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EFFECTS OF NON-TARIFF BARRIERS ON RWANDA'S INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS IN THE EAST AFRICAN COMMUNITY: A CASE OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to assess the effect of non-tariff barriers on Rwanda's international relations in the East African Community. The study was guided by comparative advantage theory. Descriptive research design was used to achieve the study objectives. The target population for this study constituted 184 officials of Rwanda's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation from whom a sample of 126 respondents was selected using stratified random sampling method. Data was collected using a questionnaire and was analyzed using descriptive, inferential and thematic content analysis techniques. Analyzed statistical data was presented using tables and charts while qualitative data was documented using narratives. This study concluded that Non-tariff barriers have a positive and significant effect on Rwanda's International Relations in East African Community. From the findings, this study recommended that the government of Rwanda should continue supporting and advocating for trade liberalization within the EAC. This can be achieved through negotiations within the EAC's Common External Tariff (CET) framework.

Key Words: *Non-Tariff Barriers, International Relations*

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INTRODUCTION

Interstate relations among different players in the global market remain an important phenomenon in all aspects of a country's development. The need for good relationship between different countries is increasing becoming important, especially in the current dispensation where interconnectivity is fast gaining momentum for the sake of market expansion (World Trade Organization [WTO], 2019). This situation strongly informs the idea behind consolidation of the eastern African market where different countries in the region feel compelled to push for a common market. Despite various challenges unique to each of the countries in the region, there is the determination to establish a vibrant economic bloc in the region to spearhead trade among the willing state partners. One such economic bloc in the region is the East African Community (EAC).

Despite the commitment towards transforming the EAC into the East African Federation which may give way to a stronger and sustainable economic and political alliance among countries in the region, not all the countries have total commitment in equal measure (World Bank, 2020). Differences in terms of policy and practices related to domestic and international trade in each of the countries could potentially interfere with the efforts for a strongly united economic bloc. The EAC is greatly motivated by large market size and access as well as trade policies that aim to cement regional trade integration. But, some countries in the region are accused of poor governance, insufficient and ineffective regulatory structures, border insecurity, and poor physical infrastructural facilities (Bayne, 2009). At the same time, inadequate access to productive resources, insufficient involvement of local communities, and weak institutional background are thought to be hindrances to good international relations among the EAC partners when it comes to cross-border trade. Hence, there is need for the trade partners to create fair trade policies and strengthen public and private sector institutions involved in export promotion and development (Hill, 2010).

Although most of the EAC member countries share Kiswahili as a common language for easier trading, Rwanda does not compare to such peer countries in the region such as Tanzania and Kenya where Kiswahili is a national language. At the same time, Rwanda has had a unique history of political turmoil traced to the 1990s, which some international trade analysts argue that has often tended to place its national administration on the defensive when it comes to international trade matters (Peter, 2015). As a result, poor regulatory frameworks for the common market could remain hard to achieve in the short term, thereby denying the EAC countries the opportunity to collectively move forward international trade in the region. Having ratified the implementation of African Continental Free Trade Area (ACFTA)to begin in 2021 where Djibouti, Ethiopia and Uganda also pledged to be part of, it was expected that Rwanda would reduce its international trade tariffs (Mold, 2020). However, the agreement among the partner countries to eliminate tariffs on intra-regional imports over a period of 10 years has not fully been realized. Therefore, both tariff and non-tariff policies for international trade affect trading partners in terms of ready access of the goods and services and service delivery to the citizens. The current research examines interstate trade practices on Rwanda's international relations in the East African Community, with focus on the effect of regional tariff policy, non-tariff barriers, cross-border cooperation, and Rwanda's economic diplomacy on its international relations in the East African community.

Statement of the Problem

International trade is very important for any country's economic development opportunities and market expansion across borders. As a promising economy in the East African region, Rwanda has remained aggressive in occupying its rightful place among its peers through the East Africa Community collaboration framework. Despite increased efforts for promotion of the East African Community as a platform for interstate trade and development of all the partner countries, certain specific legal and corporate regimes place hurdles for sustainable good international relations (Ministry of the East Africa Community [MEAC], 2014). For instance, notwithstanding abolition by licensed agents of pre-shipment or destination inspections in all the EAC countries, these practices are carried out for certain goods in Kenya and Burundi. Hence, some tariff and non-tariff customs procedures and documentation requirements continue to remain country-specific where different computer systems are applied.

Discrepancies in legal and operational activities in one way or the other hamper their full harmonization, thus denying creation of standard operating procedures for the EAC fraternity for cheaper and easier movement of goods and services between partner countries. The EAC Customs Management Act of 2004 (as revised in 2009), and the EAC Customs Management Regulations of 2010 envisage harmonization of legal and operational practice among the EAC member countries. Yet, there are a number of country-related nontariff barriers that further derail regional trade, investment and service systems integration in the region. This has for instance led Tanzania and Kenya to be often accused of propagating the 'bigger-brother' syndrome thus denying other countries like Rwanda their rightful share in interstate trade in the East African region. Since joining the EAC in 2009, Rwanda has increased it trade volume. However, non-tariff barriers could impact its international relations in the East African Community.

Various studies have focused on international relations in the east African community. For instance; Wanjugu (2019) focused on the effect of EAC trade block on economic growth in Kenya, Kihumba (2018) assessed the effect of Kenya's and Tanzania's economic interests in the east African community (EAC) Between the Periods 1967-1977 and 2000-2016 and Uwineza (2018) conducted an Evaluative analysis of the compliance with the EAC-CMP: the cases of Rwanda and Tanzania. Nevertheless, none of these studies assessed the influence of interstate trade practices on Rwanda's international relations in the East African Community. To fill the highlighted gaps, this study sought to assess the influence of non-tariff barriers on Rwanda's international relations in the East African Community.

Objectives of the Study

The purpose of this study was to assess the influence of non-tariff barriers on Rwanda's international relations in the East African Community.

Research Questions

- What is the effect of non-tariff barriers on Rwanda's international relations in the East African community?

Non-tariff barriers: these are restrictions or obstacles for international trade which are not related to taxes. In this study, non-tariff barriers will be viewed in terms of such things as licenses processing, foreign exchange and import impositions, business embargoes, and quotas, among others, which in one way or the other affect Rwanda's international trade relations among the EAC arrangement.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Review

Comparative Advantage Theory

Comparative advantage theory was initiated by David Ricardo in 1817 to explain why nation states engage in international trade even when one country may be more efficient in production of certain commodities than the international trade partners(Ricardo, 1817; Rihim, 2002). Comparative advantage refers to the ability of an economy to produce particular goods or services at a lower opportunity cost than other trading allies(Bair, 2014). The comparative advantage theory emphasizes opportunity cost as an important factor for analysis when it comes to making a decision on different options for production (Crozet & Trionfetti, 2014). The theory further postulates that based on the principle of comparative advantage, a country should always take advantage of its outstanding expertise to produce goods and services that it is best placed to produce while only importing those that it is not in the best position to create (Hill, 2001). The opportunity cost may be in terms of better trained manpower, less costly raw materials, or more efficient production system, among other favorable factors of doing business.

Interstate trade practices of any country are determined by both internal and external factors, including political systems and organizations, trade and tax policies, and stability of its currency in the international market, among other essential economic and political dynamics (Beaudreau, 2011). This also applies to Rwanda's trading position in the East African Community. According to Ehnts (2008), organized trade and effective commercial policies are pertinent for any country's interstate relations among its peers in a trading bloc, such as the EAC, for the case of Rwanda. In his book *Principles of Political Economy and Taxation* (1817), the political economist David Ricardo posits that opportunity cost as an important concept behind comparative advantage is the ultimate benefit of choosing one option over others (Freiling et al, 2008). In rooting for free trade, the theory suggests that countries are better off concentrating on the things they enjoy a comparative advantage in. Such a scenario would also call for countries to only import commodities in which they do not enjoy comparative advantage. However, related to Rwanda's trading position within the East African Community framework, it would be imperative to understand if the country is in a position to claim comparative advantage of any particular commodities over its peers in the region (Freiling & Fichtner, 2010). The current research will help in explaining Rwanda's interstate trade practices that may put it a level a head of its trading partners in the EAC trading bloc.

Successful international trade in a trading coalition cannot be dictated only by a single country's trade practices as each country has its own unique domestic and external policy direction (Jadesimi, 2017). However, the principle of comparative advantage remains central to any country's performance in interstate trading as the benefits of free trade are expanded. The theory of comparative advantage indicates that even in cases where a country may be enjoying absolute advantage in production of a given commodity, many trading partners can still be in a position to benefit from the trading arrangements (Sturgeon & Gereffi, 2009). According to Hill (2001), trade is for the most part based upon a certain level of advantage, where the buyers try to procure from dealers the goods or services they are not in a position to produce to their satisfaction either in terms of quantity or quality.

The comparative advantage theory has been applied to explain trade flows between countries, and this explains why Rwanda's interstate practices may be informed by what other countries in the EAC region are practising (Peter, 2015). As the emphasis shifts from absolute to relative advantage in delivery of international trade, parties to such arrangement at any given time must realize that there is the question of other factors of production, such as labour, which are not mobile. Sachs and Warner (2014) argue that Ricardo's theory of comparative advantage assumes that trade is basically horizontal in nature, where only finished goods are traded between dealers and consumers ideally occupying or enjoying perceived equal economic position.

Contrary to this notion, Sylvanus (2016) postulates that there are also vertical comparative advantages based on four factors of input that may be enjoyed by a trade partner at any given time. The four input factors may include ability to generate and apply knowledge and skills (knowledge-generation), natural resources, capital, and labour. These factors can create a vertical comparative advantage for a country in terms of an effective value chain management. It therefore means that a resource-rich country will be vertically advantaged by virtue of easy resource-extraction link in its value chain processes (Baylis et al., 20917). The ultimate outcome is a more vibrant system of moving and sharing goods and services within the country's borders. However, in international trade, the concept of horizontal comparative advantage, as implied in Ricardo's theory, cannot be ignored since a country enjoying advantage of knowledge-generation, natural resources, capital, and labour will obviously be in a better trading position in the international arena compared to their peers which do not enjoy similar advantages. This study will therefore use comparative advantage theory to assess the influence of interstate trade practices on Rwanda's international relations in the East African Community.

Empirical Review

Regional Non-Tariff Policy and International Relations in the East African Community

The East African Community has the overriding objective of nurturing trade relationship between its member countries by creating an environment for free trade in a larger market than that of any individual member country. In order to actualize this goal, the EAC is expected to implement tariff and non-tariff policy initiatives that are agreeable to all the 7 member partners. However, different tariff and non-tariff related factors inform the success or failures of the EAC partnerships. In a study by Kimeu (2020) to understand the challenges of regional integration in the East African Community (2000-2019), it was established since the initiation of the EAC by its three founder member states of Tanzania, Kenya and Uganda in 2000, the regional integration has significantly contributed to acceleration of economic growth and development not only in the East African region, but in the whole continent.

A non-tariff barrier refers to any measure or step, other than a customs tariff, which may hinder effective running of international trade (Cassim et al, 2015). These could be regulations which can dictate how a product can be produced, shipped, or advertised, or rules which define and demand proof of country of origin of goods. Some of the common examples of non-tariff barriers include licenses, quotas, trade embargoes, foreign exchange sanctions, and import deposits or levies which all tend to slow down the business processes (Arvis et al, 2016). One objectives of the EAC regional bloc is to ensure that non-tariff barriers of trade are removed as much as possible to enable free improvement of goods within the member states. Yet, the extent this provision is being implemented is not consistently sustainable (USAID, 2022). While regulations are used to dictate manufacturing, handling, or advertisement of products, rules of origin demand proof of the country in which the goods were produced. Quotas tend to limit the amount of a given product that can be allowed to be sold in a market (Arvis et al, 2016). While their different trade barriers that impede business growth and development of a country or countries within a trading bloc, non-tariff barriers are thought to be more restrictive to international trade than the normal tariffs.

According to the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), non-tariff barriers contribute more than double as much as normal tariffs to the overall restrictions to market access in many economies across the world. In the East African Community region, removal of non-tariff barriers has not been very successful (UNCTAD, 2018). The UNCTAD classifies non-tariff barriers into 16 types, cutting across different sectors of the economy. Although these may not be applicable to every economy at any given time, according to the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) any of these barriers has the potential to affect trade practices and processes of any country (USAID, 2022). For instance, technical barriers to trade tend to place regulations on the content and manufacturing process of products, while contingent trade-protective measures entail polices that regulate importation of certain products in the name of protecting the market against dumping.

An effective trading environment is realized when external trade and internal free trade policy guidelines are implemented to create change from a high to a low-cost production change in all the partner states within the EAC regional bloc. Other spillover benefits for the regional economic bloc include reduced financial market uncertainties, a situation which provides confidence to external investors, thereby expanding business and increasing profits for both small and large private and government trading companies. According to Ehrich and Axel (2018), enhanced regional unity could improve political and economic environment in among the member states in general. In particular, this scenario has the potential to improve security, governance, democratic space, and human rights situation (Duval et al, 2016). Eventually, a more favorable level of trade and economic development could be realized across all the member countries. Yet, the imposition of tariffs makes consumer and capital goods more expensive, thereby reducing the purchasing power of the country's consumers and businesses. The situation also creates business uncertainty as demand s reduced as a result of increased prices.

According to the USAID (2022), trade and investment in the EAC region face a number of non-tariff barriers which impede economic integration and market expansion. Poor infrastructure, insufficient power supply, and lack of a common currency are just some of these challenges in the region. Despite the need for the countries in the region to enhance their partnership in order to tackle these barriers through concerted efforts, different key players in international trade are yet to find a common ground for executing this intention. According to Cassim et al (2015), favorable tariff and non-tariff policies in the EAC will stimulate economic growth in the region and beyond, thereby reducing migration to the west in search of better economic opportunities. Although tariffs benefit the importing countries in form of tax revenues, ironically, the high prices imposed on imported goods end up hurting the local consumers (Defraigne, 2016). Rwanda, like a number of the EAC partner states, experiences such non-tariff barriers as slow customs services, processing of certificate of conformity from national bureau of standards, and obtaining of an import standards mark, among others (USAID, 2022). The net effect is slowed pace in business transactions and eventual high cost of conducting businesses at all levels.

The involvement of the EAC member states in other regional organizations has been viewed as one of the main impediments to effective partnership. Overlapping memberships of the EAC countries in the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), the Intergovernmental Authority on Drought and Development (IGAD), and the Southern Africa Development Cooperation (SADC)sometimes tends to erode the central role of the East African Community in consolidating interstate trade within the member countries in the region (Ehrich &Axel, 2018), The small economies of most of the countries in the region, when viewed in isolation, are not capable to sustain their respective countries in dual or multiple memberships. At the same time, multiple memberships tend to cause competition and fragmented international relations and trade laws which do not necessarily serve all the partner countries (UNECA, 2015). For instance, South Sudan which is not yet a member of the World Trade Organization (WTO) may not enjoy the same benefits like the rest of the EAC member states (USAID, 2022). The situation can also lead to acting at cross-purposes by some of the EAC partners.

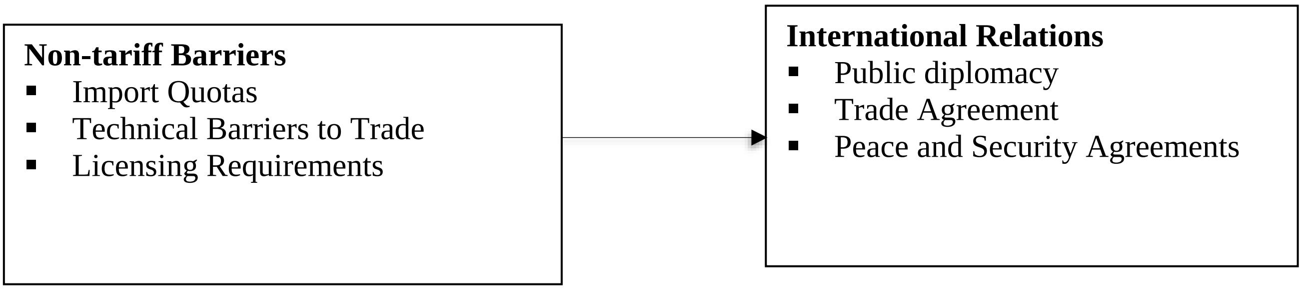
In a 2014 World Bank report on trade and development, Rwanda was classified as among the countries experiencing steady and continuous economic growth in the East African region due to stable social indicators (World Bank, 2016). This is contrary to countries such as Burundi and South Sudan whose economic trajectories have over the years been affected by political crises. Despite the undertaking by the EAC countries to establish a monetary union by 2024, given that up to now all the EAC member countries apply internal tax regimes which are yet to be harmonized, achieving a common currency for the countries may not be achieved anytime soon. Notably, each of EAC member countries determines their own rate of excise duties to be levied on a number of locally produced products.

International Relations

International relations is the study of the relationships and interactions between states, international organizations, and other global actors in the international system. It encompasses a wide range of topics, including diplomacy, international security, global governance, international law, and international political economy. The study of international relations seeks to understand the ways in which global actors interact with one another, and the impact of these interactions on global politics, economics, and society. It also explores the ways in which international relations have evolved over time, and the factors that have shaped the international system (Afman & Maurel, 2010).

International relations is an interdisciplinary field, drawing on insights from political science, history, economics, sociology, and other social sciences. It is an important area of study for understanding global challenges, such as conflict, terrorism, climate change, and economic inequality, and for developing effective strategies to address these challenges. Overall, the study of international relations plays a crucial role in shaping global policy, as well as in promoting peace, security, and cooperation among nations. It is a dynamic and constantly evolving field, reflecting the changing nature of global politics and the challenges facing the international community (Aggarwal, & Ranganathan, 2019).

Conceptual Framework



Independent Variable **Dependent Variable**

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

METHODOLOGY

The study used descriptive research design to achieve its objectives. The target population for this study constituted 184 officials of Rwanda's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation who were accessed through Rwanda's Embassy in Kenya. Sampling was undertaken using stratified random sampling technique where research participants were proportionately selected from different categories or departments in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to allow incorporation of different views into the study. The sample size was 126 respondents. The research utilized a structured questionnaire for collection of primary data. After data collection, completed questionnaires also become easier to organize, code, and analyze data, thereby proving to be time saving. With a questionnaire, it is also easier for a researcher to allow the respondents to administer the tool on their own so that the researcher can later pick completed copies for processing and analysis (Flick, 2017). In this case, the questionnaire was designed to comprise of both close and open-ended questions so that a rich quantitative and qualitative data was obtained from the respondents. In the process, data generated from pilot study was entered into SPSS computer software and thereafter Cronbach's alpha generated to help in testing internal consistency of the questionnaire. Descriptive and inferential statistics were analyzed using SPSS computer software and excel worksheets and documented using tables and charts. Processing of qualitative data involved the researcher going through texts severally and keenly to determine emerging patterns and themes based on the specific objectives of the study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Descriptive Analysis of Influence of Interstate Trade Practices

Non-Tariff Barriers and Rwanda's International Relations in EAC

The objective of the study was to determine the effect of non-tariff barriers on Rwanda's international relations in the East African community. On whether non-tariff barriers had any effect on Rwanda's international relations in the East African community, the responses were as captured in figure 2.

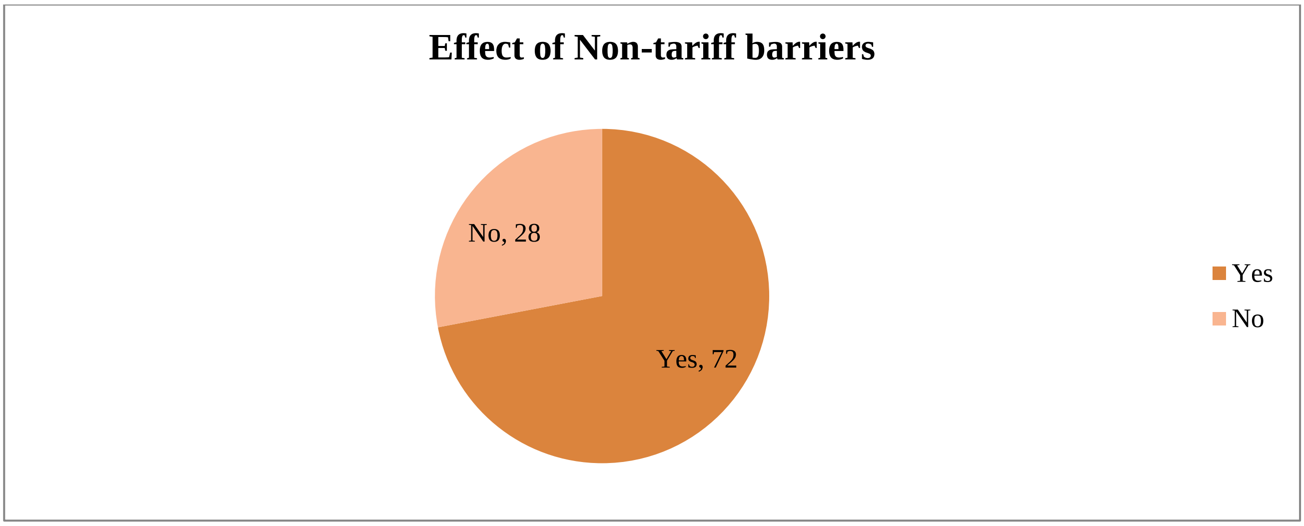


Figure 2: Effect of Non-Tariff Barriers on Rwanda's International Relations

As noted in figure 2, 58% (66) and 42% (47) of the respondents answered yes and no, respectively regarding whether non-tariff barriers had any effect on Rwanda's international relations in the East African community. The respondents were further asked about the extent to which Rwanda applied on-tariff barriers that influenced its international relations in the East African Community, where the responses were summarized in figure 3.

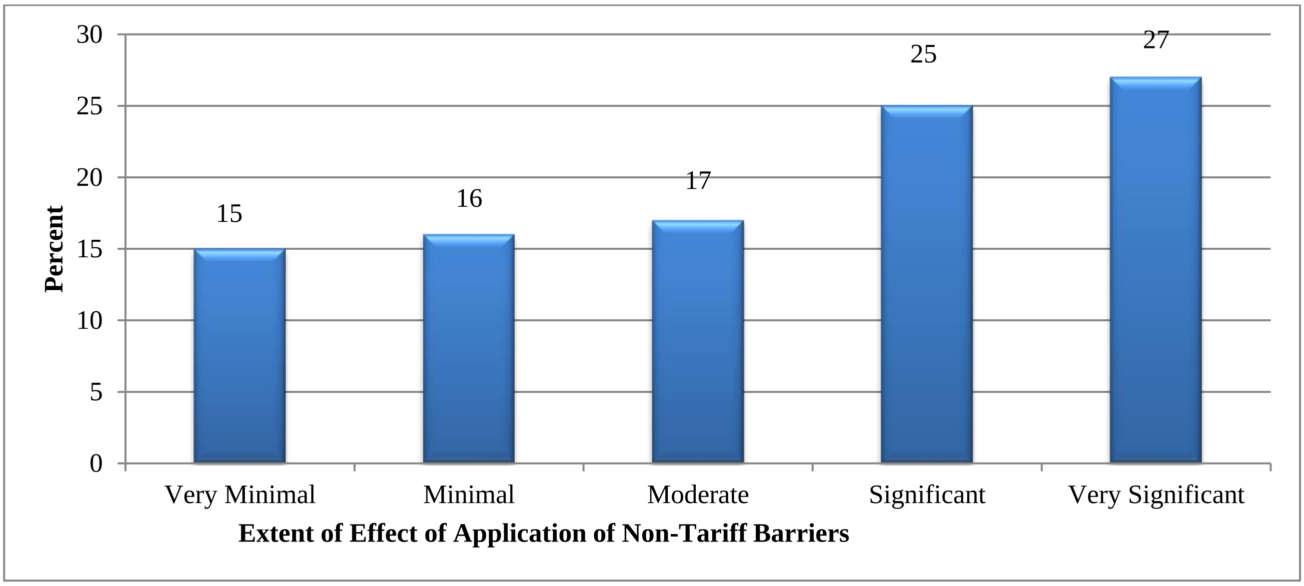


Figure 3: Extent of Effect of Application of Non-Tariff Barriers

As demonstrated in figure 3, based on a 5-points Likert scale, 15% (17), 16% (18), 17% (19), 25% (28), and 28% (31) of the respondents opined that the effect of Rwanda's application of non-tariff barriers on its international relations in the EAC was to a very minimal, minimal, moderate, significant, and very significant extent, respectively. Overall, majority of the respondents had the opinion that application of non-tariff barriers significantly influenced Rwanda's international relations in the East African Community.

Aspects of Non-Tariff Barriers

The respondents were further, requested to indicate the extent to which Non-Tariff Barriers influence Rwanda's International Relations in EAC. A five point Likert scale was used where 1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=neutral, 4=agree and 5=strongly agree. The study results were as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Aspects of Non-Tariff Barriers

Statement	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Non-tariff barriers (NTBs) are important for protecting domestic industries from unfair competition from foreign countries.	113	3.955	0.672
Non-tariff barriers can hinder international trade and limit economic growth and development.	113	3.855	0.839
Rwanda regulates and monitors non-tariff barriers to ensure that they are not used as a tool for protectionism or discrimination against foreign companies	113	3.842	0.898
Non-tariff barriers can be a legitimate tool for protecting public health and safety, but they should be used in a transparent and non-discriminatory manner.	113	3.815	0.612
Non-tariff barriers can be used to limit the access of foreign companies to domestic markets and protect the interests of domestic producers	113	3.758	0.969
Rwanda has put efforts to reduce non-tariff barriers and promote free and fair trade between countries to boost economic growth and development.	113	3.723	0.732
Non-tariff barriers can create unnecessary bureaucratic hurdles and increase the cost of doing business for companies operating in different countries	113	3.961	0.952
Rwanda uses import quotas to limit importation of certain products	113	3.873	0.821
Import Quotas are used to restrict competition and rise prices for consumers	113	3.729	0.921
technical regulations make it difficult for foreign companies to operate in Rwanda	113	3.732	0.856
Price controls put in place are effective	113	3.845	0.943
Aggregate		**3.826**	**0.838**

From the table 1. above, the respondents agreed that non-tariff barriers (NTBs) are important for protecting domestic industries from unfair competition from foreign countries. This is supported by a mean of 3.955 (std. dv=0.172). In addition, the respondents agreed that non-tariff barriers can hinder international trade and limit economic growth and development (*M*=3.855, *SD*=0.839). Further, the respondents agreed that Rwanda regulates and monitors non-tariff barriers to ensure that they are not used as a tool for protectionism or discrimination against foreign companies (*M*=3.842, *SD*=0.898).

From the results, the respondents agreed that non-tariff barriers can be a legitimate tool for protecting public health and safety, but they should be used in a transparent and non-discriminatory manner. This is supported by a mean of 3.815 (std. dv=0.112). The respondents also agreed that non-tariff barriers can be used to limit the access of foreign companies to domestic markets and protect the interests of domestic producers (*M*=3.758, *SD*=0.969). In addition, the respondents agreed that Rwanda has put efforts to reduce non-tariff barriers and promote free and fair trade between countries to boost economic growth and development (*M*=3.723, *SD*=0.732). Further, the respondents agreed that non-tariff barriers can create unnecessary bureaucratic hurdles and increase the cost of doing business for companies operating in different countries (M=3.961, SD=0.952). Cassim et al (2015) noted that non-tariff barriers are regulations which dictate how a product can be produced, shipped, or advertised, or rules which define and demand proof of country of origin of goods. Some of the common examples of non-tariff barriers include licenses, quotas, trade embargoes, foreign exchange sanctions, and import deposits or levies which all tend to slow down the business processes (Arvis et al, 2016).

As shown in table 1, the respondents agreed that Rwanda uses import quotas to limit importation of certain products. This is supported by a mean of 3.873 (std. dv=0.821). Further, the respondents agreed that import Quotas are used to restrict competition and rise prices for consumers (M=3.729, SD=0.921). The respondents also agreed that technical regulations make it difficult for foreign companies to operate in Rwanda. This is supported by a mean of 3.732 (std. dv=0.856). The respondents agreed that price controls put in place are effective (M=3.845, SD=0.943).

Despite varied views regarding the effect of non-tariff barriers on Rwanda's international relations in the EAC, they generally have a negative effect on innovation, streamlined production, and competitiveness in a business. At the same time, non-tariff barriers limit selection of goods and affect quality and pricing of goods, thus slowing down business in general. Non-tariff barriers have also often been associated with trade wars. Notably, this type of barriers may increase the cost of doing business through bureaucratic customs related procedures. However, partner countries can institute similar policies to protect their business industries. As noted in the current study, non-tariff barriers have a significant influence on international relations for the member countries in the EAC. In order to actualize this goal, the EAC is expected to implement tariff and non-tariff policy initiatives that are agreeable to all the 7 member partners. Different tariff and non-tariff related factors inform the success or failures of the EAC partnerships, as also demonstrated in a study by Kimeu (2020).

Some countries use price-control measures to impose taxes, other than tariffs, that influence the pricing of imports and ensure that prices for imported goods are not cheaper than locally produced commodities (Carballo et al, 2016). All these restrictions are part of the strategies that are sometimes used to guard against importation of goods from other countries without being restrictions. Within the EAC operations, it is expected that goods imported from the member countries are not treated any differently from those produced in an importing country (Duval *et al*, 2016). However, it may not be possible for a country to freely allow goods from other countries without any sanctions when similar commodities are produced within. In a 2014 World Bank report on trade and development, Rwanda was classified as among the countries experiencing steady and continuous economic growth in the East African region due to stable social indicators (World Bank, 2016). This view was reflected in the current study which showed that non-tariff barriers have an influence on international relations of Rwanda as one of the interstate practices.

CONCLUSIONS

This study concluded that Non-tariff barriers have a positive and significant effect on Rwanda's International Relations in East African Community. The study established that Non-tariff barriers (import Quotas, technical Barriers to Trade and licensing Requirements) influence Rwanda's international relations in the East African Community. While Non-tariff barriers do not generate direct revenue like tariffs, they can bring several economic benefits to a country: For instance; When Non-tariff barriers are used to ensure the safety, quality, and standards of imported products, can protect consumers from potentially harmful or substandard goods. This enhances consumer confidence and well-being. In addition, by imposing certain non-tariff measures, countries can ensure fair competition between domestic industries and foreign imports. This can promote the growth of local industries and provide more opportunities for domestic businesses to thrive.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It was worth noting that non-tariff barriers (NTBs) are generally considered to hinder trade and economic integration. However, considering the potential positive effects that NTBs may have on Rwanda's international relations within the East African Community (EAC), this study recommends that the Government of Rwanda should encourage the harmonization and standardization of non-tariff measures within the EAC. By establishing common regulations, standards, and conformity assessment procedures, the negative impact of NTBs can be minimized. This will facilitate trade, reduce trade costs, and enhance market access for businesses within the region.

Recommendations for Further Research

The study found that 81.8% changes in Rwanda's international relations in the East African Community was explained by interstate trade practices, which included non-tariff barriers as the predictor variable for this study. These statistics further implied that further to this study's independent variable, there were other factors outside the scope of this research that explained or influenced Rwanda's international relations in the East African Community, accounting for 18.2%. This study therefore recommended further research on the other factors affecting Rwanda's international relations in the East African Community.

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