Awareness and User Satisfaction With Archival Services At the Archives Management Department (RAMD) in Tanzania

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Abstract

This study assesses the awareness of, and user satisfaction with, archival services that the Records and Archives Management Department (RAMD) provides in Tanzania. It also identifies constraints undermining effective service access. Employing a descriptive research design and a mixed-methods approach, the study collected data from 81 respondents. Of these, four (4) were key informants who participated in interviews, with the remaining 77 taking part in a questionnaire survey. We subjected qualitative data to content analysis and processed quantitative data with the help of the SPSS. Then, Chi-square tests determined the association between the respondents' awareness of archival services and their demographic characteristics. The study found moderate awareness among the respondents, with gender and education levels varyingly influencing such awareness. On the one hand, the majority of the respondents reported dissatisfaction with RAMD services, particularly the reading room space, service processes, and finding aids. On the other hand, a one-sample test revealed that the respondents were satisfied with record content and customer care. Inadequate ICT infrastructure, reading facilities, material deterioration, and the lack of web-based finding aids emerged as major constraints that contributed to user dissatisfaction. The study results suggest that RAMD should transition to the use of digital platforms (such as websites), as well as use of mass media (like radio and television), to enhance public awareness of RAMD's services. Moreover, the RAMD should also create a more user-friendly environment, expand the reading room space, train employees, and digitise all the archival materials.

Keywords: *awareness, user satisfaction, archives services, Records and Archives Management Department*

1. Introduction

Archival institutions play a pivotal role in safeguarding historical information, facilitating the making of informed decisions, and contributing to societal and national development, all of which need effective management (Rakemane & Mosweu, 2021). These institutions maintain, make public records accessible, and weed them (when necessary) to support diverse users, e.g., academics, historians, students, and the public. The archival services cater for reference, education, research, administration, publication, and outreach purposes (Rhee, 2015).

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In developed countries, like the United States, national archives provide quality services, hence high user satisfaction. These developed nations rely on digital technology for their archival materials, and employ user-centric digital delivery systems and online finding aids (Rhee, 2015). In this regard, user satisfaction determination serves as an essential feedback mechanism for organisations to evaluate and enhance their services (Kumar, 2012). Assessing user satisfaction through user surveys and other means help to discern customer expectations and perceptions to make organisations responsive to information-user needs, and accordingly fine-tune their services. Yet, many national archives of developing countries, particularly in Africa, contend with neglect and resource shortages, hence underdeveloped and sometimes shoddy services. Particularly, they grapple with low staffing levels, inadequate training, budgetary constraints, and lack of political will, which cumulatively impede their potential contribution to national development (Garaba, 2013; Kemoni et al., 2011). Consequently, user engagement with these archives has remained severely limited relative to more autonomous institutions such as libraries. Moreover, direct access to online finding aids remains limited, hence creating a knowledge gap on the availability and accessibility of online resources.

In Tanzania, the Records and Archives Management Department (RAMD), formerly known as the National Archives, boasts of a rich history dating back to the colonial era. The RAMD, which was founded in 1965, aims to encourage good records management practices among institutions, and maintain permanent public documents (Magaya & Lowry, 2013). Its services include reference, education, research, and information services aimed to cater to user needs (Ngulube, 2009). Zeithaml and Bitner (2003) underline how in Tanzania, user knowledge is crucial for gaining access to, and making use of, archive services. They also highlight the ways in which user awareness, access, and usage of RAMD services are interdependent. Apparently, previous studies on records management in Tanzania has mostly examined obstacles rather than user satisfaction with RAMD services. To bridge this gap, this study explored user satisfaction with archival services at the RAMD to determine constraints that hinder effective provision of such services.

1.1 User Awareness and Satisfaction with the Archives and Services

User satisfaction is a critical metric for evaluating the effectiveness of archival services. This literature review delves into various user awareness and satisfaction aspects within archival services, with a specific focus on the Records and Archives Management Department (RAMD) in Tanzania. Understanding the factors influencing user satisfaction and the strategies for enhancing archival services is vital. This review examines the existing research to establish the knowledge gaps that warrant further investigation. Ngoepe and Ngulube (2011) underscore the significance of outreach programmes as effective tools, which

include disseminating information through brochures, websites, newsletters, and guides. However, their effectiveness, as Maphorisa and Jain (2013) noted, can be constrained since user awareness often involves the capacity to independently identify relevant historical sources within archival holdings to reduce over-reliance on archivists for assistance (Grabowski, 1992).

As a performance indicator for organisations, user satisfaction reflects the degree to which a product or service aligns with the expectations of information users (Zeithaml & Bitner, 2003). The alignment of perceived performance with user expectations constitutes a critical factor in determining satisfaction (Kotler, 2000). Sadeqiarani (2022) further contends that user satisfaction serves as a valuable diagnostic tool for service improvement because of the interplay between what users expect, and what they experience. On the other hand, diverse perceptions and expectations of users can present difficulties in meeting their varied needs and aspirations. Kemoni et al. (2002), for example, found that users of the Kenya National Archives reported dissatisfaction because of the perceived irrelevance and out-of-datedness of some archival information. On their part, Chepukaka and Kirugi (2019) attributed dissatisfaction of users at the same institution to unstable internet connectivity, low speed of retrieval and finding aids problem. As such, understanding these diverse information needs and preferences can provide a basis for delivering satisfactory services.

1.2 Constraints on Providing Archival Services
In Tanzania, the RAMD, as an archival institution, similarly grapple with a multitude of challenges that impede its capacity to deliver quality and effective archival services (Mwango, 2015). These constraints have to do with human and financial resources, access rules, material arrangements, finding aids, marketing activities, and technological infrastructure. Simply put, these challenges are largely on the scarcity of both manpower and financial resources (Mwango, 2015). Inadequate staffing levels can disrupt organisational and management efficiency of archival materials, whereas limited financial resources often stifle essential infrastructure improvements and digitisation. These resource-related challenges exert substantial influence on RAMD's operational capabilities, much like other similar institutions.

Other challenges revolve around public awareness and attention that archival institutions garner. Indeed, these archival institutions often suffer from a lack of prominence both among the public and in government agendas (Wilson, 2002; Seelakate, 2018), which requires expanding outreach programmes and enhancing public awareness (Wilson, 2002) to secure the much-needed recognition and support for archival institutions. In essence, the success of the RAMD and other similar institutions hinges on their ability to bridge this awareness gap.

Furthermore, the digitisation of archival materials presents another formidable hurdle, particularly in resource-poor developing countries (Trombone, 2014). Usually, the transition from physical to digital archives is undercut by limited funding for digitalisation and automation processes. Similarly, RAMD's budgetary constraints tends to undermine the preservation and accessibility of historical records that are now increasingly dependent on digital formats. The accessibility of archival materials is also closely tied to the currency of finding aids. Outdated finding aids can considerably hinder users' ability to locate and utilise archival materials. Yet, many archives in developing countries lag behind in transitioning to digital services (McGahee & Clayton, 2018; Adeleke & Nwalo, 2017; Mnjama, 2010). The shift from paper-based to electronic records, together with the growing demand for web-based services: all implore archival institutions to adapt accordingly. Even though progress has been made to introduce online archives in developing countries, user restrictions often persist since such online archives frequently prioritise the preservation of digital materials over user-friendliness and accessibility, hence highlighting the need for the adoption of a more user-centric approach.

Overall, the literature review on constraints to providing archival services underscores the critical need to address them in a bid to advance the quality of archival services, in addition to exposing a yawning knowledge gap. Specifically, there is a dearth of recent research on these constraints in the Tanzanian context, especially when it comes to RAMD services and operations. Even though existing studies offer valuable insights, further particularised research is essential to comprehensively understand the challenges and opportunities for enhancing archival services in the setting of Tanzania. Bridging this gap is pivotal for further developing the RAMD and similar archival institutions to ensure that they align with the ever-evolving user expectations and technological advancements.

2. Theoretical and Conceptual Frameworks

This conceptual framework has been informed by the SERVQUAL theory developed by Parasuraman in 1985, which elucidates on the intricate web of factors influencing user satisfaction. For the archival services at the RAMD in Tanzania, the framework portrays the interplay among independent variables, an intervening variable, and the ultimate dependent variable-user satisfaction. This framework allowed the study to understand comprehensively the dynamics shaping service quality and user satisfaction, while highlighting the role of inadequate or adequate resources as intervening factors. Independent variables include tangibles, reliability, empathy, responsiveness, activities and services. Encompassing physical elements such as facility, website, equipment, and employees, and tangibles created the initial impression of service quality. In this regard, reliability hinges on the consistent and accurate delivery of services, as well as establishing trustworthiness. Empathy fosters a customised service

experience by reflecting the capacity to comprehend and address the requirements of a user. Being responsive means being nimble when it comes to providing services on time, and meeting user needs. Also, activities are essential in determining the quality of services, and cover every activity from acquiring materials to ensuring accessibility. This variable highlights the significance of providing high-quality services by ensuring that users receive sufficient and satisfactory services. Twum et al. (2022) further reinforce the idea that providing high-quality service is pivotal in catalysing user satisfaction.

In this framework, user satisfaction is a dependent variable—the ultimate outcome of the interaction between users and archival services. User satisfaction signifies the extent to which services align with the expectations and needs of information users. On the other hand, inadequate or adequate resources—including financing, ICT infrastructure, and staffing—acts as an intervening variable because they play a pivotal role in mediating the relationship between the independent variables and user satisfaction. In fact, inadequacies in these resources can hinder the effectiveness of service provision. Towards this end, the current study modified Parasuraman's (1985) SERVQUAL theory to suit this research, as Figure 1 illustrates:
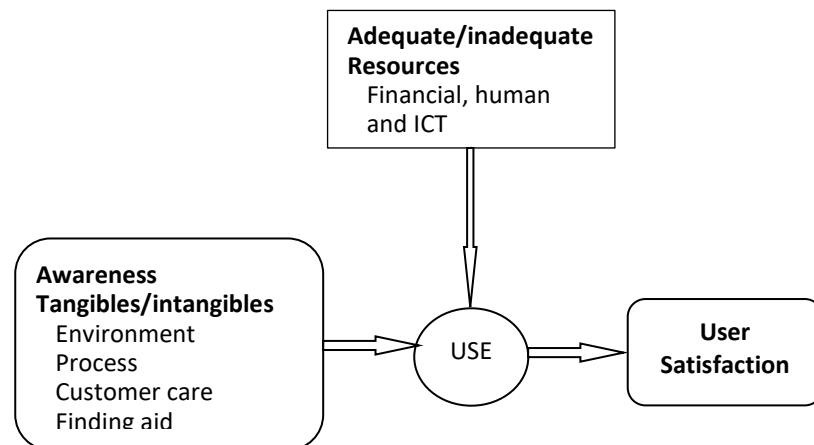

Figure 1: Use and User Satisfaction Nexus
Source: Modified from Parasuraman (1985)

The conceptual model outlines the complex relationships that exist among independent variables, an intervening variable (adequate/inadequate resources), and user satisfaction in the context of RAMD's archival service provision. Adapted from the SERVQUAL theory, this model guided the assessment of user satisfaction with a view to making improvement, while underscoring the pivotal role resource adequacy plays. Independent variables include awareness, tangibles and intangibles such processes, services, customer

care, finding aids and records' content. As for awareness, it refers to the extent to which users are knowledgeable about RAMD's archival services. Contributory factors to such awareness include promotional efforts, marketing strategies, and user outreach programmes. On the other hand, processes refer to the procedures and workflows in accessing and utilising RAMD's archival materials, for example, ease of requesting records, efficiency of archival staff in fulfilling requests, and overall smoothness of the information user journey. Services that RAMD offer such as reference assistance and preservation rout to be of the desired quality and timely delivered.

Regarding customer care, it has to do with interpersonal interactions between the RAMD personnel and information users. Positive attributes of customer care include responsiveness, helpfulness, and courtesy of staff members when dealing with users to meet their archival needs. Finding aids constitute tools and guides that help users locate and navigate through archival materials and save time. This variable covers the availability and effectiveness of finding aids, such as indexes, catalogues, and online search tools. For record content, the focus is on the quality and relevance of the archival records. Factors here include the comprehensiveness of the collection, the accuracy of metadata, and the records' historical significance. Each of these independent variables contributes to the overall user experience when interacting with the RAMD archival services. Understanding and managing these variables, therefore, can help improve user satisfaction for the effectiveness of the archival service. Adequate or inadequate resources constitutes an intervening variable in the conceptual framework because it represents the availability and sufficiency of financial and human resources, as well as ICT infrastructure in the RAMD, as they mediate the relationship between independent variables and user satisfaction.

3. Methods
3.1 Study Area
The primary focus of the study was the Dar es Salaam-based Records and Archives Management Department (RAMD) in Tanzania. The RAMD caters to a broad and diverse spectrum of users, including researchers, historians, government officials, international visitors, students (at both higher and lower educational levels), as well as public and private institutions. This diversity in the user base makes this research site generate a rich and varied pool of perspectives and experiences to draw upon in the study. Besides, being a public institution, the RAMD is subject to public scrutiny and accountability, which ensures transparency and access to information, making it an ideal location for a study focusing on assessing user satisfaction with public archival services. Furthermore, the Dar es Salaam region, where the RAMD is situated, is an easily accessible location and a commercial hub of the country where innumerable activities relating to national archives occur. This accessibility facilitated data collection, interactions with information users, and observance of on-site research activities.

3.2 Research Design

The study employed a descriptive research design, with emphasis on the survey method. The descriptive research design was well-suited for comprehensively exploring the respondents' attitudes and opinions for the research, whose focus was on grasping user satisfaction in the context of the RAMD archival service provision. Employing this research design also allowed the researchers to capture a broad spectrum of insights into user attitudes and opinions. Particularly, the survey method facilitated a comprehensive exploration of the people's attitudes and opinions through interviews and questionnaires on specific issues. This study utilised surveys to represent population segments and research approach that combined quantitative and qualitative data for a holistic understanding of the research problem. This approach allowed for triangulation, combining insights from both methods, and mitigated limitations of using either approach in isolation. Its advantages include a comprehensive investigation of a phenomenon.

3.3 Sampling and Sample Size

The study sample comprised 81 respondents distributed as four key informants (heads of sections) purposively selected based on their strategic position for participating in interviews, and 77 other respondents (both users and staff) who completed self-administered questionnaires. Convenience sampling facilitated the selection of this larger group. Convenience sampling came in handy because of the devastating impact of the COVID-19 epidemic that reduced the number of on-site users due to social distancing and, hence, elongated the process of encountering new archival resource users.

3.4 Data Collection and Analysis

To collect the requisite data, the researchers interviewed four heads of sections, and distributed questionnaires with both closed and open-ended questions to 77 respondents. The SPSS facilitated the generation of frequency distributions, percentages, tables, and figures derived from quantitative data, backed up by statistical tests such as chi-square and one-sample tests. Qualitative data, on the other hand, were subjected to content analysis that enabled a systematic examination of textual information to extract meaningful insights and generate themes in accordance with the research aims.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

The demographic characteristics of the respondents in this study covered the respondents' gender, age, and education levels to generate information on the respondents' backgrounds. To begin with, the study determined the gender of the respondents, whose results have been summarised in Table 1.

Table 1: Gender of the Respondents (n=77)

Category	Frequency	Percent
Male	37	48
Female	40	52
Total	**77**	**100**

Source: Survey data (2021)

In other words, there was a relatively balanced representation of both genders within the respondent pool. The slight difference in the number of male and female respondents suggests a near equilibrium in terms of gender participation in utilising archival resources. However, the data was generated in 2021, and gender distribution may have evolved since then.

The study also sought to establish various categories of age among the respondents, as Figure 2 presents.

Table 2: Respondents' Age Groups (n=77)

Category	Frequency	Percent
Less than 30 years	13	16.9
31–60 years	62	80.5
61 years and above	2	2.6
Total	**77**	**100**

Source: Survey data (2021)

Table 2 shows that a significant proportion of the respondents, accounting for 80.5 percent of the participants, belonged to the age group spanning from 31 to 60 years. In contrast, the distribution of respondents in other age categories was relatively smaller. Specifically, the age group of the respondents under 30 years constituted 16.9 percent; whereas those aged 61 years and above accounted for a modest 2.6 percent. Given this distinct age distribution, this study delved deeper into its potential implications, particularly regarding its influence on the awareness of archival resources, as Table 5 further illustrates.

Influenced by their educational backgrounds, respondents' preferences for specific services often vary. For further exploration, we categorised respondents into several educational levels—certificate, diploma, bachelor's degree, master's degree, and PhD—whose results feature in Table 3:

Table 3: Education Levels of the Respondents (n=77)

Category	Frequency	Percent
Certificate	4	5
Diploma	19	25
Bachelor degree	23	30
Master' degree	26	34
PhD	5	7
Total	**77**	**100**

Source: Survey data (2021)

The results indicate that the majority of respondents held master's degrees, comprising 34 percent of the total. Following closely were those with bachelor's degrees, making up 30 percent of the sample. In contrast, a smaller proportion (5%) possessed certificates; whereas 7 percent had PhD qualifications. This distribution underscores the participation of individuals across various educational levels to ensure a diverse and comprehensive dataset for analysis.

4.2 Respondents' Awareness of Archival Services

In this regard, the study considered the extent of awareness among respondents on the archival services offered by the RAMD in Tanzania. Table 4 presents the results.

Table 4: Respondents' Awareness of Archival Services (n=77)

Category	Frequency	Percent
Aware	15	35
Moderately aware	28	65
Total	**43**	**100**

Source: Survey data (2021)

As Table 4 illustrates, the majority (65 percent) of the respondents reported being moderately aware of the archival services that RAMD provides. In contrast, only 35 percent claimed to be fully aware of these services. This finding aligns closely with Out and Asante's (2015) study, which similarly found low awareness levels among inhabitants regarding services offered by the national archives of Ghana. These results underscore why the RAMD ought to intensify its efforts to promote its services and raise awareness among its user base.

To bolster public awareness, RAMD's management must also look beyond its current methods of information dissemination. One promising avenue is the utilisation of online platforms for educational purposes. As one interviewee noted:

> *"In addition to diversifying our marketing strategies, we are in the process of implementing online educational initiatives to expand users' awareness of archival services."*

This interviewee emphasises the need for the RAMD to diversify its marketing strategies and embrace online educational initiatives. The interviewee suggests that, in addition to traditional methods of information dissemination, such as marketing through conventional channels, the RAMD should actively work on implementing online educational programmes to expand users' awareness of archival services. By acknowledging the limitations of current marketing approaches, the interviewee suggests that simply relying on traditional methods may not be effective in reaching and informing the community about the services RAMD offers.

The shift towards online platforms—including websites, and mass media such as radio, and television—can help achieve a wider reach in addition to enhancing awareness. Impliedly, the RAMD recognises the value of

leveraging digital tools and platforms to communicate with a broader audience. Thus, online educational initiatives can serve as an effective means for educating the public about the significance of archival services, available resources, and how individuals and various sectors can benefit from utilising archival resources that RAMD provides. The emphasis on diversification and the use of digital platforms aligns with contemporary communication trends, and reflects a proactive approach to raising awareness and user satisfaction with archival services in Tanzania. This finding signals the ineffectiveness of RAMD's current marketing approaches. As such, a shift towards digital platforms—such as websites, as well as mass media like radio, and television—can translate into a wider reach and improved awareness of RAMD's services. As highlighted by Kamatula and Saurombe (2013), RAMD possesses the potential to boost user awareness across the entire community and various sectors.

4.2.1 Relationship between Education, Awareness of Archival Services and Gender
The cross-tabulation in Table 5 examines the relationship between the respondents' educational levels, awareness of archival services, and gender. In this regard, the Chi-square tests assessed the statistical significance of these relationships. Table 5 presents the results:

Table 5: Cross-tabulation between Educational of respondents and Awareness of RAMD Archival Services (n=77)

Demographic Characteristics	Awareness of Archival Services			Chi-square	df	Sig.
	Aware	*Moderately Aware*	*Total*			
Age group						
Less than 30 years	8 (32%)	5 (9.6%)	13 (16.9%)			
31–60 years	17 (68%)	44 (84.6%)	61(79.2%)			
61 years and above	0 (0%)	1 (1.9%)	1 (1.3%)			
Total	**34 (100%)**	**43 (100%)**	**77 (100%)**	4.023	4	.403
Educational levels						
Certificate	2 (5.9%)	3 (7%)	5 (6.5%)			
Diploma	16 (47.1%)	3 (7%)	19 (24.7%)			
Bachelor degree	11 32.4%)	11 25.6%)	22 (28.6%)			
Master's degree	5 (14.7%)	21 (48.8%)	26 (33.8%)	23.206	4	.000
PhD	0 (0%)	5 (11.6%)	5 (6.5%)			
Total	**34 (100%)**	**43 (100%)**	**771 (00%)**			
Gender						
Male	25 (73.5%)	12 (27.9%)	37 (48.1%)			
Female	9 (26.5%)	31 (72.1%)	40 (50.9%)	15.832	1	.000
Total	**34 (100%)**	**43 (100%)**	**77 (100%)**			

Source: Survey data (2021)

The results reveal significant associations between awareness of archival services and both gender and educational levels at a 5 percent level of significance. However, there is no significant association between awareness of services and the age of the respondents. These findings suggest that education plays a crucial role in determining individual awareness of information sources, including archival services. These results align with Adeleke and Nwalo (2017), whose study examined the relationship between information literacy and the use of electronic information resources for academic purposes at Ibadan university in Nigeria. Their findings similarly established a relationship between gender and the choice of information sources.

4.3 User Satisfaction with RAMD Services

In this study, the respondents also rated their satisfaction with both the tangibles and intangibles at the RAMD, such as reading environment, processes, customer care, archival records' content, and finding aids. The respondents specifically rated the service environment prevailing at RAMD. Their responses are as presented in Figure 2:
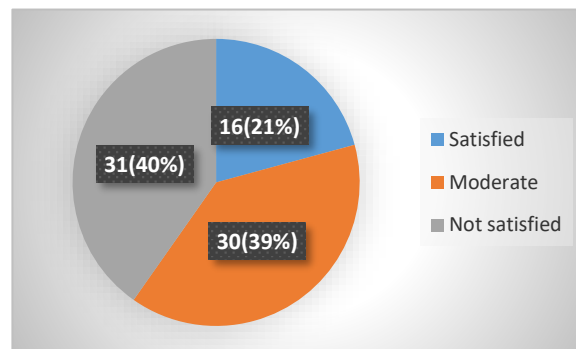

Figure 2: Service Environment at RAMD (N=77)
Source: Survey data (2021)

Figure 2 presents a nuanced picture of user satisfaction at RAMD. Only a minority (21 percent) of the respondents reported being satisfied with the service environment. A significant proportion were either moderately satisfied or dissatisfied with the service. User satisfaction is pivotal for the effective functioning of archival services, as it directly affects users' willingness to engage with, and utilise, the available resources. During an interview, one of the respondents explained the challenges users faced by stating:

"The RAMD area is too small to accommodate many users at once. For example, the search room is too small to house more than fifteen users. Therefore, we are in the process of expanding our archive and search room areas to create a conducive environment for users."

In this case, space is a critical issue that users contended with, hence their dissatisfaction with the service environment at the RAMD in Tanzania. Specifically, the limited space in the search room is a less-than-conducive environment, hence creating challenges for users. Too, the respondent mentioned RAMD's location in the city centre as also limiting the possibility of expanding the building. This finding also resonate with Mairaj and Naseer (2013), who found that many developing countries struggled with user congestion due to inadequate space. In this regard, Ngulube (2009) underscores the importance of ensuring sufficient space before constructing archives to ensure better housing and user-friendly operational environments.

4.3.1 Extent of User Satisfaction with RAMD Processes
This study gauged user satisfaction with the service process at the RAMD. Figure 3 presents the results of the respondents' rating of their satisfaction with RAMD processes:
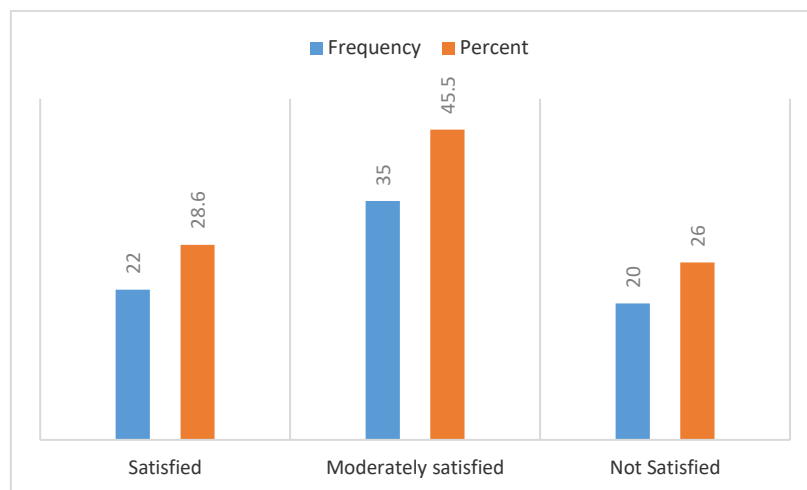

Figure 3: Service Process at RAMD (n=77)
Source: Survey data (2021)

As Figure 3 illustrates, there is a nuanced perspective on user satisfaction with the service process at the RAMD. A minority (28.6 percent) of the respondents reported being satisfied with the service process whereas almost a similar figure (26 percent) were dissatisfied. Meanwhile, a significant number (45.5 percent) was moderately satisfied with the RAMD processes. User satisfaction with the service process is a critical aspect of quality archival service delivery, as it directly influences users' overall experience, which underlines the importance of RAMD expediting its efforts to provide high-quality services that save users time and offer them a more streamlined

experience. After all, the service process is supposed to be an organised performance by individuals or organisations to meet user needs (Zeithaml et al., 2018). Implicitly, based on the majority of users' perceptions RAMD's services were not yet user-friendly.

4.3.2 Extent of User Satisfaction with RAMD Customer Care
The study also assessed user satisfaction with customer care provided by service workers at RAMD. Figure 4 presents the results:
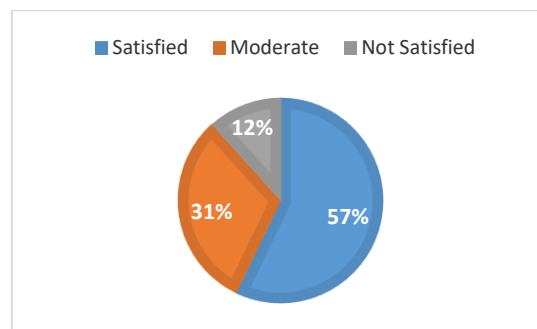

Figure 4: Respondents' Satisfaction with Customer Care (n=77)
Source: Survey data (2021)

Figure 4 provides valuable insights into user perceptions of customer care at RAMD. A significant majority of respondents (57 percent) expressed satisfaction with the customer care they received, and another significant number (31 percent) expressed moderate satisfaction. Only a small number (12 percent) of the respondents indicated being dissatisfied with the customer care they experienced. The satisfaction with customer care in the current study resonates with Palalani et al. (2016), whose study in Botswana found the quality of customer care at the Records Management Unit in that country to be top-notch. In other words, RAMD employees generally performed their duties well, however with room for further improvement.

Moreover, to enhance user satisfaction with customer care, the RAMD should consider exploring different techniques and approaches to customer service delivery. By identifying best practices and continuously refining their customer care methods, the RAMD can make a larger proportion of their users very satisfied with their interaction with archival services provided. After all, as Garaba (2013) explicates, the state of archives in many African countries was largely characterised by low staffing levels, inadequate staff skills and limited experience in providing quality services to users. Thus, the RAMD needs further investment in training its employees in customer care to ensure they acquire the requisite skills and knowledge to satisfy users on a consistent basis.

4.3.3 Extent of User Satisfaction with Content of Archival Records
Respondents further rated their satisfaction with the content of archival records. Table 6 presents the outcome for these ratings:

Table 6: Respondents' Satisfaction with Archival Records Content (n=77)

Category	Frequency	Percent
Satisfied	49	63.6
Moderately satisfied	23	29.9
Not satisfied	5	6.5
Total	**77**	**100**

Source: Survey data (2021)

Table 6 shows that a significant majority (64 percent) of the respondents expressed satisfaction with RAMD content, with only a negligible number (6.5 percent) indicating dissatisfaction. The remaining respondents reported being moderately satisfied. Collectively, the results suggest that users at the RAMD generally had a positive view of the archival materials they accessed. However, observations revealed instances of materials being in poor state, torn, or even missing, which could erode user satisfaction. One interviewee aptly explained:

"Users prefer quality materials. In response, RAMD has developed a comprehensive record management programme aimed to ensure that materials remain in good condition, and are preserved meticulously."

The interviewee acknowledges that users preferred high-quality materials, implying that the condition of archival records significantly influences user satisfaction. Moreover, the mention of RAMD's comprehensive record management programme suggests that the institution was proactively addressing the issues of poor condition, tearing, or loss of archival materials. This programme requires strategic initiatives aimed to preserve materials meticulously, ensure their longevity, and maintain a standard of quality that meets users' expectations. By stressing the value of quality materials and the implementation of a dedicated record management programme, the RAMD strives to meet user expectations and bring about a positive user experience.

4.3.4 Extent of User Satisfaction with Finding Aids
The respondents also rated their satisfaction with the finding aids available at the RAMD. Table 7 presents the results:

Table 7: Respondents' Satisfaction with Finding Aids (n=77)

Category	Frequency	Percent
Satisfied	32	41.6
Moderately satisfied	33	42.9
Not Satisfied	12	15.6
Total	**77**	**100**

Source: Survey data (2021)

Table 7 offers insights into user perceptions of finding aids at the RAMD. Only 32 (42.9 percent) expressed satisfaction, with a similar number (42.9 percent) indicating moderate satisfaction, and a minority (15.6 percent, n=12) saying they were not satisfied at all. Further probing revealed that some respondents recommended the updating of finding aids, whereas others suggested the introduction of an online alternative. These responses highlight the importance of finding aids as crucial access tools that can either facilitate or hinder users' access and utilisation of archival materials. Similarly, Ngulube (2009) identified the lack of adequate and relevant finding aids, as one of the major challenges to accessing archival materials in Africa. Evidence from interviews further reinforced the idea that access mechanisms presented a significant challenge to the RAMD, with one respondent specifically mentioning inadequate electronic storage devices. Another challenge that emerged during the study was the inconsistent assignment of materials to finding aids, with some materials unavailable on the shelves. These disparities made it more difficult to provide users with high-quality services effectively and efficiently, and highlight the need to enhance the calibre and accessibility of finding aids at the RAMD. According to Qingchun et al. (2023), improving finding aids is one of the areas that need improvement to boost user satisfaction.

4.3.5 User Satisfaction Across Key Variables
To identify which aspects of user experience at the RAMD lead to, or undermine, satisfaction, we carried out a one-sample test on four critical variables in this study: satisfaction with the environment, service process/waiting time, customer care, record contents, and finding aids. Table 8 presents the results.

Table 8: One-Sample Test on User Satisfaction

Category			Test Value = 0			
	t	df	Sig. (2–tailed)	Mean Difference	95 percent Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
Satisfaction with reading environment	25.289	76	.000	2.19481	2.0220	2.3677
Satisfaction with processes	23.316	76	.000	1.97403	1.8054	2.1427
Satisfaction with customer care	19.412	76	.000	1.54545	1.3869	1.7040
Satisfaction with content	20.344	76	.000	1.42857	1.2887	1.5684
Satisfaction with finding aid	21.371	76	.000	1.74026	1.5781	1.9024

Source: Survey data (2021)

As evidenced in Table 8, the means for user satisfaction across key variables at the RAMD suggest that the respondents were more satisfied with the archival record contents and customer care than they were with finding aids, processes and the reading environment. In other words, users had a more favourable experience

with the quality and content of the archival materials and customer care provided than with the other two variables. However, as Qingchun et al., (2023) suggest, there is room for further improvement in service process/ waiting time and finding aids. Specifically, the RAMD should consider enhancing user satisfaction with the reading environment, streamlining the service process and waiting times, and improving the accessibility and effectiveness of finding aids. Such improvements could add value to its services, and further enrich their users' experience.

5. Challenges to Accessing and Utilising Archival Services

The study further sought to uncover the barriers and challenges that users encounter when accessing and using archival services that RAMD provides. In this regard, respondents had a checklist from which to identify the multiple challenges they faced. Several significant issues emerged as primary obstacles to effective access and use of archives. A substantial number (65 percent, n=50) of the respondents identified the deterioration of archival materials as a significant challenge. During interviews, one key informant said, *"The older archives are in danger of being dilapidated and are locked in boxes because they are very hard to read."* This finding aligns with Ngulube's (2003) observation that archives at public archives in South Africa had deteriorated significantly due to moulding, paper acidity, frequent handling, and insect damage. Implicitly, there is a critical need for meticulous preservation efforts to prevent further deterioration of precious records. On the other hand, one key informant raised concerns about inadequate staffing, which contrasts with the findings of Magaya and Lowry (2021), who found staffing not to be an issue in their 50–year review for Tanzania's archives. This discrepancy may arise because, between 2015 and 2020, the government froze the hiring of new employees before resuming such recruitment in 2021. Adequate staffing is essential for maintaining and providing access to archival materials effectively.

A substantial number (56 percent, n=44) of the respondents) cited technical challenges as obstacles to accessing and using archival services. During an interview, one informant elaborated these challenges, thus:

> *"The ICT infrastructure is inadequate in the search room; there are few computers, and there are no supportive tools or staff for disabled users."*

The inadequacies in the ICT infrastructure within the search room—a critical space for users engaging with archival materials—is also evidenced by the availability of only a 'few computers', hence, a scarcity of useful technological resources for users. Indeed, in an era where digital access plays a vital role in archival research, such a critical shortage of computers can impede efficiency, while aggravating the convenience of users. Additionally, the absence of supportive tools for disabled users raises concerns about inclusivity and accessibility. Inevitably, such a lack limits the capacity of individuals with disabilities to engage fully with archival resources.

Mwango (2015) emphasised the importance of improving technical services, as enhanced technical services can significantly enhance user satisfaction. Yet, in the current study, the majority (77 percent, n=59) expressed dissatisfaction with the inaccessibility of finding aids online. Further inquiries revealed that most of the respondents had to physically visit the archives to access the information they needed. One key informant said*: "Frankly, we are still behind on uploading finding aids online. COVID-19 has made this even more necessary."* This statement illustrates the challenges users faced in accessing finding aids online at the RAMD in Tanzania. The process of uploading finding aids online at the RAMD lag behind. At the time of the study, the online availability of finding aids—a crucial tool for users to locate and access specific archival materials—largely failed to meet user expectations. The mention of the COVID-19 pandemic adds another layer to the challenge. The global health crisis exacerbated by the pandemic necessitated a shift towards digital services and remote access, hence making online availability of finding aids even more critical, especially during periods of restrictions or lockdowns that preclude physical visits as part of social distancing. Mnjama (2010) strongly supports facilitating access to collections for education and research purposes. Moreover, technological advances during the digital age demand readily available valuable materials in online databases, as noted by Rujayachayakul (2013). The RAMD has yet to harness fully ICT benefits to make its services even more effective.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

The archival services offered by the RAMD are undeniably vital, serving as essential reference and evidentiary resources for a wide range of users. However, the majority of the respondents were only moderately aware of the services offered by the RAMD. Similarly, the majority were also moderately satisfied with archival services due to several challenges, such as financial constraints, staffing inadequacies, an inhospitable user environment, over-reliance on manual finding aids, and an underdeveloped technological infrastructure that hinder an effective delivery of satisfactory services to users. As such, the RAMD should transition to digital platforms to enhance the awareness of its services among the public. Doing so could enhance the visibility, accessibility, and usability of archival materials and, subsequently, lead to the development of online access through the uploading of archival materials. In addition, the RAMD should create a user-friendly environment by expanding the search room to accommodate more users, updating finding aids, and equipping the reading room with an adequate number of computers. Furthermore, the government should formulate policies tailored to preserve and conserve archival materials. Such policies can mitigate the deterioration of archival materials to ensure their ready availability, and reduce the tendency of retaining damaged materials.

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