and diminished national or international opportunities.

Alarmingly, even within the same university community, obtaining an intra-university transcript for further studies remains a difficult and often uncertain process. Transcripts are frequently not forwarded to postgraduate schools within the stipulated timeframe, and records units are repeatedly inundated with complaints, petitions, and, in some cases, formal indictments.

The persistent and troubling pattern of transcript delays and denials has created a perception that obtaining a transcript is a privilege rather than a right. This situation fosters opportunities for undue gratification, negotiation, and, in extreme cases, transactional arrangements in favour of the highest bidder. Concerned by these challenges, various scholars have undertaken studies to address inconsistencies in records management within Nigerian universities.

However, the review of existing literature indicates that no study has been conducted specifically on *records management strategies and transcript delivery speed*, nor has any been carried out within the South-South geopolitical zone of Nigeria. This study therefore seeks to fill this gap by examining whether the adoption of effective records management strategies can significantly enhance transcript delivery speed in South-South Nigerian universities.

Research Questions

The study was guided by the following research questions:

- i. How does the records skills management strategy relate to transcript delivery speed in South-South Nigerian universities?
- ii. How does the records continuum management strategy relate to transcript delivery speed in South-South Nigerian universities?

Research Hypotheses

To guide the investigation, two null hypotheses were formulated and tested at the 0.05 level of significance:

- i. There is no significant relationship between the records skills management strategy and transcript delivery speed in South-South Nigerian universities.
- ii. There is no significant relationship between the records continuum management strategy and transcript delivery speed in South-South Nigerian universities.

Research Methodology

Design of the Study

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design to obtain information from records staff in Nigerian universities on how records management strategies relate to transcript delivery speed. A survey research design involves studying a sample that represents a larger population of interest. Augustino (2002) asserts that this design is most appropriate for investigating behaviour and assessing the opinions of a target population. It was selected for this study because the opinions of a large population were sought, and the analysis was based on responses from a representative sample.

Population for the Study

The population comprised 610 records staff drawn from six federal universities in the South-South geopolitical zone of Nigeria. These universities are: University of Uyo, University of Calabar, University of Port Harcourt, University of Benin, Federal University Otuoke (Bayelsa State), and Federal University of Petroleum Resources, Effurun (Delta State) (Personnel Affairs Directorates, 2013).

Instruments for Data Collection

Two researcher-developed instruments were used for data collection: the *Records Management Strategies Questionnaire* (RMSQ) and the *Transcript Delivery Speed Questionnaire* (TDSQ).

The RMSQ contained 25 items across five variables, with five items per variable, designed to assess records management strategies in federal universities in the South-South zone. The TDSQ contained five items assessing the extent to which records staff delivered transcripts promptly.

Both instruments were structured on a four-point Likert scale:

- **Strongly Agree (SA)** – 4 points
- **Agree (A)** – 3 points
- **Disagree (D)** – 2 points
- **Strongly Disagree (SD)** – 1 point

The cut-off point for decision-making was determined by assigning the corresponding numerical values to each option on the scale.

Method of Data Analysis

Data for statistical analysis were obtained from the questionnaire responses. Descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) were used to summarise the data, while the Pearson product–moment correlation coefficient was used to determine the relationships between records management strategies and transcript delivery speed.

Summary of the Analysis

This study investigated the relationship between records management strategies and transcript delivery speed in federal universities within Nigeria's South–South geopolitical zone. Two research questions and two corresponding null hypotheses guided the investigation. The study adopted a survey research design, targeting all 610 records staff in the selected universities. Using stratified and simple random sampling techniques, a sample of 305 respondents was drawn.

Data were collected through two researcher-developed instruments: the *Records Management Strategies Questionnaire (RMSQ)* and the *Transcript Delivery Speed Questionnaire (TDSQ)*. Both instruments were validated and pilot-tested, yielding reliability indices of 0.71 and 0.78, respectively.

The research questions were addressed using simple linear regression analysis, while the null hypotheses were tested for relationship coefficients using the Pearson product moment correlation (PPMC) at the 0.05 level of significance. All null hypotheses were rejected.

The analysis revealed that:

- i. Records Skill Management Strategy has a significant positive effect on transcript delivery speed in South–South Nigerian universities.
- ii. Records Continuum Management Strategy has a significant positive effect on transcript delivery speed in South–South Nigerian universities.

Results and Discussion

This section presents the findings of the study based on the research questions and hypotheses. Data were analysed using simple linear regression and Pearson Product

Moment Correlation (PPMC) to determine the relationships between records management strategies and transcript delivery speed in South–South Nigerian universities.

Research Question 1

How does Records Skill Management Strategy relate to Transcript Delivery Speed in South–South Nigerian Universities?

Simple Linear Regression Analysis was employed to answer this question. The results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Simple Linear Regression Analysis of the Relationship between Records Skill Management Strategy and Transcript Delivery Speed

Model	R	Adjusted R²	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.687	0.471	1.97778

The correlation coefficient (R) of 0.687 indicates a strong positive relationship between records skill management strategy and transcript delivery speed. The adjusted R² value of 0.471 shows that records skill management strategy accounts for 47.1% of the variance in transcript delivery speed. This implies that improved skills in managing records significantly enhance the efficiency of transcript processing and delivery in the studied universities.

Research Question 2

How does Records Continuum Management Strategy relate to Transcript Delivery Speed in South–South Nigerian Universities?

Simple Linear Regression Analysis was also employed to answer this question, as presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Simple Linear Regression Analysis of the Relationship between Records Continuum Management Strategy and Transcript Delivery Speed

Model	R	Adjusted R²	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.587	0.345	1.22528

The correlation coefficient (R) of 0.587 indicates a moderate positive relationship between records continuum management strategy and transcript delivery speed. The adjusted R² value of 0.345 shows that this strategy accounts for 34.5% of the variance in transcript delivery speed. This suggests that effective implementation of the records continuum approach contributes meaningfully to timely transcript delivery.

Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis 1

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between Records Skill Management Strategy and Transcript Delivery Speed in South–South Nigerian Universities.

The hypothesis was tested using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis.

Table 3: PPMC Analysis of Records Skill Management Strategy and Transcript Delivery Speed

Variables	r-cal	r-crit	Decision at p < .05
Skill Management Strategy (x) vs. Transcript Delivery Speed (y)	0.62	0.062	Reject H ₀₁

Since the calculated r-value (0.62) is greater than the critical r-value (0.062) at the 0.05 significance level with 303 degrees of freedom, the null hypothesis is rejected. This implies a significant positive relationship between records skill management strategy and transcript delivery speed in the studied universities.

Hypothesis 2

H₀₂: There is no significant relationship between Records Continuum Management Strategy and Transcript Delivery Speed in South–South Nigerian Universities.

Table 4: PPMC Analysis of Records Continuum Management Strategy and Transcript Delivery Speed

Variables	r-cal	r-crit	Decision at p < .05
Records Continuum Management Strategy (x) vs. Transcript Delivery Speed (y)	0.70	0.062	Reject H ₀₂

The calculated r-value (0.70) exceeds the critical r-value (0.062) at the 0.05 significance level, with 303 degrees of freedom. Thus, the null hypothesis is rejected, confirming a significant positive relationship between records continuum management strategy and transcript delivery speed.

Discussion of Findings

The results indicate that both records skill management strategy and records continuum management strategy have statistically significant positive relationships with transcript delivery speed in South–South Nigerian universities. The findings align with established records management theory, which posits that well-developed skills in record handling and adherence to systematic management frameworks lead to improved service delivery and operational efficiency.

Specifically, the higher correlation in Hypothesis 2 ($R = 0.70$) compared to Hypothesis 1 ($R = 0.62$) suggests that while staff skills are crucial, embedding these skills within a robust continuum management framework produces even greater benefits. This supports the argument by Augustino (2002) that sustainable records management systems require both individual competencies and institutionalised processes.

In practical terms, the results imply that universities in the region can significantly improve transcript delivery timelines by investing in staff training programmes and by adopting comprehensive records continuum strategies that ensure seamless records creation, maintenance, and retrieval. These measures could help reduce administrative bottlenecks, enhance institutional reputation, and improve stakeholder satisfaction.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it is concluded that effective records management strategies play a critical role in enhancing transcript delivery speed in South–South Nigerian universities. Specifically, the study established a significant positive relationship between the skills of records staff and the efficiency of transcript delivery. This implies that when staff possess adequate technical, organisational, and ICT-related skills in records management, transcripts are processed and delivered more promptly. Competence in records handling, retrieval, and processing minimises administrative delays and reduces student grievances relating to transcript acquisition.

The findings also revealed a significant positive relationship between the adoption of the records continuum approach and transcript delivery speed. This suggests that integrating record-keeping processes across the entire lifecycle (from creation, active use, storage, and archiving to eventual disposal) ensures information remains accessible and reliable at all times. Universities that apply this integrated strategy are better positioned to eliminate redundancies, prevent loss of vital student data, and improve the timeliness of transcript delivery.

In all, the evidence from this research demonstrates that strengthening both staff competencies and systematic lifecycle-based record-keeping frameworks is essential for improving transcript service delivery in Nigerian universities.



Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are proposed:

- i. The National Universities Commission (NUC) should formulate and enforce a policy requiring that only professionally trained and certified records managers be employed to handle students' records in universities. This will ensure speed, accuracy, and reliability in records-related services, including the preparation and delivery of academic transcripts.
- ii. University administrations should formally adopt and implement the records continuum approach to ensure the seamless flow of information across all stages of the records lifecycle. This integrated strategy will enhance the continuity, accessibility, and accuracy of student records, thereby improving the efficiency of transcript delivery.

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