
**PERCEIVED INFLUENCE OF AUTOMATION AS A STRATEGIC RECORD
MANAGEMENT INNOVATION IN THE 21ST CENTURY BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT
IN ANAMBRA STATE**

Okoye, Anthonia Chinyere (Ph.D)

Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University, Igbariam Campus

E-mail: toniachyokoye@yahoo.com

&

Ndunagum Ogochukwu Loretta

Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University, Igbariam Campus

E-mail: ogochukwuemele83@gmail.com

Abstract

The main purpose of the study was to determine the perceived influence of automation as a strategic record management innovation in the 21st century business environment in Anambra State. Two research questions guided the study and two hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance. The descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The population of the study comprised 148 managers of registered Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) firms in Anambra State. A researcher developed structured questionnaire which was validated by experts business managers was used to collect data for the study. The Cronbach Alpha reliability method was applied to the collected data, resulting in coefficient values of 0.84 and 0.88 for clusters 1 and 2, respectively. The overall reliability coefficient was 0.86. Mean, standard deviation and t-test was used to analyse data. The finding of the study revealed that automation improves records creation in the 21st century business environment in Anambra State to a high extent. The finding also revealed that automation improves records storage in the 21st century business environment in Anambra State to a high extent. The findings further revealed that gender did not influence the perception of business managers on the influence of automation as a strategic record management innovation in the 21st century business environment in Anambra State. Based on these findings, the researchers recommended among others that Owners and managers of business organization should develop clear and comprehensive policies outlining the use of automated systems, including procedures for data security, access control, and privacy.

Keywords: *Influence, Automation, Strategic, Record Management, Business Environment*

Introduction

The business environment encompasses all relevant variables within an organization that influence strategic decisions, comprising relationships between various actors and external factors. Organizations interact within this environment, shaping and being shaped by it. Strategic decisions in organizations are significantly impacted by the general business environment, influencing both content decisions and planning processes (Mohamed & Bunawan, 2022). In the 21st century, the business environment has evolved significantly, characterized by a diverse workforce, technological advancements, and changing management strategies (Madgavkar et al., 2019). In order to be competitive and successful, businesses in the 21st century must be flexible, inventive, and sensitive to shifts. This includes strategic planning, integrating technology and implementing sustainability programmes like proper record management.

Records contain data that are essential for planning, decision-making, and management in organizations. Record serves as evidence of existence and can be used to recreate or verify a state of existence, regardless of its medium or format. Records are either created or received by an organization to fulfill legal requirements or conduct business transactions (Abdullahi et al., 2016). They can take the form of tangible items like paper documents such as birth certificates, driver's licenses, and physical medical x-rays, or digital content like electronic office documents, database information, website content, and emails (Muhammad et al., 2021). Records are important to organizations achieving their objectives (Ekowati & Handriana, 2021). Records are invaluable in administration, as managers, administrators, and legal officers rely on them daily for various administrative tasks, particularly in decision-making (Omeha & Lulu-Pokubo, 2020). The information within records aids legal officers and administrators on matters significant to the organization. Additionally, records serve as crucial resources for strategic planning, successful implementation, and effective policy formulation and execution (Franks, 2018). This is the reason why organization ensures that records are managed effectively.

Records Management (RM) is the discipline that focuses on the efficient and systematic oversight of the creation, receipt, maintenance, use, and disposition of records (Mohammed et al., 2022). It encompasses processes for capturing and preserving evidence of business activities and transactions in the form of records and information (Allison, 2021). Records management procedures involve adopting standard methods that guide how various aspects of an organization's records management work should be executed. These procedures act as a checklist of all the necessary steps to ensure that records are created and maintained as evidence of the organization's policies and activities while delivering its mandated services (Crockett, 2016). According to the International Standards Organisation (ISO) (2016), records management procedures encompass specific instructions for the creation, capturing, and management of records. The United Nations Archives and Records Management Section in Allison (2017) stated that these procedures are critical steps an organization must follow to maintain complete and reliable records that facilitate

well-informed decision-making. Scholars like Franks (2018), Peltier (2016), and Read and Ginn (2016) have described records management as a set of steps or instructions organizations utilize to conduct records management tasks in a predictable and orderly manner while performing business functions and delivering services.

The primary purpose of records management procedures is to establish systematic controls at every stage of the records life cycle (Peltier, 2016). All organizational records go through five stages in their life cycle: creation or receipt, distribution, use, maintenance, and disposition (Read & Ginn, 2016). Understanding the stages records go through helps identify the necessary procedures needed to protect and properly organize an organization's records in relation to service delivery. Thus, Strategic record management involves the planning and execution of records management to align with the overall strategic goals of an organization (Crockett 2016).

Strategic record management includes the development of an efficient records service that meets the needs of the organization, promotion of a culture of reliable and accessible records, strengthening the role of records management and records managers within the organization, and developing and implementing records related standards (Gesmundo et al., 2022). Strategic record management also involves securing senior management support for good records care by communicating the importance of information as an asset for national development and the links between information management, information technology and records and archives management (Seniwoliba et al., 2017). This approach involves integrating records management techniques into the organization's strategic planning and operational procedures, ensuring that records management contributes to the organization's long-term goals and success (Alegbeleye & Chilaka, 2019). Strategic records management involves working with other departments and leadership to discover how records may support business operations, compliance, risk management, and decision-making (Sherman, 2019). This comprehensive approach of records management allows organisations to use records as assets that provide value, streamline processes, and support strategic goals. Sadly, it appears like business organizations in Nigeria are struggling to effectively management records in their business operations. Tourary (2021) stated that employees who engage in illicit activities, such as corruption or fraud, or those who are concerned about job security may be reluctant to maintain records. The author emphasizes that a properly implemented records management system plays a crucial role in safeguarding the organization from legal risks. Allison (2021) averred that issues such as the loss of customer information, reliance on a single source of suppliers, and the inability to verify the origin of information are all problems associated with traditional and analog methods of information management. The need for automation in record management is becoming increasingly important in today's digital age.

Automation refers to the transformation of a process, equipment, or work function from human-operated control to automatic operation. According to Zhang et al. (2020), automation involves a comprehensive reorganization of work processes, redefining the roles of both machines and

humans. It's not merely about shifting human responsibilities to machines but rather includes a broad spectrum of computer technology applications. Automation can significantly support archival and records management tasks in office settings. Dosunmu and Bukki (2017) described office automation as the integration of computer applications into office operations to boost productivity, consistency, and efficiency. Similarly, Onoja (2020) defined automation as the process of enabling a system to automatically handle office tasks. Automation can help streamline the record-keeping process, reducing the risk of human error and ensuring that records are kept up-to-date and accurate. Automated records management systems can also provide a more secure and reliable way of storing records, reducing the risk of records being lost or destroyed (Ukata & Wechie, 2019). The National Archive (2019) outlined a model that establishes the relationship in automation for creating, storing, managing, and retrieving electronic records through digital means. Furthermore, automation can help improve the accessibility of records, making it easier for employees to access the information they need when they need it. This can help improve efficiency and productivity within the organization, as employees are able to spend less time searching for records and more time focusing on their work (Emasealu, 2019). Automation is very efficient in operations in a records management setting. Records management functions such as record production, sharing/dissemination, processing, storage, destruction, evaluation and file tracking are effectively carried out (Adeleke, 2017).

Automated records management systems can also help ensure compliance with legal and regulatory requirements, reducing the risk of non-compliance and the associated legal and financial penalties. The use of electronic systems provides various advantages to both organizations and customers, including accountability, data integrity, authenticity, and security. The significant operational efficiency and other possibilities and/or advantages brought about by the use of a system serve to improve service delivery in an organization (Wandiri, 2020). The usage of automation rather than manual methods may significantly improve client/customer satisfaction. These views however have not been empirically verified in Anambra State. The influence of automation as a strategic record management innovation in the 21st century business environment may vary based on the gender of the respondents. Research indicates that women, on average, perform more routine tasks than men, which are more prone to automation (Brusseovich et al., 2019). This suggests that women may be at a higher risk of displacement by automation than men, with 11 percent of the female workforce at high risk of being automated given the current state of technology (Brusseovich et al., 2019). However, the influence of automation on women's employment may not be entirely negative. As machines increasingly handle routine physical and cognitive tasks, women could spend more time managing people, applying expertise and interacting with stakeholders (Madgavkar et al., 2019). This could lead to a shift in the skills required for women's employment, with a greater emphasis on technical and interpersonal skills. It is not clear if that would same can be said when applied to strategic record management. It is therefore against this background that the researcher sought to determine the influence of

automation as a strategic record management innovation in the 21st business environment in Anambra State.

Statement of the Problem

In the traditional method of record-keeping in business offices in Nigeria, manual processes have been predominantly utilized. These practices often involve the use of physical paper documents, ledgers, and filing cabinets to store important information related to business transactions, operations, and other relevant data. However, this approach has proven to be slow and cumbersome, hindering the efficient management of records within organizations in Anambra State. The inefficiency of manual record-keeping methods has posed significant challenges in facilitating the realization of business objectives. The reliance on paper-based systems has led to difficulties in accessing and retrieving information promptly, resulting in delays in decision-making processes and hindrances to overall productivity. Moreover, the risk of misplacement and loss of office records due to carelessness, environmental factors such as floods or fire, has been a persistent issue. Instances of misplaced or destroyed records have led to severe consequences, including financial losses, legal disputes, and even the closure of businesses in Anambra State.

These challenges not only threaten the growth of businesses but also pose a significant threat to the national economy. The inability to efficiently manage and safeguard business records undermines investor confidence, hampers business expansion, and stifles economic development. As such, there is an urgent need to seek innovative solutions to address these pressing challenges.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study is to determine perceived influence of automation as a strategic record management innovation in the 21st century business environment in Anambra State. Specifically, the study determined the extent:

1. automation improves record creation in the 21st century business environment in Anambra State.
2. automation improves record storage in the 21st century business environment in Anambra State

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. To what extent does automation improves record creation in the 21st century business environment in Anambra State?
2. To what extent does automation improves record storage in the 21st century business environment in Anambra State?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance:

1. There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female business managers on the extent automation improves record creation in the 21st century business environment in Anambra State.
2. There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female business managers on the extent automation improves record storage in the 21st century business environment in Anambra State.

Research Method

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The study was conducted in Anambra State, Nigeria. The population of the study comprised 148 managers of registered Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) firms in Anambra State. The researcher used the entire population without sampling because it was manageable. A self-structured questionnaire was used for data collection. The instrument is titled “Questionnaire on Perceived Influence of Automation as a Strategic Record Management Innovation (QPIASRMI).” The instrument consisted of two sections; Section A elicited information of the respondents gender (male or female). Section B comprised 20 items spread in two clusters. Cluster 1 consisted of 10 items on the perceived influence of automation on records creation in the 21st century business environment. Cluster 2 comprised of 10 items the perceived influence of automation on records creation in the 21st century business environment. The instrument is structured on a 4-point rating scale of Very High Extent (VHE), High Extent (HE), Low Extent (LE) and Very Low Extent (VLE).

The instrument was validated by three experts from the Department of Vocational Education, Faculty of Education, Chukwuemeka Odumegwu University, Igbariam campus. To assess its reliability, a pilot test was conducted on 10 business managers in Enugu State. The Cronbach Alpha reliability method was applied to the collected data, resulting in coefficient values of 0.84 and 0.88 for clusters 1 and 2, respectively. The overall reliability coefficient was calculated as 0.86, indicating that the instrument was considered reliable for the study.

The researchers administered copies of the instrument to the respondents and out of the 148 copies of questionnaire distributed, 126 were retrieved in good condition. Mean, standard deviation and t-test were employed for data analysis. Mean values were utilized to address the two research questions, with items scoring 2.50 and above considered as high extent, while items scoring below 2.50 were categorized as low extent. Additionally, standard deviation was used to assess the consensus of opinions among the respondents. The hypotheses were tested using t-test. t-test was employed to test the null hypotheses at .05 level of significance. Where the p value is greater than the significant level of .05, it means that there is no significant difference and the

hypothesis was accepted. Conversely, where the p value is equal to or less than the significant level of .05, it means that there is a significant difference and the hypothesis was not accepted.

Results

Research Question 1: To what extent does automation improves record creation in the 21st century business environment in Anambra State?

Table 1: Respondents Mean Ratings on the Influence of Automation on Record Creation in the 21st century Business Environment in Anambra State (N=126)

S/No.	Item Statements	Mean	SD	Remarks
1.	Automation tools allow businesses to create records quickly	3.25	0.83	High Extent
2.	Automation ensure that records created are accurate	3.40	0.76	High Extent
3.	Automated systems can ensure that records are created in a consistent format	3.21	0.85	High Extent
4.	Automated record creation reduces the risk of data duplication	3.68	0.73	High Extent
5.	Automation enables real-time recording of information	3.44	0.78	High Extent
6.	Automation enables real-time recording updating of information	3.58	0.81	High Extent
7.	Automated systems ensures that records are created in compliance with legal regulatory requirements	3.56	0.75	High Extent
8.	Automated record creation process helps to reduce the need for manual labor	3.33	0.88	High Extent
9.	Automation of records reduces the cost of record creation	3.50	0.74	High Extent
Cluster Mean		3.44		High Extent

Source: Field Study (2024)

Data in Table 1 indicate that the respondents rated items, 1-9 as the influence of automation on record creation in the 21st century business environment in Anambra State with mean ratings ranging between 3.21 and 3.68. The standard deviation scores ranging between 0.73 and 0.88 shows that the respondents' opinions were close. The cluster mean of 3.44 indicate that automation improves record creation in the 21st century business environment in Anambra State to a high extent.

Research Question 2: To what extent does automation improves record storage in the 21st century business environment in Anambra State?

Table 2: Respondents Mean Ratings on the Influence of Automation on Record Storage in the 21st century Business Environment in Anambra State (N=126)

S/No.	Item Statements	Mean	SD	Remarks
10.	Automated systems reduce the need for physical storage space by digitizing records	3.10	0.73	High Extent
11.	Records stored electronically can be accessed quickly	3.27	0.83	High Extent
12.	Automated records can be retrieved from any location	3.55	0.81	High Extent
13.	Automated record storage often incorporates access control to safeguard sensitive information from unauthorised access.	3.51	0.76	High Extent
14.	Automated storage systems enable businesses to back up records which reduces the risk of data loss due to disasters	3.58	0.87	High Extent
15.	Electronic records can be indexed which makes it easier for businesses to categorize large volumes of data.	3.20	0.78	High Extent
16.	Automated systems can keep detailed logs of access to records	3.09	0.70	High Extent
17.	Automated record storage systems are readily adaptable to business expansion which enables organisations to store	3.14	0.72	High Extent

increasing volumes of records without physical infrastructure adjustments.

Cluster Mean

3.31

High Extent

Source: Field Study (2024)

Data in Table 2 indicate that the respondents rated items, 10-17 as the influence of automation on record storage in the 21st century business environment in Anambra State with mean ratings ranging between 3.09 and 3.58. The standard deviation scores ranging between 0.72 and 0.87 shows that the respondents' opinions were close. The cluster mean of 3.31 indicate that automation improves record storage in the 21st century business environment in Anambra State to a high extent.

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female business managers on the extent automation improves record creation in the 21st century business environment in Anambra State.

Table 3: Summary of t-test Analysis on the extent Automation Improves Record Creation in the 21st century Business Environment in Anambra State

Variables	N	Mean	SD	df	α	t-value	P-value	Decision
Male Business Managers	98	3.43	0.84	124	0.05	0.62	0.53	Significant
Female Business Managers	28	3.32	0.81					

Data in Table 3 showed that the p-value of 0.53 is greater than 0.05 alpha level of significance. This means that there is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female business managers on the extent automation improves record creation in the 21st century business environment in Anambra State, therefore the hypothesis was not rejected.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female business managers on the extent automation improves record storage in the 21st century business environment in Anambra State.

Table 4: Summary of t-test Analysis on the extent Automation Improves Record Storage in the 21st century Business Environment in Anambra State

Variables	N	Mean	SD	df	α	t-value	P-value	Decision
Male Business Managers	98	3.21	0.81					
				92	0.05	0.87	0.38	Significant
Female Business Managers	28	3.36	0.77					

Data in Table 4 showed that the p-value of 0.38 is greater than 0.05 alpha level of significance. This means that there is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female business managers on the extent automation improves record storage in the 21st century business environment in Anambra State, therefore the hypothesis was not rejected.

Discussion

The finding of the study revealed that automation improves record creation in the 21st century business environment in Anambra State to a high extent. The finding further revealed that automation as a strategic record management innovation reduces the risk of data duplication, enables real-time recording updating of information, ensures that records are created in compliance with legal and regulatory requirements and reduces the cost of record creation. This finding is in line with Ukata and Wechie (2019) who reported that automated records management systems can also provide a more secure and reliable way of storing records, reducing the risk of records being lost or destroyed. Chinyemba and Ngulube (2015) stated that automation improves the efficiency and accuracy in the production of records in organizations. Furthermore, there is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female business managers on the extent automation improves record creation in the 21st century business environment in Anambra State. This finding highlights the importance of automation in improving the record creation processes in business organizations.

The finding of the study revealed that automation improves record storage in the 21st century business environment in Anambra State to a high extent. The finding of the study further revealed that automation as a strategic record management innovation improves records storage as it enable

businesses to back up records which reduces the risk of data loss due to disasters, allows for the retrieval of record from any location, incorporates access control to safeguard sensitive information from unauthorised access, allow for quick access of information and makes it easier for businesses to categorize large volumes of data among others. This finding is in agreement with Olubiyo and Awoyemi (2021) who reported that automation has significant impact on record storage. Olubiyo and Awoyemi further noted that through automation records can be properly safeguarded from attack or disaster. Wandiri (2020) reported that electronic record management system has positive influence on the ways record are stored as it ensures records safety. Furthermore, finding of the study showed that male and female business managers are in agreement on the influence of automation on records storage in the 21st century business environment.

Conclusion

The researchers conclude based on the findings of the study that automation as a strategic record management innovation improves records creation and records storage in the 21st century business environment in Anambra State. Business managers irrespective of their gender opined that automation is a veritable tool for improving record recreation and storage in the 21st century business environment. It is therefore imperative that measures are put in place to improve the integration of automation in the record management system of business organizations.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the researchers recommended that:

1. Owners and managers of business organization should develop clear and comprehensive policies outlining the use of automated systems, including procedures for data security, access control and privacy.
2. Owners and managers of business organizations should invest in up-to-date technology and software solutions that automate records creation, storage, and management processes.
3. Owners and managers of business organizations should provide continuous training and professional development opportunities for staff to enhance their knowledge and skills in using automated records management systems.

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