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Influence of Knowledge Management Systems on Performance of Small and Medium Enterprises in Nanyuki Town, Laikipia County, Kenya

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Abstract: The study sought to investigate the influence of knowledge management systems on performance of small and medium enterprises. The study was anchored on systems theory. Descriptive cross sectional research design was adopted. Owners and employees of small and medium enterprises in Nanyuki town were targeted. Stratified random sampling technique was used to select a sample of 115 respondents. Data was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics and regression analysis was used to establish the relationships between the variables. The findings were presented in tables and figures. The findings showed that knowledge management systems were lowly adopted by SMEs especially for feedback and decision support systems. Knowledge management systems (p=0.11) was not found to be statistically significant. It was concluded that majority of managers and employees did not have awareness of these systems. Failure to adopt these systems therefore remains the gap in the performance of SMEs. The study recommended that SME owners and employees should be sensitized about knowledge systems to enable them adopt the same and enhance performance.

Keywords: BPR, Knowledge Management, Knowledge Management Systems, Smes

INTRODUCTION

There is no universal definition ofsmall and medium enterprise (SMEs) that is widely accepted [14]. Different countries adopt different criteria such as employment, sales or investment for defining small and medium enterprises.

Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in Kenya (2004), defines SMEs as enterprises that have less than 500 employees. In Britain SMEs are defined as enterprises with annual turnover of 2 million pounds or less and with fewer than 200 paid employees while in Australia, SMEs are defined as enterprises having between 5 and 199 employees [1]. In Indonesia SMEs are defined as an enterprise with 5 to 99 employees. In Kenya, they are defined as businesses operating in both the informal and formal sectors of the economy and employing between 5 and less than 50 employees (Republic of Kenya, 2005).

SMEs are important because they are key drivers of economic growth. At a macro level, SMEs have created the majority of new jobs in OECD countries and at a micro level, SMEs are popularly looked upon by governments as a keystone to regional economic and community regeneration. Through a multiplier effect, employment provides income to regions which stimulates local economic activity which in turn, drives wealth and further creation of employment [15]. In Africa, SMEs employ more than 40 percent of all new entrants to the labour force because they tend to be more labour intensive than large firms and are thus better placed to alleviate unemployment [16]. Further, extant research has indicated that SMEs have contributed greatly to job creation and in promoting social economic development [14]. Small and medium enterprises are widely recognized for their role in the social, political and economic development. According to the management of Laikipia County government there are 4,000 registered SMEs in the whole of Laikipia County with those operating in Nanyuki alone standing at 1,150 as at March 2016.

Information technology is a Business Process Reengineering (BPR) platform that has been used to breakdown communication barriers between corporate functions in order to fuel process reengineering. It involves reshaping how the business is done and enabling process design through creating a more flexible, team oriented, coordinative and communication based work capability. BPR on the other hand is the fundamental rethinking and radical redesign of business processes to achieve dramatic improvements in critical measures of performance such as cost, quality, and service and speed [2]. BPR is about innovation and improvement and process redesign and IT are its essential ingredients [3].

Knowledge management systems (KMS) reduce new product and service development cost and time-to-market thus improving the profitability of the organizations. With the help of knowledge management systems, SMEs can acquire customer knowledge and create customer-oriented marketing strategy. This improves the effectiveness and efficiency of marketing and creates more values for the customers [4]. Knowledge should be applied in making decisions, marketing and innovation processes [17]. The process of knowledge application is to integrate new knowledge into existing knowledge and leverage them to resolve problems or make decisions. Knowledge management system can help employees find the right person or right knowledge quickly thus reducing costs for the SMEs. If SMEs do not manage knowledge well, the firm may not grow and hence knowledge management system is one key element for their success. Today many SMEs are trying to make successful knowledge management systems in order to gain competitive advantage and grow rapidly.

Statement of the Problem

Despite their significance and the increased efforts by the government of Kenya and other stakeholders to ensure the success of small and medium enterprises, past statistics indicate that they exhibit high birthrates and high death rates with 40% of the startups failing by year two and at least 60% closing their doors by year four (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, 2015). SMEs in Kenya have difficulties in growth. They hardly grow beyond the start-up stage. Others go out of business at a very early stage. These high cases of SME failure reported are as a result of SMEs not investing in IT since its adoption is a matter of survival not choice. According to Laikipia County Integrated Development Plan [5], 80% of SMEs in Nanyuki town have not fully invested in IT; only 20% have embraced it. This is a strong indicator that in Nanyuki town there is a high degree of poor SME performance and consequently an underlying issue with IT adoption. Technological innovation, office automation and knowledge management were selected as variables in the study because they are easily adopted by SMEs and are easily measurable in the study.

Previous research on KMS and firm performance suggest avenues for further additional research. The underlying mechanisms through which the findings of the studies are obtained are by no means clear. Majority of studies were conducted with data from the early 1990s and 2000s. This calls for reexamination of the findings that link superior KMS capabilities to superior business performance and there is need to update these studies with new data from post 2010. Little has been done to assess the influence of KMS as a BPR platform on performance of SMEs. Majority of studies have focused on the banking sector and big government agencies. The main purpose of this study therefore is to fill in the knowledge gap that exists in literature on influence of KMS as a BPR platform on performance of small and medium enterprises.

Purpose of the Study

To investigate the influence of knowledge management systems on performance of small and medium enterprises in Nanyuki town, Laikipia County, Kenya.

Hypothesis

H_{01} There is no relationship between knowledge management systems and performance of small and medium enterprises in Nanyuki town, Laikipia County, Kenya.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Literature

Systems theory was developed by Ludwig Von Bertalanffy in 1968. It concentrates on the connections amongst parts and the properties of an entire, instead of diminishing an entire to its parts and concentrates their individual properties [6]. Framework is a marvel of whatever sort including physical, natural, social and so on, which is a composed entire with identifiable, interrelated structures outlining it from condition in which it is found and with which it interfaces [7]. Frameworks hypothesis gives a structure by which gatherings of components and their properties might be contemplated together with a specific end goal to comprehend results. Frameworks that communicate with their condition are called open frameworks. Open frameworks trade data, vitality or material with their surroundings [6]. Frameworks that don't collaborate with their condition or that have any condition are called shut frameworks.

The general systems theory argues that each framework including information administration framework has subsystems which make up the whole framework. They are allotted works and gave empowering strengthening to empower them release their parts ideally. Where this is the situation, there is said to be solidness in the framework. On the other hand, there would be shakiness in the learning administration framework, where the subsystems and the whole framework can't work ideally [7]. Framework believing was gotten from frameworks hypothesis and is the reason for the learning association [6]. Frameworks thinking center on causes, instead of occasions, and don't disconnect the littler parts of the framework being examined. Or maybe, it considers the various associations of the framework being referred to Senge, [6]. In connection to information, an essential idea in frameworks believing is generative learning.

Generative learning is the way toward utilizing, coordinating and altering existing information to suit the necessities of another application or another client

[6]. Generative learning empowers imaginative ways to deal with new issues instead of insignificant reactionary and regularly ill-suited re-utilization of old plans to new issues. A frameworks hypothesis way to deal with information administration perceives that each time one of the key learning forms is established; there might be a progressively outstretching influence of occasions and practices that may change the condition of other sub-frameworks. Occasions might be a piece of fortifying procedures that prompt the development or decrease of either attractive or undesirable results. Every information procedure may prompt reactionary arrangements or genuine generative learning. Information and yield investigation of a learning administration framework is critical. A framework is said to get its sources of info, for example, explore information, customer input and shopper reviews from the earth. These sources of info are what the subsystems utilize to release their capacities, with the goal that the framework can convey its yields into the earth and acquire additionally contributions for its operations [18].

Assumptions of systems theory are that enterprises will utilize forms and their assets inside their condition to build up the coveted yields and that the earth gives crude material and different information sources while the association delivers the yields. Another supposition is that every association is seen as a piece of a bigger framework and made out of littler subsystems and that each specialist in the association ought to be doing their part to accomplish a shared objective that is fundamental to the general goal of the association. Applying this short article of the frameworks examination to this investigation, input database frameworks, choice emotionally supportive networks and information stockpiling frameworks will constitute the subsystems of learning administration frameworks. They should be very much taken care of as far as being nourished with satisfactory information sources, so they can contribute fittingly to the optimality of the learning administration framework, and in addition its soundness. In the event that the turn around is the situation, that is, if the subsystems don't have the expected contributions to work, two imperative things may happen. In the first place is that there may be framework instability and the second is that there may be discontent among the framework clients which will influence execution of the endeavor. The two are interwoven [7].

Empirical Literature

Torabi, Kyani and Falakinia [8] explored the impact of knowledge management (KM) on human resource (HR) performance in management of Keshavarzi bank branches in Tehran. To analyze the impact of KM on employee performance and its components, one-sample t-tests were performed. In light of the results, KM significantly influenced HR performance as well as all performance components, except for environment. Jafari, Suppiah and Ramalingam [9] explored the impact of learning administration rehearses on workers' imaginative execution in an association point of view. The outcomes got from the exploration reasoned that information administration assumes an indispensable part on supporting workers' creative execution inside associations. It additionally uncovered that two sorts of learning administration subcategories; information obtaining and responsiveness to learning assumes more critical part on empowering workers' imaginative execution in examination with learning scattering. Ahmed, Fiaz and Shoaib [10] looked to recognize the effect of learning administration hones e.g. information securing, learning transformation, and information application and information assurance on authoritative execution. Results demonstrated that learning administration exercises i.e. learning obtaining, information transformation, information application and learning assurance brings about arrangement of value administrations to clients, high consumer loyalty, proficiency in asset usage, more benefits and general enhanced authoritative execution.

Hosseinian, Salagegheh and Gholami [11] explored the impact of information administration hones on hierarchical execution in little and medium ventures (SMEs) utilizing basic condition demonstrating (SEM). The outcomes demonstrated that learning procurement, information stockpiling, information creation, learning sharing and learning usage have critical factor stacking on information administration. Efficiency, money related execution, staff execution, development, work connections and consumer loyalty additionally have noteworthy factor stacking on authoritative execution. In Rasula, Vuksic and Stemberger [12] ponder; the effect of information administration hones on execution was exactly tried through basic condition demonstrating. The outcomes demonstrated that learning administration develops (i.e. data innovation, association and information) emphatically influence hierarchical execution.

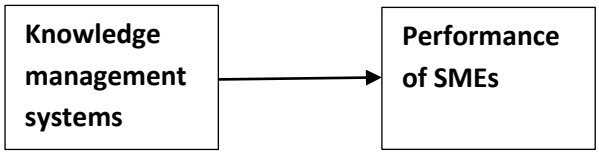
Tubigi *et al.* evaluated the effect of KM forms on authoritative execution (OP). The investigation demonstrated that learning utilization is the most powerful part of KM that affects OP. Also, the investigation uncovered that learning exchange is a typical KM process utilized by associations. As needs be, it was positioned as the second most persuasive factor of KM concerning OP. Riungu [13] inspected the impact of information administration hones on hierarchical execution of cell phone organizations in Kenya. The study found that knowledge management practices in general influenced organization performance in various ways including, knowledgeable employees, and better decision making in the organization, improved service offering to clients,

reduced operational costs and improved organizational competitiveness. The order of significance of the effect of knowledge management practices on performance of mobile telephone companies in Kenya starting with the most significant to the least is; knowledge creation, knowledge sharing, knowledge acquisition, knowledge implementation and knowledge storage respectively.

Mumbi researched the impacts of learning administration on execution among the vehicle valuation firms in Kenya. The different factors to be specific, information procurement, change, application, assurance and association execution demonstrated that they do have connections and relationship coefficients were gotten from the investigation. The discoveries demonstrated that information securing, transformation, application and assurance positively affected the firm execution. In another investigation, Katsuro *et al.* (2013) tried to discover the effect of learning administration on hierarchical execution. An investigation of the gathered information uncovered that learning administration had decidedly affected on the execution of the association through changes in configuration time, costs lessening, worker adaptability and decreased representative disappointment and disarray. In any case, the examination additionally found that information administration can be contrarily influenced once a culture that grasps learning and sharing information is least.

Conceptual Framework

Independent Dependent



Knowledge management system was measured by aspects such as better feedback systems, improved data storage and decision support systems. Performance of SMEs referred to a set of financial and nonfinancial indicators which give information on the degree of achievement of an organization's goals and objectives. It comprises actual output of an organization as measured against its intended goals and objectives. It was measured by aspects such as efficiency of business processes and increase in customer loyalty.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

A research design is a plan for collecting and utilizing data so that desired information can be obtained with sufficient precision or so that a hypothesis can be tested properly. Descriptive and cross sectional research design was applied to collect views and opinions of the owners and personnel working with SMEs in Nanyuki town. The study was non-experimental and was concerned with explanations, descriptions, opinions and perceptions of owners and employees of the SMEs rather than predictions based on manipulation of variables.

Target Population

The target population in this study was the owners and employees of all SMEs operating in Nanyuki town. According to the management of Laikipia County government there were 4,000 registered SMEs in the whole of Laikipia County with those operating in Nanyuki alone standing at 1,150 as at March 2016.

Sampling Procedures

The target population of 1150 SMEs was sampled using the stratified random sampling technique in which 10% of each stratum was taken to come up with 115 respondents. According to Kothari (2004), a representative sample is one which is at least 10% of the population.

Table 1: Sampling Frame

Population category	Target Population	Sample (10%)
Small and medium shops	603	60
Chemists	57	6
Small and medium petrol filling stations	9	1
Hotels and Restaurants	298	30
Cybercafe	20	2
Supermarkets	6	1
Butcheries	30	3
Small and medium transport companies	13	1
Informal sector-Juakalis	114	11
Total	1150	115

Data Collection

The research used both primary and secondary methods. Primary data was collected through administration of questionnaires to the owners and employees of the SMEs. The questionnaire method was used because it was easy to administer and it gave

freedom to respondents to express their views or opinions. Secondary data was obtained from documents and websites of the SMEs. These techniques were the main source of actual data that was analyzed to enable the researcher make conclusions on the research study. Content validity was ensured by formulating questions based on parameters identified in the literature review. Cronbach's Alpha coefficient for Likert-type scale was used in this study to ensure reliability. The acceptable Alpha value that meets the statistical requirement for the instrument to be characterized as reliable should be 0.70 and above. A cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.83 was achieved in the study and thus the instrument can be said to be reliable.

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages, mean and standard deviation were used to analyze quantitative data. The study also used multiple linear regression models for testing the hypothesis drawn from the conceptual framework. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) computer software was used. SPSS is able to handle large amount of data given its wide spectrum of statistical procedures purposeful designed for social sciences and it is also quite effective.

FINDINGS

Response Rate

A total of 109 questionnaires were retuned for analysis out of a possible 115. This represents a 95% response. This is well above the 70% response threshold recommended by Mugenda and Mugenda [19].

Background Information of the Respondents

Majority (70%) of respondents were managers while employees accounted for 30% of the respondents. Majority (59%) of participants in the study were male. The findings show that majority (62%) of respondents were aged between 35 and 50 years. Findings in Table 2 also show that 50% of the respondents had acquired a certificate or diploma while 30% were university graduates.

Table 2: Background Information of the Respondents

Characteristic	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	64	59
	Female	45	41
Age (Years)	>21	2	2
	21-34	32	30
	35-50	68	62
	>50	7	6
Job role	Manager	33	30
	Employee	76	70
Education	Secondary	21	20
	Certificate/diploma	55	50
	Graduate	33	30

Characteristics of Participating SMEs

Findings in 3 show that 46% of the respondents indicated that their SME had between 1 and 5 employees while those SMEs that had between 5 and 10 employees were 37%. The findings also show that majority of SMEs (51%) were small and medium shops while 23% of the SMEs were in the hospitality industry.

Table 3: Characteristics of Participating SMEs

Characteristic	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Number of employees	1-5	50	46
	5-10	40	37
	10-50	19	17
Business activity	Hotel/restaurant	25	23
	Cyber	5	5
	Chemist	6	6
	Supermarket	4	4
	Butcheries	5	5
	Juakali	5	5
	Small and medium shop	56	51
	Small and medium transport company	1	1
	Small and medium petrol station	2	2

Knowledge Management in Participating SMEs

The study sought to establish knowledge management practices and their effect on performance of SMEs. Respondents in the study were asked to indicate the extent to which their SMEs used various knowledge management systems. Findings in Table 4 show the mean for the three items was 3.09 indicating that technological innovations were used to a small extent. The standard deviation values were between 1.0 and 1.30 indicating lack of a large dispersion in the answers. The findings therefore show that knowledge management systems were lowly adopted by SMEs especially for feedback and decision support systems.

Table 4: Knowledge Management Systems

	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Feedback database	109	1	5	2.86	1.02
Decision support systems	109	1	5	2.91	1.03
Data storage systems	109	1	5	3.49	1.29
Total				9.26	3.34
Average				3.09	1.11

Respondents who used knowledge management systems to a large extent were asked to indicate the reason behind their use. Majority (56%) of respondents indicated that they used knowledge management systems for safe keeping of records. Respondents who used knowledge management systems to a low extent were asked to indicate the reason behind their use. All respondents (100%) cited cost as the reason why they were not using the knowledge management systems. According to the respondents, the system needed supervision which translated to more costs to the business.

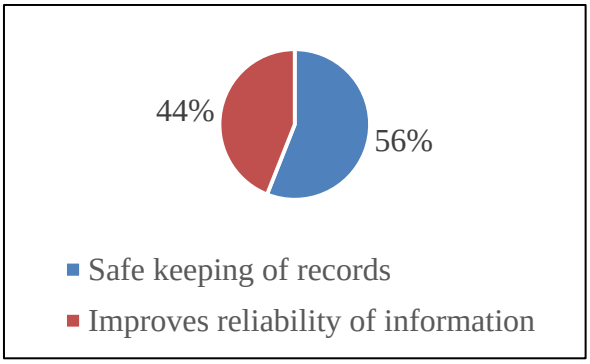


Fig-1: Reasons for High Use of Knowledge Management Systems

Performance of SMEs

The study sought to establish the performance of participating SMEs. This was achieved by assessing customer loyalty, efficiency of business processes and quality of product and service delivery in terms of market share, public rating and referral business. The respondents in the study were asked to state how SME adoption of information technology had enhanced performance and competitiveness of the SME. The mean for the six items was 3.4 indicating that the performance of participating SMEs was high. The standard deviations were very small as all three were less than 1.0 indicating convergence of views.

Table 5: Performance of SMEs

	Low	Moderate	High	Mean	SD
Customer Loyalty	109	1	4	3.43	0.644
Efficiency of business processes	109	1	4	3.71	0.785
Quality of product and service delivery	109	1	4	3.69	0.857
Marketing rating	109	1	4	3.26	0.854
Public rating	109	1	4	3.30	0.822
Referral business	109	1	4	3.26	0.911
Total				**20.65**	**4.873**
Average				**3.4**	**0.8**

Influence of Knowledge Management on Performance of SME

Knowledge management systems (p=0.11) was not found to be statistically significant. The study hypothesis cannot therefore be rejected and the study concludes that there is no relationship between knowledge management systems and performance of SMEs in Nanyuki town. The findings show that a unit change in knowledge management leads to a 0.05 change in performance of SMEs.

Table 6: Regression between KM and SME performance

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.388	.151		2.569	.000
	Knowledge_management	.050	.031	.072	1.607	.111

DISCUSSION

The study sought to investigate the influence of knowledge management systems on performance of small and medium enterprises. Findings showed that knowledge management systems were lowly adopted by SMEs especially for feedback and decision support systems. There was no significant relationship between knowledge management systems and performance of small and medium enterprises. The finding is in disagreement with Schultze and Leidner [4] who indicated that knowledge management systems reduce new product and service development cost and time-to-market thus improving the profitability of the organizations. The finding is also in disagreement with Riungu [13] who found that knowledge management practices in general influence organization performance in various ways which include knowledgeable employees, better decision making in the organization, improved service offering to clients, reduced operational costs and improved organizational competitiveness. Moreover the finding is in disagreement with Ahmed *et al.* [10] who showed that knowledge management activities i.e. knowledge acquisition, knowledge conversion, knowledge application and knowledge protection results in provision of quality services to customers, high customer satisfaction, efficiency in resource utilization and overall improved organizational performance. Lastly the finding is in disagreement with Rasula *et al.* [12] who showed that knowledge management constructs (i.e. information technology, organization and knowledge) positively affect organizational performance.

CONCLUSION

Knowledge management systems were found to be the most under adopted area of information technology. Majority of managers and employees did not have awareness of these systems. Failure to adopt these systems therefore remains the gap in the performance of SMEs.

RECOMMENDATIONS

SME owners should adopt information exchange systems to allow employees to appropriately access and securely share businesses' important information electronically thus improving the speed, quality, safety and cost of doing business. In addition the SME owners and employees should be sensitized about knowledge systems to enable them adopt the same and enhance performance.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

The current study was limited to Nanyuki town. Future studies should be conducted in other areas for comparative purposes and to provide a deeper understanding of the influence of KM as a BPR platform on performance of small and medium enterprises in different locations, settings and sectors. The current study also found that the adoption of knowledge management systems was low. More research should go into finding out the knowledge, perceptions and challenges of adoption of the same.

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