

**Original Research Article**

**Knowledge Management as a Tool for Improving Work Performance in Selected Law Firms in Nairobi County, Kenya: An Assessment**

UNDER PEER REVIEW

## ABSTRACT

Knowledge management is recognized as an important tool for sustaining competitive merit and improving performance of work. It is a means through which law firms can clout their knowledge base and intensify work performance. The assessment of knowledge management performance has become increasingly invaluable since it provides the indicator for guiding organizations to improve their work execution and competitiveness. Many law firms have no documented and planned approach to tap the organization's knowledge and make it accessible to the staff for enhancement of service delivery.

The study was informed by the learning organization theory. The research design for this study was a descriptive and positivism case study that was analysed largely through quantitative methods with a small qualitative component. Purposive sampling design was employed to select 222 law firms, qualitative data was collected using focus group discussions from 12 key informants supported by document review.

The results revealed that most of the respondents 86.5% were aware of knowledge management whereas 64.9% indicated that knowledge management contributed to their law firm's legal practice. From the inferential statistics analysis, there was a significant relationship and influence across different attributes examined that knowledge management is a tool for improving work performance which is,  $p < 0.05$ . This was also reflected in focus group discussion results.

Awareness of knowledge management and contribution of knowledge management to legal practise were significant tools for improving work performance. The study recommended awareness forums for knowledge management

**Keywords:** Knowledge management, Nairobi County, Law Firms, awareness, contribution

## INTRODUCTION

Knowledge management can be achieved with serious consideration of the culture and management style of individuals, groups and organizations. Every organization owns information, records, creates and receives it in the course of the daily business transactions. (Koloniari, M. & Fassoulis, K, 2016) observed that every institution has to spend large costs to build library collections and librarian should be aware of the value of the knowledge to act as an association between the source and the user community.

(Krishnamurthy, V.& Balasubramani, R., 2012) discovered that the level of awareness of KM among personnel working in Greek academic libraries is high. Most of the respondents indicated that they came to know about KM during their studies, suggesting that KM has become part of their Library and Information Science (LIS) curricula. On the contrast, (Valaei, N. S. & Aziz. K., 2012) found out that the level of awareness of KM by companies in Iran is low. To align organizational priorities and KM opportunities, (Valaei, N. S. & Aziz. K., 2012) suggested that management should consider learning about Knowledge Management activities.

Most practices created in organizations may be widely viewed as contributing to the knowledge agenda. Such knowledge projects vary from setting up an intranet, through Lotus Notes or other team-oriented software, mentoring, creating personal development plans, or sharing information on best practices. Organizations are creating particular initiatives or programs with a knowledge focus. Knowledge teams and knowledge leaders are emerging and applying knowledge management in their organizations.

Why businesses and organizations devote substantial amounts of money, time, and effort into knowledge management projects is majorly to survive. (McCampbell, A. T., Clare, L. M., & Glitters, S. H., 1999) maintain that in an economy of uncertainty, the only sure source of lasting competitive advantage is knowledge. Successful companies are those that consistently create new knowledge, disseminate it widely throughout the organization, and quickly embody it in new technologies and products.

## STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The challenge of Many law firms in Nairobi County is absence of suitable techniques for acquisition, encoding and provision of access to crucial knowledge that is in an individual's head.

Any organization that has the capacity to codify experience, insight or judgment into a form which can be reused by others, can position itself to provide effective and efficient service; of which most law firms do not have this capacity.

Looking at law firms in Nairobi County there is lack of policy to tap the knowledge of staff especially those leaving the organization as part of the coherent strategy for knowledge management.

A further challenge for the law firms in Nairobi County is that they lack the necessary techniques and skills to acquire, code and even provide the crucial knowledge available within the organization. There is no defined infrastructure, for example the law firms in Kenya are not prepared to tap, organize, preserve and disseminate knowledge resources.

Knowledge management requires appropriate management competencies without which the organization is very unlikely to be competitive. However, no study has been undertaken on knowledge management as a tool for improving work performance in law firms in Nairobi County. This creates a gap in knowledge which the proposed study intends to fill. It is this gap in knowledge that constitutes a research problem.

## **SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

The study is significant in many ways. Knowledge Management practices in law firms will result in the organization's increased efficiency and improved service delivery.

The findings of the study will be essential to the legal profession. Due to the intensity of the work done by lawyers, judges, magistrates, clerks and other judicial staff, an arena for knowledge management has been provided in this research.

In the context of this study, if knowledge management is implemented in the law firm, it would result in; delivery of better-quality services to the clients, as well as professional satisfaction to the lawyer, and also increase profitability in the law firms so is the enhancement of teamwork.

## **METHODS**

The chapter discuss the study design, study area, target population, sample population, data collection tools, validity, reliability & normality testing, data collection tools & techniques, data analysis and finally ethical considerations adopted in the study.

### **Study Design**

The research design for this study was a descriptive and positivism case study that was analysed largely through mixed method of data collection (quantitative and qualitative methods). This enabled collection of data at that particular point in time and allowed triangulation of the collected data.

### **Study location**

The research was carried out in selected law firms in Nairobi County,

### **Target Population**

All staff from the selected law firms were targeted in the study as shown in table 1 below. These were directly involved in the law firms and were believed to possess the information required in this study.

### **Table 1 : Target population**

Category	Target population n=524	Sample
Advocates	383	162
Records Managers / Librarians	141	60

### Sample Size Determination

The objective of the sample size determination was to produce a representative sample of participants involved in the study for purposes of reducing bias.

Fisher et al., (1998) formula was used to determine the sample

### Sampling Techniques

The law firms in Nairobi County were selected using “convenience sampling technique based on their size and their ability to represent fairly the law firms in Kenya.” These law firms were viewed as “being well established and having the appropriate infrastructure and an edge over the recently established smaller law firms.”

Of the 115 total numbers of law firms in Nairobi County, twenty-two were conveniently selected. The firms have 524 employees of whom 383 were advocates and 141 were librarians / records officers.

‘Simple random sampling technique was used to select the right sample from the 524 employees from the twenty-two firms. “Simple random sampling helps to avoid bias as units of the population are given an equal chance of being selected” (Kerlinger, F.D., 2002).

### Validity of Research Instrument

Validity is “the degree to which an instrument measures what it is supposed to measure or the degree to which results obtained from the analysis of the data give a representation of the phenomena under study” (Mugenda, A. and O. Mugenda, 2013), (Kothari, C. R., 2004)).

Correlation was used in testing validity to determine if the instrument was valid by examining whether all variables were significant at total level. The test used was construct validity.

The test confirmed there was validity.

### Reliability of Research Instrument

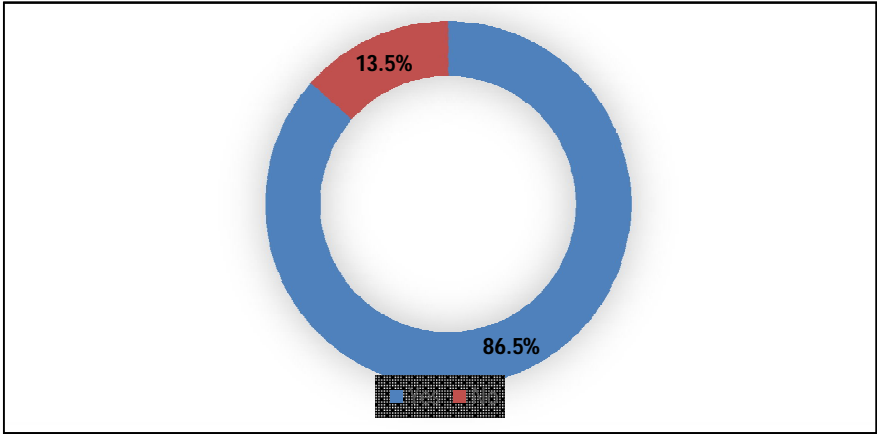
The internal consistency of the pilot data responses was measured using the Cronbach’s Alpha. The overall calculated Cronbach’s Alpha was 0.702, which was above the accepted reliability threshold of 0.70.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Objective one: To assess the knowledge management practices in selected law firms in Nairobi County.

Figure 1 shows awareness of knowledge management among participants. Most of the respondents 192 (86.5%) were aware of knowledge management

**Figure 1: Awareness of knowledge management**



From figure 2 below, most of the respondents did not answer to having knowledge management programme in their law firms 167 (78.4%). those who said yes were 38 (17.8%) and no were 8 (3.8%)

**Figure 2: Do you have knowledge management programme in your law firm**

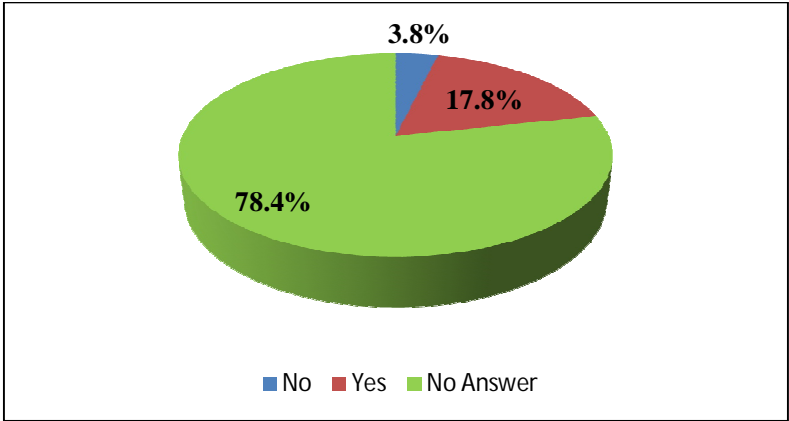


Table 2 meeting clients' needs had the highest level of agreement at 27% followed by flexibility and responsiveness to clients' needs by assigning the right resources 26.6% cost effective with various services being provided 15.8%, standard and consistent forms 19.4% and efficient due processes and procedures 3.7%

**Table 2: Rating of factors influencing knowledge management practices**

	Strongly disagree		Disagree		Neither		Strongly agree	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Meeting client needs	36	16.2%	47	21.2%	13	5.9%	60	27.0%
Cost effective with various services being provided	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	96	43.2%	35	15.8%
Standard and consistent forms	30	13.5%	16	7.2%	2	0.9%	43	19.4%
Efficient due processes and procedures	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	81	37.2%	8	3.7%
Flexibility and responsiveness to client needs by assigning the right	2	0.9%	3	1.4%	7	3.2%	59	26.6%

Factors associated with knowledge management practices that were significantly associated with Knowledge management as a Tool for Improving work performance were meeting client needs  $p < 0.05$ , cost effective with various services being provided  $p < 0.05$ , Efficient processes and procedures  $p < 0.01$  and Flexibility and responsiveness to client needs by assigning the right resources  $p < 0.01$  as illustrated in Table 3.

**Table 3: Relationship of Knowledge management as a Tool for Improving work performance with factors influencing knowledge management practices**

Attribute s		Knowledge management as a Tool for Improving work performance						Statistics
		Agree		Disagree		No Answer		
		n	%	n	%	n	%	
Meeting client needs	Strongly disagree	25	13.0%	11	36.7%	0	0.0%	$\chi^2 = 13.23$ 29, df = 4, p= <b>0.010*</b>
	Disagree	39	20.3%	8	26.7%	0	0.0%	
	Neither	12	6.3%	1	3.3%	0	0.0%	
	Agree	60	31.3%	6	20.0%	0	0.0%	
	Strongly agree	56	29.2%	4	13.3%	0	0.0%	
	Total	192	100.0%	30	100.0%	0	0.0%	
Cost effective with various services being provided	Strongly disagree	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	$\chi^2 = 7.729$ , df = 2, p= <b>0.021*</b>
	Disagree	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	
	Neither	78	40.6%	18	60.0%	0	0.0%	
	Agree	79	41.1%	12	40.0%	0	0.0%	
	Strongly agree	35	18.2%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	
	Total	192	100.0%	30	100.0%	0	0.0%	
Standard and consistent forms	Strongly disagree	28	14.6%	2	6.7%	0	0.0%	$\chi^2 = 4.723$ df = 4 p= 0.317
	Disagree	15	7.8%	1	3.3%	0	0.0%	
	Neither	2	1.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	
	Agree	108	56.3%	23	76.7%	0	0.0%	
	Strongly agree	39	20.3%	4	13.3%	0	0.0%	
	Total	192	100.0%	30	100.0%	0	0.0%	
Efficient processes and procedures	Strongly disagree	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	$\chi^2 = 9.848$ df = 2, p= <b>0.007**</b>
	Disagree	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	
	Neither	69	36.7%	12	40.0%	0	0.0%	
	Agree	115	61.2%	14	46.7%	0	0.0%	
	Strongly agree	4	2.1%	4	13.3%	0	0.0%	
	Total	188	100.0%	30	100.0%	0	0.0%	
Flexibility and responsiveness to client needs by assignin	Strongly disagree	1	0.5%	1	3.3%	0	0.0%	$\chi^2 = 13.502$ df = 4 p= <b>0.009**</b>
	Disagree	1	0.5%	2	6.7%	0	0.0%	
	Neither	6	3.1%	1	3.3%	0	0.0%	
	Agree	128	66.7%	23	76.7%	0	0.0%	
	Strongly agree	56	29.2%	3	10.0%	0	0.0%	
	Total	192	100.0%	30	100.0%	0	0.0%	

g the right resources	Total	192	100.0%	30	100.0%	0	0.0%
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Source: Primary data (2019).

n = 222

**Note: \* p<0.05, \*\* p<0.01**

From Table 4, factors influencing knowledge management practices that were significantly associated with Knowledge management as a Tool for Improving work performance were meeting client needs  $\chi^2=13.329$ ,  $df = 4$ ,  $p < 0.05$ , cost effective with various services being provided  $\chi^2=7.729$ ,  $df = 2$ ,  $p < 0.05$ , Efficient processes and procedures  $\chi^2=9.848$ ,  $df = 2$ ,  $p < 0.01$  and Flexibility and responsiveness to client needs by assigning the right resources  $\chi^2=13.502$ ,  $df = 4$ ,  $p < 0.01$

**Table 4: Influence of Knowledge management as a Tool for Improving work performance with factors influencing knowledge management practices**

	B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)
Meeting client needs	-0.509	0.153	11.056	1	<b>0.001**</b>	0.601
Cost effective with various services being provided	-2.130	0.584	13.295	1	<b>0.000**</b>	0.119
Standard and consistent forms	0.109	0.215	0.257	1	0.612	1.115
Efficient processes and procedures	1.655	0.497	11.096	1	<b>0.001**</b>	5.231
Flexibility and responsiveness to client needs by assigning the right resources	-0.879	0.314	7.839	1	<b>0.005**</b>	0.415
Constant	4.284	2.414	3.148	1	0.076	72.502

Source: Primary data (2019).

n = 222

**Note: \*\* p<0.01**

Key findings from KIs strengthened quantitative findings on knowledge management practises were;

*“Knowledge management means organizational memory,” which emphasizes “the support of the human user by providing, maintaining and distributing relevant information and knowledge” (Shapley Barre & co. adv.)*

*Knowledge management is the management of information using information communication technologies (Ngatia & Associates).*

*Knowledge management is how you manage information in your law firm such that the knowledge is kept away from lawyers in other firms. (Kaplan & Stratton Co. Adv.)*

*Knowledge management is the use of information and communication technology to manage knowledge (Robson Harris & Co. Adv.).*

*A records officer said that “knowledge management is about harnessing the intellectual and social capital of individuals in order to improve organizational learning capabilities” (RMO, Miller & Co. Adv.)*

*Another records officer refers knowledge management as the systematic, organizational and specific process of acquiring, organizing and communicating both the tacit and explicit knowledge of employees so that other employees may make use of it to be more productive (RMO, Rachier & Omollo Co. Adv.)*

**Objective Two: To Establish how knowledge management contributes to legal practice in selected law firms in Nairobi County.**

Figure 3 shows most of the respondents 144 (64.9%) indicated that knowledge management contribute to their law firm's legal practice.

**Figure 3: Contribution of knowledge management to your law firm's legal practice**

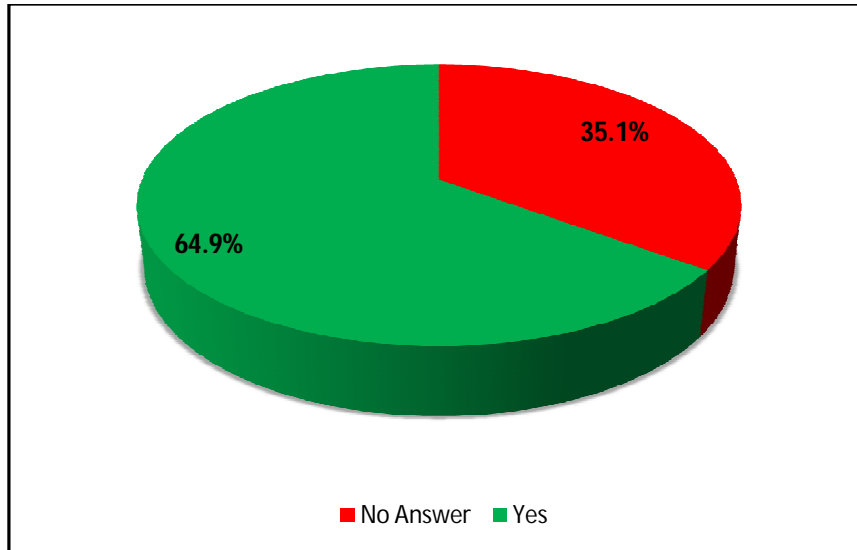


Table 5 shows rating of contribution of knowledge management in legal practice were not rated highly; whereby improved performance was rated highly at 3.6% others rated highly were improved support by fostering collaboration, sharing lessons learned, continuous improvement of the organization all rated at 1.8%.

**Table 5: Rating contribution of knowledge management in legal practice**

	very low		Low		Neither		Very highly	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Improved performance	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	8	3.6%
Competitive advantage	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	17	7.9%	0	0.0%
Improves support by fostering collaboration	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	102	45.9%	4	1.8%
Sharing of lessons learned	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	94	42.3%	4	1.8%
Integration of law practice and law of the business	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	103	46.4%	0	0.0%
Continuous improvement of the organization	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	90	41.3%	4	1.8%

Table 6 shows factors contributing to Knowledge management as a Tool for Improving work performance that were significantly associated with knowledge management contribution to law firm's practices were improved performance,  $p < 0.05$ , Competitive advantage  $p < 0.01$ , Improves support by fostering collaboration  $p < 0.01$ , Sharing of lessons learned  $p < 0.01$ , Integration of law practice and law of the business  $p < 0.01$  and Continuous improvement of the organization  $p < 0.01$ .

**Table 6: Relationship of Knowledge management as a Tool for Improving work performance with factors contributing to knowledge management in legal practice**

Attribute	categories	Knowledge management as a Tool for Improving work performance						Statistics
		Agree		Disagree		No Answer		
		n	%	n	%	n	%	
Improved performance	very low	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	$\chi^2 = 4.495$ , df = 1, p = <b>0.034*</b>
	Low	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	
	Neither	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	
	Highly	136	94.4%	0	0.0%	78	100.0%	
	Very highly	8	5.6%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	
	No Answer	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	
	Total	144	100.0%	0	0.0%	78	100.0%	
Competitive advantage	very low	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	$\chi^2 = 10.591$ , df = 1, p = <b>0.001**</b>
	Low	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	
	Neither	17	12.5%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	
	Highly	119	87.5%	0	0.0%	78	100.0%	
	Very highly	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	
	No Answer	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	
	Total	136	100.0%	0	0.0%	78	100.0%	
Improves support by fostering collaboration	very low	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	$\chi^2 = 104.437$ , df = 2, p = <b>0.000**</b>
	Low	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	
	Neither	102	70.8%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	
	Highly	42	29.2%	0	0.0%	74	94.9%	
	Very highly	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	4	5.1%	
	No Answer	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	
	Total	144	100.0%	0	0.0%	78	100.0%	
Sharing of lessons learned	very low	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	$\chi^2 = 91.073$ , df = 2, p = <b>0.000**</b>
	Low	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	
	Neither	94	65.3%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	
	Highly	50	34.7%	0	0.0%	74	94.9%	
	Very highly	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	4	5.1%	
	No Answer	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	
	Total	144	100.0%	0	0.0%	78	100.0%	
Integration of law practice and law of the business	very low	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	$\chi^2 = 113.619$ , df = 2, p = <b>0.000**</b>
	Low	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	
	Neither	29	20.1%	0	0.0%	74	94.9%	
	Highly	115	79.9%	0	0.0%	4	5.1%	
	Very highly	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	
	No Answer	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	
	Total	144	100.0%	0	0.0%	78	100.0%	
Continuous improvement of the	very low	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	$\chi^2 = 91.073$ , df = 2, p = <b>0.000**</b>
	Low	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	
	Neither	90	62.5%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	

organization	Highly	50	34.7%	0	0.0%	74	94.9%
	Very highly	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	4	5.1%
	No Answer	4	2.8%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
	Total	144	100.0%	0	0.0%	78	100.0%

Source: Primary data (2019).

n = 222

**Note: \* p<0.05, \*\* p<0.01**

Table 7 shows all factors influencing contribution of knowledge management in legal practices with factors influencing Knowledge management as a Tool for Improving work performance with improved performance p=0.003 with OR of 7.668, competitive advantage p = 0.009 with OR of 2.959 an indication of 2.959 level of influence in contribution of knowledge management in legal practice, Improves support by fostering collaboration p = 0.034 with OR of 0.924, Sharing of lessons learned p = 0.001 with OR of 15.581 an indication of 15.581 level of influence in contribution of knowledge management in legal practice, Integration of law practice and law of the business p = 0.140 with OR of 1.002 and Continuous improvement of the organization p = 0.003 with OR of 2.743.

**Table 7: Influence of contribution of knowledge management in legal practices with factors influencing Knowledge management as a Tool for Improving work performance**

Attribute	B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)
Improved performance	2.037	14442.369	16.772	1	<b>0.003**</b>	7.668
Competitive advantage	1.085	17524.497	13.056	1	<b>0.009**</b>	2.959
Improves support by fostering collaboration	0.079	14562.922	11.295	1	<b>0.034*</b>	0.924
Sharing of lessons learned	2.746	14154.940	3.257	1	<b>0.001**</b>	15.581
Integration of law practice and law of the business	0.002	2290.364	12.096	1	<b>0.140*</b>	1.002
Continuous improvement of the organization	1.009	3481.903	8.984	1	<b>0.003**</b>	2.743
Constant	3.284	68186.819	3.528	1	0.082	26.672

Source: Primary data (2019).

n = 222

**Note: \* p<0.05, \*\* p<0.01**

The findings were supported by the KIs as shown in the excerpts:

*Knowledge management provide higher quality knowledge work, improve individual and group competencies, Provide more effective networking and collaboration, (Shapley Barret & Co. Adv.)*

*Knowledge management Streamline operations and reduce costs by eliminating redundant or unnecessary process; Improve productivity;(Rachier & Amollo Adv.)*

*Knowledge management according to an advocate from one of the law firms said that "it Facilitates decision-making and the achievement of other business objectives; Provide better integration of practice across firms" (Ahmed Nassir firm of Advocates);*

*Knowledge management Provide better client service. (Ngatia & Associates)*

*Knowledge management meets the information and knowledge needs of the lawyer (Lilian & Koech Adv.).*

another advocate said that "knowledge management meets the information and knowledge needs of the lawyer" (Murgor & Murgor Co. Adv.)"

*Knowledge management Improve organizational productivity in delivering services to client (LIB, Robson Harris & Co. Adv.).*

*"Improvements in the quality of an organization's work force, through capacity building" (LIB, Daly & Figgis Co. Adv.)"*

Another librarian said that *"knowledge management Enhance business development and the creation of opportunities for organizations" (LIB, Lilian & Koech Co. Adv.)"*

*"Knowledge management Improves efficiency, it's Better for decision making, enhances profitability of the company, enhances performance and productivity by solving emerging organizational problems and Enabling identification of knowledge gaps. (LIB, Murgor & Murgor Co. Adv.)"*

Factors influencing knowledge management practices were rated as follows; meeting clients' needs had the highest level of agreement at 27% followed by flexibility and responsiveness to clients' needs by assigning the right resources 26.6% cost effective with various services being provided 15.8%, standard and consistent forms 19.4% and efficient due processes and procedures 3.7%.

Contribution of knowledge management in legal practice were not rated highly; where improved performance was rated highly at 3.6% others rated highly were improved support by fostering collaboration, sharing lessons learned, continuous improvement of the organization all rated at 1.8%.

From the focus group discussion guide it was "indicated that the benefits of knowledge management in law firms result in general and overall efficiency, improvement of quality of output and improvement in the quality of the clients." Almost all the participants acknowledged the importance of knowledge management in their firms.

## **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

In conclusion the study indicated that;

Knowledge management is a tool for improving work performance. Knowledge management contributes to legal practice.

Law firms in Kenya should "invest in information and communication technologies that support their knowledge management goals. It is, however, important to pay particular attention to the people, structure, processes, leadership and techniques before selecting a technological solution. Law firms should provide opportunities for professional development and encourage life-long continuing education and training of staff in the firms."

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## **COMPETING INTERESTS**

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