

Research Data Management in universities in Kenya : a comprehensive analysis of the legal and policy framework

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Research data management (RDM) has become increasingly recognized within the research community worldwide as critical in ensuring research quality, transparency, and reproducibility. As such, adequate legislation and policy frameworks are needed to guide the processes and ethical issues that may arise. This study examined the legal and policy framework governing RDM practices to recommend steps to optimize data management in Kenyan universities. This study was qualitative, using document analysis and interviews to collect data. Since RDM is relatively new, multiple case study designs were used to analyse policies from six selected universities, as they work best in unearthing reality. To better understand the legal and policy frameworks of RDM, a comprehensive search was conducted across databases, government publications, and university policies to identify and analyse legislation and policies relevant to RDM in Kenya. The review revealed an inadequate multifaceted legal and policy landscape for research data management in Kenyan universities. At the national level, the legislations were erratically provided for in the Constitution of Kenya (2010), the Kenya Data Protection Act (2019), the Kenya Access to Information Act (2016), The Science, Technology, and Innovation Act of (2013), the ICT Policy (2019), and the Commission for University Act (2012), among others. At the institutional level, only one of the cases studied developed a detailed and standalone RDM policy, even though it had not yet been implemented. They recommend comprehensive adaptive legislation and institutional policies that promote university research data management.

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