

Academic Law Libraries as knowledge ecosystems : a framework for leveraging their role in accessing quality legal education and training in Kenya

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A knowledge ecosystem refers to a dynamic network of interconnected entities, including individuals, organizations, institutions, technologies, and resources, all interacting to create, share, and utilize knowledge. Thrives on collaboration, openness, inclusivity, and continuous learning, adapting to changing needs and contexts. The purpose of this study was to investigate academic law libraries as knowledge ecosystems and propose a framework for leveraging their role in accessing quality legal education and training in Kenya. The objectives of the study were to establish the existence of academic law libraries' knowledge ecosystems, to examine the contribution of academic law libraries as knowledge ecosystems, and to determine factors affecting academic law libraries as knowledge ecosystems. The study adopted the Resource-advantage theory. The methodology included a survey, descriptive qualitative approach and literature review. A convergent parallel was employed to collect quantitative and qualitative data concurrently. The target population was 17, and the sample size was nine academic law libraries of institutions licenced by the Council of Legal Education. Due to time constraints, convenient sampling was used to complete and submit the paper. Data was collected from 15 respondents through a Google form and called interviews using a questionnaire and interview schedule as tools. For validity, the author was directly instrumental in ensuring that the data collected was able to measure academic law libraries as knowledge ecosystems. Reliability was achieved through objectivity and methodological triangulation, interviews and rich legal profession content analysis. Study context Council of Legal Education is the regulator of legal education libraries' standards environment. Data was screened, and the dataset was scrutinized to identify any inconsistencies. Data was analysed statistically using an Excel Spreadsheet. Ethical considerations encompassed data anonymization, minimization and responsible data use. Findings show individual agency as a high-risk factor in academic law libraries' knowledge ecosystems; durability of knowledge is second, and development of infrastructure is third. Findings show a 43% knowledge ecosystem gap among academic law libraries in Kenya. It is suggested that the Council of Legal Education consider incorporating academic law libraries' knowledge ecosystem framework into its checklist, which is found in the Third Schedule of Legal Education Institutions Regulations, 2012, through roundtable stakeholder discussions.

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