

COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE FOR KNOWLEDGE SHARING AMONG LEGAL PRACTITIONERS IN KANO STATE

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated communities of practice (CP) for knowledge sharing among legal practitioners (NBA members) in Kano state. The study sought to address three research questions. The study adopted quantitative methodology using cross sectional survey design. The population consisted of five hundred and eighty-six respondents, Israel published table sample size determinant was used where two hundred and twenty-six were arrived as sample size of this study, simple random sample was used in selecting respondents of this study. Questionnaire was used as the research instrument. Content validity was ensured while Cronbach alpha was used to insured the reliability of the instrument. Questionnaire was distributed to the entire sampled population out of which 200 (88.0%) were returned and found usable for the analysis. The findings of the study revealed that knowledge about legal drafting proceedings among others were among the knowledge generated. Also, with regards to the type of strategies used for knowledge sharing. the findings reveal that litigation meetings, NBA among others were available strategies used for sharing knowledge. Findings revealed that sharing individual knowledge (tacit knowledge) in printed form were among the challenges associated with knowledge sharing. Based on the findings of this study, the researcher recommends that the legal practitioners (NBA members) should assign an expert in knowledge sharing to provide them with advice on how they should overcome these challenges.

Keywords: Community of Practice, Explicit Knowledge, Implicit Knowledge, Knowledge, Knowledge sharing, Legal practitioners (Nigerian Bar Association)

Introduction

The importance of knowledge has increased organisations' focus on connecting employees in collaborative entities called Communities of Practice (CoP), because CoP facilitates knowledge sharing and knowledge development resulting in improvements to how the work is done. Furthermore, a CoP can be applied by legal practitioners (Nigerian Bar Association members NBA) to improve knowledge sharing to the benefit of the organization. Communities of practice (CoPs) is defined as group of people who share a concern, a set of problems, or a passion about a topic and who deepen their knowledge and expertise in the common area of interest, by interacting on an ongoing basis. CoPs have also been defined as flexible groups of

professionals, who are informally bound by common interests and who interact through collaborative tasks, guided by common goals and who share a common knowledge-base. Knowledge sharing is not only about sharing codified information, but also includes sharing of experiences, images, beliefs and contextualized practices.

Legal practitioners (NBA members) communities of practice, links members across multiple geographic boundaries, organisations and cultures. In its distributed capacity, the mission legal practitioners (NBA members)'s is to enable professionals across the state share work experiences and best practices on Knowledge for solution to various cases related, Job related Knowledge, Individual Knowledge (tacit knowledge); network and build strong and learning relationships among legal practitioners (NBA members) in Nigeria, Africa and around the world; collaborate on cases among others. Enabling legal practitioners (NBA members) in this self-organized community to effectively share knowledge is therefore key to legal practitioners (NBA members) CoP's ability to achieve its core objectives. The challenge however is that as a self-organized community of legal practitioners cannot depend on face-to-face interactions as a primary vehicle for connecting members for knowledge sharing purposes.

Knowledge creation is the development of new knowledge in the organization so that it can be used by individuals or employees. Cong (2017) define knowledge creation as a process in which organisations can create new knowledge that can be absorbed by their employees and further applied to production activities or services. They consider knowledge creation as a cyclical process in which new knowledge is created by physical operations or interactions of continuous justification and modification among people. Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) describe knowledge creation as a dynamic and continuous process involving the acquisition, accumulation, creation and exploitation of new tacit and explicit knowledge. Organisations should create knowledge for competitive products and services.

Knowledge-sharing practices are all the actions that are aimed at improving the internal flow and use of knowledge within an organization. In addition, Hsu (2018) indicates that they are all considered practices that encourage and facilitate knowledge sharing amongst organizational members and equip them with the knowledge they need to do their jobs. These practices are initiated and implemented to diffuse or share knowledge amongst members within organization. In other words, knowledge-sharing practices are considered deliberate undertakings or mechanisms instituted by an organization's management in order to develop its staff. The following sub-sections describe the knowledge-sharing practices identified in the literature.

Organization can adopt a codification and personalisation strategy to knowledge sharing (Atkova and Tuomela-Pyykkönen, 2015). The codification strategy focuses on codifying and storing explicit knowledge in databases so that it can be accessed and used by other members of the organization.

Brainstorming is a simple way of helping members to generate new and unusual tacit knowledge (Young, 2020). According to Evans (2022), its purpose as a knowledge-sharing practice is to generate as much tacit knowledge as possible, and then, through discussion, to draw one or a few possible solutions from that tacit knowledge.

Subject-matter experts are experienced staff who demonstrate a mastery of a particular area or job and play a crucial role in the organization by providing tacit knowledge in the form of solutions to inexperienced or less knowledgeable staff. Organisations are leveraging these staff to share tacit knowledge (Chigada & Ngulube, 2016).

Mentoring this describe a mentor as a guide, teacher and developer of skills. According to Karkouliau (2018), mentoring is a form of tacit knowledge sharing, or training that entails an association between a skilled or knowledgeable staff and a less-experienced staff in which the mentor provides guidance, support, and feedback to the mentee/learner.

There have been no prior studies on challenges associated with knowledge sharing in legal profession sector in Nigeria, but rather different studies which mostly concentrate on knowledge management sharing practices in organisations. According to Assefa (2013) knowledge-sharing barriers oppose and disrupt the flow of knowledge among team members, posing a challenge to knowledge-sharing initiatives. Therefore, it is important to identify and understand these barriers, as they affect knowledge sharing-practices; they are also of focal interest to this study, which aims to bring to light the knowledge-sharing challenges facing legal practitioners (NBA members). Barriers to knowledge sharing arise from a combination of individual, organisational and technological factors (Assefa, 2013).

Statement of the Problem

Knowledge sharing is the capturing, storing and dissemination of data using appropriate media to further the development of employees and enhance the work processes. There are many ways in which Knowledge sharing could be undertaken. It could be a mere discussion with a colleague or capturing and reusing experienced based knowledge residing within the organization. Knowledge sharing perceived to be the most essential process for knowledge management. Legal practitioners (Nigerian Bar Association Members, NBA) are knowledge workers who engage in different types of knowledge intensive activities. Today the legal profession faces great challenges and legal practitioners (NBA members) are permanently being flooded with new information, such as frequent changes in legislation and new court decisions, amongst many other changes.

Despite the importance of knowledge sharing in building up an organizational knowledge, which eventually improves the firm's competitive edge. It appears that Nigerian Bar Association (legal practitioners) in Kano State encounter numerous challenges ranging from: lack of willingness to share their knowledge voluntarily, no specific databases to protect their knowledge through documented processes for sharing knowledge, and lack of well-defined

strategy for sharing knowledge. The study expected to assist in providing and stimulate improvements of knowledge sharing, thereby ensuring effective service delivery to the Nigerian Bar Association (legal practitioners) and government at different levels.

Purpose of the Study

1. To find out the type of knowledge generated through communities of practice by Nigerian Bar Association (legal practitioners) in the State;
2. To find out the strategies adopted for knowledge sharing among Nigerian Bar Association (legal practitioners) in the State;
3. To identify the challenges associated with knowledge sharing among Nigerian Bar Association (legal practitioners) in the State.

Research Questions

The study addresses the following research questions:

1. What types of knowledge is generated through communities of practice by Nigerian Bar Association (legal practitioners) in the State?
2. What strategies are adopted for knowledge sharing among Nigerian Bar Association (legal practitioners) in the State?
3. What challenges are associated with knowledge sharing among Nigerian Bar Association (legal practitioners) in the State?

Scope and Limitations of the Study

The study covered communities of practice (CoP) for knowledge sharing among legal practitioners (Nigerian Bar Association Members) in Kano state. The study covered only registered legal practitioners with Nigerian Bar Association, Kano chapter.

Methodology

The research used cross-sectional survey design. 586 legal practitioners in Kano State from the ninety-nine-law firm made up the study's population, with a sample size of 236 using Israel Table for determining sample size. The tool utilized to get the data was a questionnaire. 200 out of the 236 questionnaire that were delivered to the respondents were later retrieved and confirmed to be valid. According to the research questions, the copies of the questionnaire were analysed. The analysis was conducted using SPSS, a statistical software for social science. The research questions were analysed using descriptive statistics.

Results

The results of the analyses obtained from the questionnaire are presented as follows:

Research Question 1: What types of knowledge is generated through communities of practice by legal practitioners (NBA members) in the Kano State?

Table 1 Types of Knowledge Generated

Types of Knowledge Generated	SA	A	D	SD
Knowledge about litigation strategies 2(1%)	93(46.5%)	100(50%)	5(2.5%)	
Knowledge about legal drafting proceedings (0.0%)	100(50%)	100(50%)	0 (0.0%)	0
Knowledge about Judgment appeal in superior court 10(5%)	89(44.5%)	100 (50%)	1(0.5%)	
Knowledge about Administration of criminal justice act 1(0.5%)	96(48%)	100 (50%)	3(1.5%)	
Knowledge about Bail Application 0(0.0%)	96(48%)	100(50%)	4(2%)	
Knowledge about Oath administering 1(0.5%)	69(34.5%)	100(50%)	30(15%)	
Knowledge about settlement of dispute and mediation strategies 0(0.0%)	80(40%)	84(42%)	36(18%)	

Knowledge about out of court settlement 10(5%)	89(44.5%) 100(50%) 1(0.5%)
Knowledge about court hearing for civil and criminal cases 1(0.5%)	70(35%) 99(49.5%) 30(15%)
Knowledge about court proceedings 1(0.5%)	93(46.5%) 103(51.5%) 3(1.5%)

Table 1, above presents the type of knowledge generated by legal practitioners (NBA members) in their law firm. As indicated in the table majority 103 (51.5%), 100 (50%), 100 (50%), 100 (50%), 100 (50%), 100 (50%), 100 (50%), 100 (50%), 99 (49.5%) and 84 (42%) of the respondents agreed with the following that Knowledge about court proceedings, Knowledge about legal drafting proceedings, Knowledge about Administration of criminal justice act, Knowledge about Bail Application, Knowledge about litigation strategies, Knowledge about Judgment appeal in superior court, Knowledge about out of court settlement, Knowledge about Oath administering, Knowledge about court hearing for civil and criminal cases and Knowledge about settlement of dispute and mediation strategies respectively.

Research Question 2: What strategies are adopted for knowledge sharing among legal practitioners (NBA members) in the Kano State?

Table 2 Knowledge sharing strategies

Knowledge sharing strategies	Yes	No
In house training on specific responsibilities	146(68%)	64(32%)
Seminars / workshops	106(53%)	94(47%)
NBA and other conferences	176(78%)	24(12%)
General meetings	122(91%)	18(9%)

The table 2 above indicates that the highest number of the respondents 176 (78%) accepted that they implored practicing knowledge sharing through NBA and other conferences. Followed by 146 (68%) of the respondents who accepted through in house training on specific responsibilities, followed by 122 (91%) of the respondents who accepted through General Meetings and 106 (53%) of the respondents who also accepted through Seminars / workshops.

Research Question 3: What challenges are associated with knowledge sharing among legal practitioners (NBA members) in the Kano State?

Table 3 Challenges of Knowledge Sharing

Challenges of Knowledge Sharing	SA	A	D	SD
Love for monopoly of knowledge in any form/format				
affect knowledge sharing 20(10%)	78(39%)	90(47.5%)	12(6%)	
Reciprocity and trust among learned colleagues				
affect knowledge sharing 10(5%)	89(40.5%)	100(50%)	1(0.5%)	
Discouragement from senior learned colleagues (SAN)				
deters knowledge sharing 1(0.5%)	78(39%)	91(45.5%)	30(15%)	
Fear of losing case deters knowledge sharing 4(2%)	71(35.5%)	90(45%)	35(17.5%)	
Sharing individual knowledge (tacit knowledge)				
in printed form 1(0.5%)	80(40%)	116(58%)	3(1.5%)	

Table 3 above indicates that majority 116 (98%) of the respondents agreed that sharing individual knowledge (tacit knowledge) in printed form is a challenge hindering legal practitioners (NBA members) with regards to knowledge sharing, followed by 80 (40%) of the respondents who strongly agreed with the notion. Whereas, 3 (1.5%) of the respondents who

disagreed with the notion, while 1 (0.5%) of the respondents strongly disagreed with the notion. This is an indication that majority of legal practitioners (NBA members) in Kano State strongly agreed with the said challenges associated with knowledge sharing in their organisations. About 100 (50%) of the respondents agreed that reciprocity and trust among learned colleagues affect knowledge sharing are the challenges associated with knowledge sharing in their organisations, this followed by 89 (40.5) of the respondents who strongly agreed with the notion. Whereas 1 (0.5%) of the respondents disagreed with the concerning the move, where by 10(5%) of the respondents strongly disagreed with the move. The findings therefore, indicates that majority of the legal practitioners (NBA members) in Kano State strongly agreed that Reciprocity and trust among learned colleagues affect knowledge sharing are the challenges associated with knowledge sharing in their organisations.

Conclusion

The study focused on the communities of practice (CoP) for knowledge sharing among legal practitioners (NBA members) in Kano State and establish how these practices could be enhancing in order to provide effective services to the legal organisations. This study established the communities of practice (CoP) that was used by legal practitioners in Kano State for knowledge sharing, and identified the challenges that hindered these practices. The legal practitioners (NBA members) face sharing individual knowledge (tacit knowledge) in printed form, reciprocity and trust among learned colleagues, reciprocity and trust among learned colleagues' challenges that affected their current knowledge sharing practices.

Recommendations

According to the result obtained for the study, the study therefore recommends that;

1. The study recommends that various sources of knowledge should be improve, develop or create by the law firms so that the Nigerian Bar Association (legal practitioners) can generate more knowledge which

should be applicable to the legal professions in the State and Nigeria at large.

2. The study recommended that there is a need for the Nigerian Bar Association (legal practitioners) to clearly recognize and formalize their meetings as community of practice by research and purposefully applying it in practice. The researcher recommends that the Nigerian Bar Association (legal practitioners) should use brainstorming, subject-matter experts, and face-to-face virtual meetings facilitated by technologies to enhance their knowledge sharing.
3. Based on the findings of this study, the researcher recommends that the legal practitioners (NBA members) should assign an expert in knowledge sharing to provide them with advice on how they should overcome these challenges.

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