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OPERATIONALISING THE ECOWAS PROTOCOL ON FREE MOVEMENT: INFERENCE FOR FREIGHT AND LOGISTICS COMPANIES

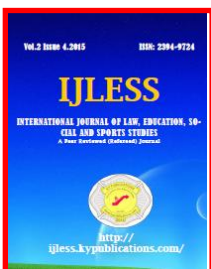
RESEARCH ARTICLE

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ABSTRACT

The rationale of this study is examining the implication for freight and logistics companies in the operationalisation of the ECOWAS Protocol on free movement of goods and persons and creates awareness and interest in the provisions of ECOWAS Protocol to freight and logistics companies. The research design is quantitative and both primary and secondary data were used in achieving the objectives of the study. Questionnaire (both close and open ended questions) was the main tool for data gathering. The study revealed that the workers of Western Freight and Logistics have better understanding of the ECOWAS protocol on free movement of people and products especially as it relates to community citizens' right to enter, reside and establish in the territory of member states. It was also established that the company takes advantage of the provisions in the ECOWAS protocol through undertaking sub-regional operations as and when necessary and as a result they are benefiting from the ECOWAS Protocol. It was as well discovered that the erection of several border checks and toll booth, the existence of different official languages at border posts, poor infrastructure in some countries in the sub-region among others are challenges the company faces in operationalising the ECOWAS protocol in the sub- region. The researchers recommend that Western Freight and Logistics Company should liaise with transport companies in other countries in the sub-region where its operations are needed to reduce its transportation cost and should modify its employment policy modalities to give opportunities to those who are bilingual or multi-lingual to neutralise the effect of the language barriers. For the sub-regional leaders ECOWAS needs to enforce the usage of the ECOWAS travellers' cheques to harmonise the sub-region's monetary policy. ECOWAS should also implement the proposed coastal rail route that links Accra, Lome, Cotonou and Lagos and the Sahelian rail route that links Lagos to Niamey and Ouagadougou to facilitate the movement of goods and people.

Keywords: Operationalisation, ECOWAS Protocol, Free Movement, Freight and Logistics, Ghana

1. INTRODUCTION

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) is a regional group of fifteen West African countries. Formed on 1975 with the signing of the Treaty of Lagos with the mission to promote economic integration across the region

that is to encourage, foster and accelerate the economic and social development of member states towards improving their standards of lives (ECOWAS Treaty, 1975). The founding countries in this economic bloc comprised Ghana, Benin, Nigeria, Cape Verde, Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire, Guinea Bissau, The Gambia, Guinea, Mali, Liberia, Mauritania, Niger, Togo, Senegal and Sierra Leone. According to Agyei and Clottey, (2008) the founding members understood that self-reliance among members could be better fostered through the promotion of harmonious but effective economic integration or co-operation that promotes the free movement of persons, goods and services. In 1976, the Island Nation of Cape Verde joined ECOWAS as its sixteenth member and Mauritania left the organisation in 2002.

The objective of promoting free movement of persons, goods and services received a major boost through the enactment of the ECOWAS Protocol in 1979 where the first phase guaranteed the free entry of Member states' citizens without visa for a period of ninety days and the second phase guaranteed the right to residence. The first and second phases were ratified in 1980 and 1986 respectively (Agyei & Clottey, 2008) and the protocol relating to the third phase, that is, the right of establishment ratified in 1990 (Alipui, 2011). That is a protocol accorded citizens of ECOWAS the right to set up or have access to enterprises in other member states without discrimination (Alipui, 2011). Adepoju (2012) posited that the free movement of people without visa represents a major achievement in the economic bloc, along with other achievements in monetary policy, trade, communication and related matters. The achievements in the latter categories were particularly accentuated through the introduction of the "ECOWAS travellers' cheques to harmonise the sub-region's monetary policy; the proposed adoption of a common currency to facilitate cross-border trade transactions and, along with it, the introduction of Brown Card travel certificates as ECOWAS passports" (Adepoju, 2012). At the Abuja summit, head of states and governments reaffirmed the free movement of goods and persons across the borders of member states beginning from April 2000. The free movement of goods was designed to go along with the harmonised custom duties across the sub-region. As a matter of fact, Adepoju (2012) observed that an immediate effect of the efforts to create borderless economic bloc was that goods from member countries no longer attracted tariffs while those from non-ECOWAS countries attracted 0.05% of the total value of product.

The summit in Abuja led to other far-reaching resolutions, prominent among was the dismantling of all check points on international highways within the ECOWAS bloc and rather using few essential agents (i.e., customs and immigration officials) where absolutely necessary, modernising border procedures and removing rigid border formalities' of member states (ECOWAS 2000a). The other development within the preview of the protocol was the harmonisation of shipping laws to promote the liberalisation of maritime services, establishment of free trade zone and as stated earlier, application of zero per cent duty rate on approved industrial goods or products and traditional handicrafts (ECOWAS, 2000b). Ideally these developments present huge opportunity for logistics and freight forwarding companies in the sub-region, especially considering that most hindrances to the free and rapid movement of goods and personnel have been removed.

However, Adepoju (2012) postulated that ECOWAS faces numerous obstacles in the forms of weak political support and rivalry along language lines (Francophone versus Anglophone), poor funding by member states and the non-ratification and non-implementation of protocols. The non-convertibility of currencies has also hindered financial settlements and the harmonisation of macro-economic policies and procedures. The multiplicity of the regional economic groupings has constrained effective integration in the sub-region among others. The dual membership of states in economic groupings mentioned Adepoju have conflicting objectives exacerbates the difficulties faced by countries in meeting financial obligations – especially as the economic crisis deepens. This is as well mirrored in the failure by member states to implement the protocols (Ojo, 1999). A lack of political will, political instability and inter-state border disputes and wars, and the reluctance of countries to surrender national sovereignty to a sub-regional organ, render the economic groupings a toothless lion (Adepoju, 2012). There is also suspicion which sometimes led to xenophobic sentiments against non-nationals, especially when that country experiences economic downturn, with its attendant increasing unemployment and political instability.

Besides comparing trading activities with other economic blocs, ECOWAS intra-regional trading activities is awful and it is estimated at a low fraction of 11% of the total or cumulative trade volumes of countries in the sub-region (Agyei &

Clottey, 2008; Adepoju, 2007). Adepoju (2012) nevertheless considers this 11% figure as understated considering that most of the sub-regional intra-border trades are informal and hence largely goes unrecorded. It is therefore obvious that slow implementation of the ECOWAS protocols has led to a situation where most of the sub-regional economic activities are largely underreported, unreported or informal as a result of daunting challenges that invariably affect the movement of freight or logistics in the sub-region. As to the reasons why a bulk number of the trades happen at the blind side of the authorities, Adepoju (2012) inferred that people usually try to avoid delays associated with customs clearance and the pervasive roadblocks across frontiers in the sub-region. These road blocks have lengthy, costly and time wasting formalities which are largely overseen by corrupt officials. These delays have been entrenched despite the ECOWAS protocol being very clear on issues relating to trade promotion, elimination or harmonisation of tariff, maritime and other barriers among/between member states through, among others, the establishment of a common customs union (ECOWAS, 1999). This showcases that freight forwarding and logistics companies have a range of impediments in moving goods or products across borders which might explain the small size of these organisations and their inability to grow beyond their national borders, despite the huge prospects for growth that these companies can enjoy per the various protocols. This is a confirmation from Berrada and Ciro (2009) cited De Castro (1993) that African continent is the least developed in terms of logistics capabilities and are poorly unreliable, insufficient liability, high cost, and organization of the road transport industry (which in Africa handles an average of 85 percent of freight) is a deterrent to trade; lack of coherent policies within the national transport markets have been a severe disincentive to freight transport security and jeopardize regional trade capabilities. Freight forwarders and logistics companies face these challenges due to the sluggish pace of trade liberalisation in West Africa, uncoordinated economic reform programmes, the establishment of a free regional zones that have remained on the drawing board for years, corruption etc. Another critical issue according to Manners-Bell (2015) is the extent of bureaucracy and delays. Citing an African Development Bank report, it was found out that the average customs transaction involves 30-40 different parties, 40 documents, 200 individual pieces of data (30 of which are repeated at least 30 times) and the re-keying of 60-70% of data at least once. This is not only an issue on the importing side of the border - there are controls to go through on the exporting side too, doubling the bureaucracy. Waiting time for a truck at a border crossing can be anything up to three days. It has been estimated that customs clearance adds about \$185 for each day delayed to the cost of a consignment. It is for this reason that many shippers prefer to bribe customs officials in order to shortcut the process. Of course, there has to be willingness on both sides of this transaction (ibid). The questions then are; how do freight forwarding or logistics companies take advantage of the huge market the sub-region presents and how do they maximise the opportunities presented while minimising the challenges presented? Though the ECOWAS protocol holds big prospects to freight forwarding and logistics companies, these challenges make the implementation of its ideals problematic.

It's therefore the desire of the researchers to examine the perceptive of freight and logistics companies on the ECOWAS protocol on free movement of goods and person within the West African sub-region. Assess the extent to which freight and logistics companies have taken advantage of the ECOWAS protocol on free movement of goods and persons. Then establish the challenges freight and logistics companies face in their bid to operationalise the ECOWAS Protocol on free movement of goods and persons to facilitate trade promotion and the organisational growth using a Ghanaian freight forwarding company that operates in the sub-region as a case study.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Historical Antecedents to the ECOWAS Protocol

Before colonialist divided West African into splinter countries, the region was thought of by its inhabitants' migrants as one economic unit where people and goods moved from one place to the other without restrictions (Addo, 1975). A classical case here is the migration of large swath of people from Nigeria, Togo and Mali to the present-day Ghana without any restrictions. It was on this note that Adepoju (2005) argued that it was difficult to distinguish between internal and external migration, intra and inter border commerce in the pre-colonial period. However, this changed during the scramble for Africa by the colonialist where the continent was divided among colonial powers without regard for tribal realities or loosely regarded demarcations by the indigenes. This wanton demarcation of the region led to several tribes

distributed among different countries in West Africa. Immediate examples of these include the Ewes who are divided between Ghana and Togo, the Hausa who span Niger, Nigeria and Mali, the Nzema and Bono who occupy both Ghana and Cote D'Ivoire, the Mende who live in both Liberia and Sierra Leone, the Yuroba who find themselves in both Nigeria and Benin among several others. These make classification of internal and external emigration difficult in the case of West Africa because tribes who are so divided continue to keep their kinship ties despite the artificial boundaries (Adepoju, 1998 and Twum-Baah, et. al., 1995).

It was therefore apparent that the border lines did little to restrict the movement of people, goods and services in the post-colonial era. Twum-Baah, Nabila and Aryee (1995) however noted that this was soon to change as restrictions on the movement of people and goods across borders become critical policy objectives pursued by various countries to protect their economic and political interests. In Ghana, for instance, the Aliens compliance order (Act160) was enacted in 1969 to prohibit Ghanaians from engaging foreigners to work, except if they are granted a licence signed by the sector Minister. It is this and other legislations that represent initial attempts to draw a clear distinction between internal and international migration (Agyei & Clottey, 2008). These legislations that attempt to clearly demarcate West African counties borders have been pursued to some extent by various countries. At the worst, the legislations led to the expulsion or the deportations of non-nationals who were blamed by the host politicians as the cause of the countries' economic problems. Thus far, Adepoju (2005) has listed nine ECOWAS members who have undertaken mass deportations of non-nationals. These include "Sierra Leone (1968); Coted' Ivoire (1958, 1964, 1999); Ghana (1969); Equatorial Guinea (1974); Senegal (1967, 1990); Guinea (1968); Nigeria (1983, 1985) Liberia (1983) and Benin (1998)".

When ECOWAS was formed in 1975, its cardinal objective was to encourage and accelerate the social and economic development of member states towards the general improvement of the sub-region's living standards (ECOWAS Treaty, 1975). Towards achieving the economic integration aspect of the objectives for the organization, the protocol was signed in 1979 to ensure the free movement of persons, goods and services as well as the right of residence. Phase one of the protocol, which guaranteed the free entry of member states' citizens without visa for a period of ninety days, was ratified in 1980 by all member states (Agyei & Clottey, 2008).

2.2 ECOWAS Protocol on Free Movement of Goods and Persons

As earlier established, the ECOWAS protocol was mainly established to ensure the free movement of people, goods and services within the West African Sub-Region. With its coming into operations, visa and other entry requirements to citizens from member states were abolished. Citizens were merely required to have minimum requirements, including an international health certificate and valid traveling documents to travel from one country to the other for three months. The protocol has a key objective of ensuring economic integration, as evidenced by Article 27 which encourages member countries to gradually remove trade barriers to ensure the free flow of persons, goods, services and capital (Paragraph 1 of Article 27). Agyei and Clottey (2008) surmised that the coming into force of the ECOWAS protocol enjoined member states to "stop demanding visa and residence permits, and allow West Africans to work and undertake commercial and industrial activities within their territories, hence re-creation a borderless West Africa which is in consonance with the African Charter on Human and People's Rights and the UN's Charter on Human and People's Rights (p 11). Agyei and Clottey (2008) cited some of the key provisions in the protocol as follows:

- i. The Community citizens have the right to enter, reside and establish in the territory of Member States.
- ii. The right of entry, residence and establishment is to be progressively established in the course of a maximum transitional period of fifteen (15) years from the definitive entry into force of this Protocol by abolishing all other obstacles to free movement of persons and the right of residence and establishment.
- iii. The right of entry, residence and establishment which shall be established in the course of a transitional period shall be accomplished in three phases.

This was further operationalised by removing restrictions on commercial and private vehicle entry into members, subject to the possession of a valid ownership card (or log book or matriculation certificate, a valid driving licence, an insurance policy and an international customs documents. Increased movement of people were furthered through the issuance of the ECOWAS 'brown card' (Abdoulahi, 2005). Besides the formation of ECOWAS thus to a certain extent re-created the kind of

pseudo-homogeneous society that had once existed in the sub-region. Hence, the Free Movement of Persons Protocol – the first to be ratified and operationalised – ushered in an era in which the free movement of ECOWAS citizens within member countries was once again possible (Adepoju, 2001).

Agyei and Clotey (2008) as well commented that members of ECOWAS were of the opinion that the integration of the Member States into a viable regional Community may demand the partial and gradual pooling of national sovereignties to the Community within the context of a collective political will. It was understood that the existing bilateral and multilateral forms of economic co-operation within the region open up perspectives for more extensive cooperation. It was also based on the view that the sub-region needed to face together the political, economic and socio-cultural challenges of sustainable improvement in the welfare of their populations; and pooling together of their resources, particularly people will ensure the most rapid and optimum expansion of the sub-region's productive capacity. These constitute the main rationale for re-creating free movement of persons in the sub-region (Agyei & Clotey, 2008)

According to Alipui (2011) in order to facilitate the movement of persons transported in private or commercial vehicles the following shall apply:

A private vehicle registered in a member state may enter another member state and remain there for 90 days upon presentation of the following documents to the competent authority of that Member State:

- Valid driving license
- Matriculation Certificate (Ownership Card) or Log Book.
- Insurance Policy recognised by Member States
- International customs documents recognised within the Community.

A commercial vehicle registered in a member state and carrying passengers may enter another member state and remain there for 15 days upon presentation of the following documents to the competent authority of that Member State:

- Valid driving license
- Matriculation Certificate (Ownership Card) or Log Book.
- Insurance Policy recognized by Member States
- International customs documents recognized within the Community

In sum on this section the study attempts to examine the perceive or the understanding of the respondents on ECOWAS protocol on free movement of goods and person.

2.3 Advantages of Free Movement of Goods

Establishing a common market can only materialize if only and if free movement of good within the borders of Members States is implemented. Free movement of goods is an essential element of a common market because without it the concept of common market is lost. The main essence of free movement of goods is to promote intra-trade among the West African States because each Member State is obliged to open up its market so that goods can move in without any obstacles. The treaty that established ECOWAS is explicit on trade promotion, the elimination of tariff and other barriers between Member States, and the establishment of a customs union (ECOWAS, 1999). To ensure free movement of goods and services, the following ECOWAS Treaties were enacted to ensure this objective: The Community shall by stages ensure:

- a) Elimination as between Member States of customs duties and other charges of equivalent effect in respect of import of goods;
- b) Abolition of quantitative and administrative restrictions on trade among Member States;
- c) Establishment of a common customs tariff and a common commercial policy towards third countries;
- d) Abolition as between the Member States of obstacles to the free movement of goods, persons, services and capital.

The advantages from free movement of goods to freight and logistics companies come in many forms particularly its allows the creation of a level playing field, hence smooth the progress of a more open market and fairer competition. The other merit from the protocol is not limited to the purging of tariffs and quantitative restrictions in trade but at the moment extends to a common set of rules on products and safety standards, on production methods that create a truly level playing field and institute consistent consumer standards. Besides, the protocol to allow the free movement of goods

within the ECOWAS Member State is unique in that the legal framework allows individuals and businesses to enforce their rights themselves in a much more competent manner than would be available in a traditional free trade area. Another advantage from free movement of goods and persons per the protocol could be seen from the fact that ECOWAS community will enjoy transparent pricing, more consumer choice at the better quality, more potential consumers for businesses and mutual recognition - harmonised standards.

Though the ECOWAS Treaty is explicit on the free movement of goods, trade within Member States remains an abysmally low. According to Adepoju (2012) only 11 per cent of the total volume of trade is from ECOWAS countries. This poor trade among Member State can largely be attributed to the avoidance of customs and other barriers, especially the ubiquitous roadblocks across frontiers, which involve lengthy and costly formalities at border posts, and are facilitated by the corruption of official. Also uncoordinated economic reform programmes have hampered the implementation of trade liberalization and privatization programmes which could have opened up domestic markets to foreign direct investment. As yet, the establishment of a free trade zone exists largely only on the drawing board.

With the exception of Nigeria and Côte d'Ivoire, most West African countries share similar characteristics (Adepoju, 2005). Largely Member States have small population, small economies, fragmented markets, distorted fiscal and monetary regime, high population growth rates and market size. In addition, most West African countries have low per capita income mentioned Seck (2013) as well as a deteriorating economic performance in most instances. Though most of these countries are not viable economic entities, intra-country trade in the sub-region is very nominal (stagnating at only 11%). Moreover, most of the countries in the sub-region have weak infrastructure, unreliable transport networks. Needless to say, these factors conspire to limit trade, especially for the landlocked nations, who are particularly disadvantaged because they must necessarily transport their produces to coastal harbours for export and import (Adepoju, 2007). It is from this observation of the fragility of the single countries in the region that led Asante (1996) to remark that the integration process includes the West African governments coming to the realization that it is very difficult and almost impossible for individual countries, irrespective of their economic might to single-handedly achieve economic development and independence. It's in their own advantage to come together to overcome the challenges crippling the sub-region economic growth.

Indeed, it is difficult for most West African nations to survive without integrating economically. Asante (1996) therefore stressed that West Africans' established ECOWAS to promote economic emancipation, reinforce their collective economic interest and influence global issues pertaining to them. Asante (1996) however noted that ECOWAS's approach to integration, with an emphasis to trade liberalization has created some complex challenges that undermine their integration. The researcher was convinced that integration should extend beyond lowering tariffs and eliminating trade barriers.

2.4 Challenges Logistics Companies face in Operationalising the ECOWAS Protocol

Freight and Logistics companies face numerous challenges in their quest to use the ECOWAS Protocol on free movement of goods and persons. Mantey (2013) established that the procedures involved in processing travelling documents at border posts by security officials are very cumbersome. This is one of the major challenges confronting the freight and logistics companies when moving goods and services from one state to another within the ECOWAS region. Mantey cited Dr Mohammed Ibn Chambers (former President of the ECOWAS Commission) in an interview noted that the existence of illegal checkpoints and road blocks as some of the impediments obstructing the smooth implementation of free movement of goods and persons.

The ECOWAS Protocol on free movement of goods and persons has not been fully realized because customs, immigration and other security agencies who do not deal with tariff tend to charge illegal fees and sometimes extort money from logistics companies (Chambers, 2012; Mantey, 2013). The operationalisation of the ECOWAS Protocol on free movement is supposed to eliminate the payments of tariff with regards to exports to other ECOWAS States. These obstacles to free movement of goods and services are exigent setbacks that need to be addressed to enhance the integration process in West Africa.

Lawrence, Blanke, Hanouz, and Moavenzadeh (2008) posited that the lack of infrastructure among Member State of ECOWAS easily leads to congestion at the borders during inspection. The inadequate of number of staff and non-

harmonized working hours that are not necessarily business friendly can result in unforeseen delays and add additional handling or storage charges. Obsolete and inadequate information and communications equipment and weak telecommunication links further aggravate the situation and add to the hassles traders have to face on a day-to-day basis. A country's logistics friendliness— that is, the ease of arranging freight operations to and from a particular country—has become a major indicator for stability and for a country's propensity to attract investment. Even the tendency to succumb to illegal payments appears to be linked to these issues, and those countries that have a logistically friendly environment are less likely to encounter large-scale corruption in this sector.

Fuseini-Bart (1988) as well identified some challenges militating against free movement of goods in ECOWAS and observed that they are extremely serious. The study identified that traditionally ECOWAS states are producers of raw materials and this is normally attributed to the nature of the colonial economy handed to them. The primary function of the colonial countries was to produce raw materials to feed the metropolitan economy. Every available resource - land, labour and capital - was devoted to this and every available incentive was made to promote the production of these raw materials. These have resulted in a very little trade between the members state of the ECOWAS. While the exports of the ECOWAS State are destined outside, the imports also originate outside the community. The other problem identified is the competitive imports and the protection of infant industries. Domestic producers tend to suffer when imports are very competitive and cause developing countries to be more cautious from such imports so as to protect domestic industries through imports restrictions. The issue of infant industries protection is a real one to almost all the Member States of ECOWAS. The ECOWAS Treaty addressed the issue of protecting domestic industries by abolishing internal taxation. Also member states are not to apply directly or indirectly to imported products any fiscal charges in excess of those applied to like domestic goods. Though the Treaty provides protection to infant industries in the Member States, it is still not enough. The real issues are that Member State like Ghana still puts import restrictions on clothes from other Member States of the Community so as to protect the Ghana Textile Manufacturing Company. It is better to prevent serious injury to domestic industries in their infant stages than to provide safeguard measures provided by the Treaty.

According to Fuseini-Bart (2008) ECOWAS Treaty on free movement of Member States is to abolish all customs duties on imports and other charges having equivalent effects. However, this part of the Treaty is the one which Member States have paid least attention to. One of the reasons from Fuseini-Bart is because Member States rely heavily on customs duties as a primary and most effective source of internal revenue to deal with budget deficits, hence to remove customs duties on imports will be suicidal to these countries. The study of Fuseini-Bart also identified other problems facing the protocol of free movement of goods and persons: inadequate economic and physical infrastructure, ties that Member States have with former colonial masters, political instability, ideological conflict among others making the operation of the protocol very difficult.

3. Methodology

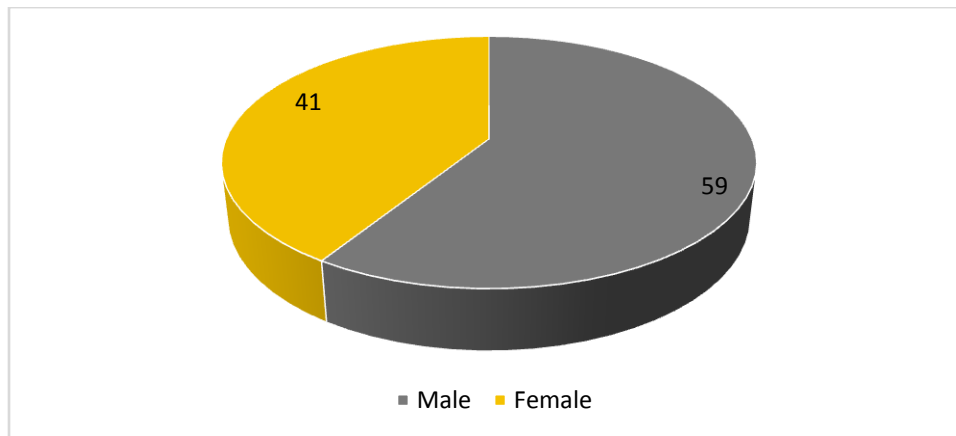
The research design for this study is quantitative. According to Mouton (1996) research design gives directions from the underlying philosophical assumptions to research design, and data collection. This choice was premised on the fact that the study sought respondents' views, opinions or perspectives on the issues under study. The study population comprised all the staff of Western Freight and Logistics Company Limited which has total staff strength of 25. The study used all the 25 staff as the respondents. Though a bigger sample would have been appreciated in this study, this was not possible considering the number of workers in the company and the indisposed nature of the other companies the researchers talked to. However, Ahiadeke (2008) is convinced that though an increase in the size of a sample increases precision of results, this is not always a guarantee that large sample sizes lead to accurate results of the sample. Neuman (2003) as well observed that the results of a well-designed sample will yield results that are equally accurate as trying to reach every single unit in the population and here we are referring to freight and logistics companies. Accordingly, as earlier argued, though the sample size is small, it is considered adequate in meeting the objectives of the study. The study used both primary and secondary data in achieving its objectives. Questionnaire (both close and open ended questions) was the main tool for data gathering. The data was analyzed with the aid of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software.

4. Data Analysis and Discussion

The total numbers of 25 questionnaires were recovered. Four (4) out of the 25 were not usable because they were wrongly filled by the respondents. The findings in the study, conclusion and recommendations are based on the 21 respondents from the Western Freight and Logistics Company. The presentation and analysis of data is presented under four thematic areas. The first theme covers the demographic information of respondents while the second covers respondents' perceptive or understanding of the ECOWAs protocol on free movement of goods and persons. The third section looks at whether the company is taking advantage of the protocol and the last section examines challenges the company faces in operationalising the protocol.

4.1 Demographic Information

Respondents' Gender

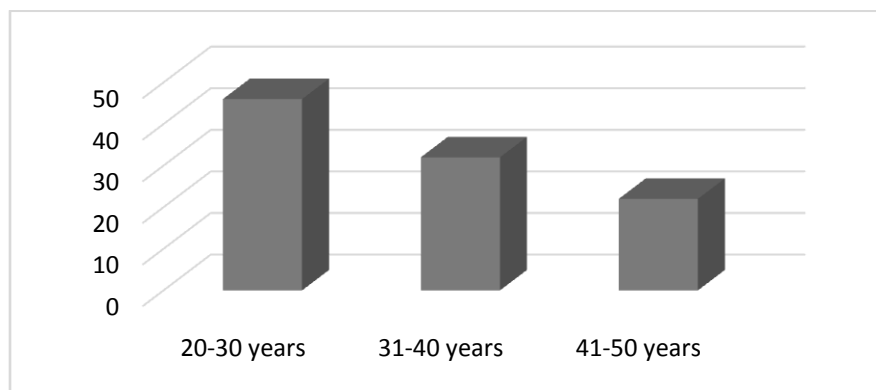


Source: Researchers' Construct, 2016

Figure 4.1: Pie chart showing respondents' gender

With respect to respondents' gender, 59% were males, the females stood at 41%. It's obvious per the data presented that majority of the respondents were males. This goes to confirmed Hall (2013) perception that logistics for some, meant that the workforce is more male dominated.

Respondents' Age

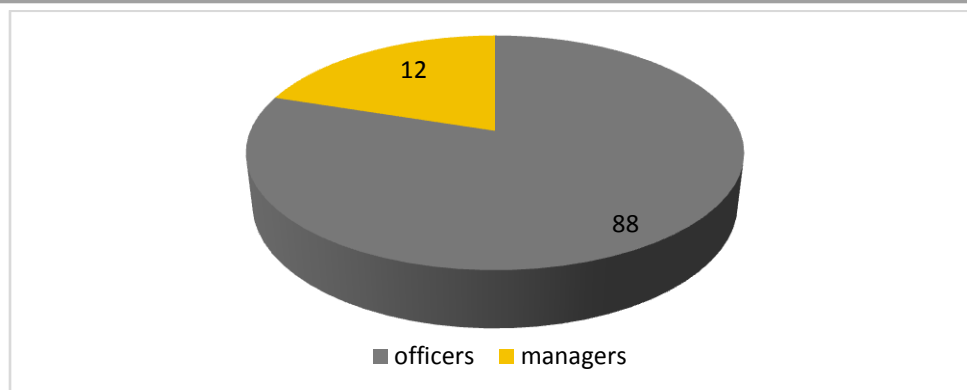


Source: Researchers' Construct, 2016

Figure 4.2: Bar chart showing the respondents' age

On the age of the respondents, from the range of 20-30 years stood 46%, 31-40 year had 32% and 41-50 years got 22%. None of the workers in the company were above 50 years of age. This shows that Western Freight and Logistics Company has a very young workforce which also means the company has massive potentials that can be relied to promote the growth of the company.

Respondents' Position in the Organisation

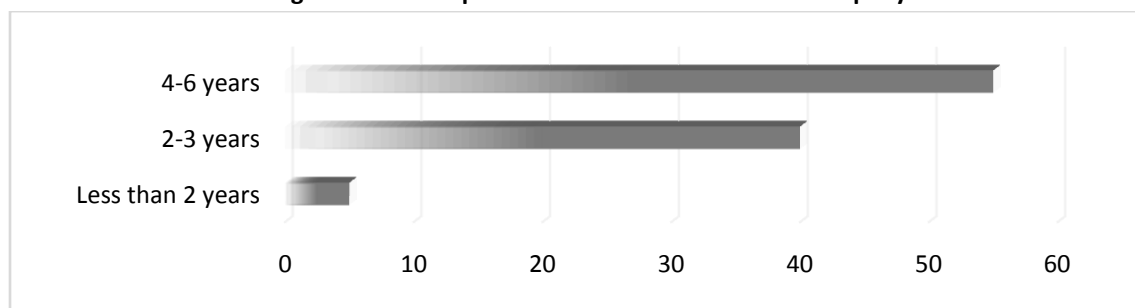


Source: Researchers' Construct, 2016

Figure 4.3: Pie chart showing the positions of the respondents

Concerning the position held by respondents, it became clear that majority were in non-managerial position termed as officers stood 88% and the managers' position had 12%. As detailed in Figure 4.3 above the officers were specifically, finance, export and import, logistics and transport officers. The rest 12% indicated that they were managers. Again, the managers were in charge of various departments in the company, i.e., finance and administration, export and imports, logistics, transport among others.

Length of Time Respondents' Have Worked in the company



Source: Researchers' Construct, 2016

Figure 4.4: Bar chart showing the length of time of respondents' has worked in the company

Figure 4.4 summarises the length of time respondents' have worked with the organisation. The range of 4-6 had 55%, while 40% of the respondents have worked with the company for two to three years. Only 5% have been with the company for less than two years. This shows that employee retention in Western Freight and Logistics Company is very high. Incidentally, majority of the workers have worked with the company since its inception in 2010.

4.2 Perceptive of the ECOWAS Protocol by the Company

This section sought respondents understanding of the ECOWAS protocol on free movement of goods and persons. Thus, using a scale of one to five, with one representing Not Aware; 2-Somewhat Aware; 3-Not Sure; 4-Aware; 5-Highly Aware, respondents were asked to rate their level of awareness of some key provisions in the ECOWAS protocol. Their responses are summarised in Table 4.1 below.

Table 4.1: Respondents Awareness on Provisions in the ECOWAS Protocol

Statement	Somewhat Aware	Aware	Highly Aware
The Community citizens have the right to enter, reside and establish in the territory of Member States	18	54	28
The right of entry, residence and establishment is to be progressively established in the course of a maximum transitional period of fifteen (15) years from the definitive entry into force of this Protocol by abolishing all other obstacles to free movement of persons and the	15	50	35

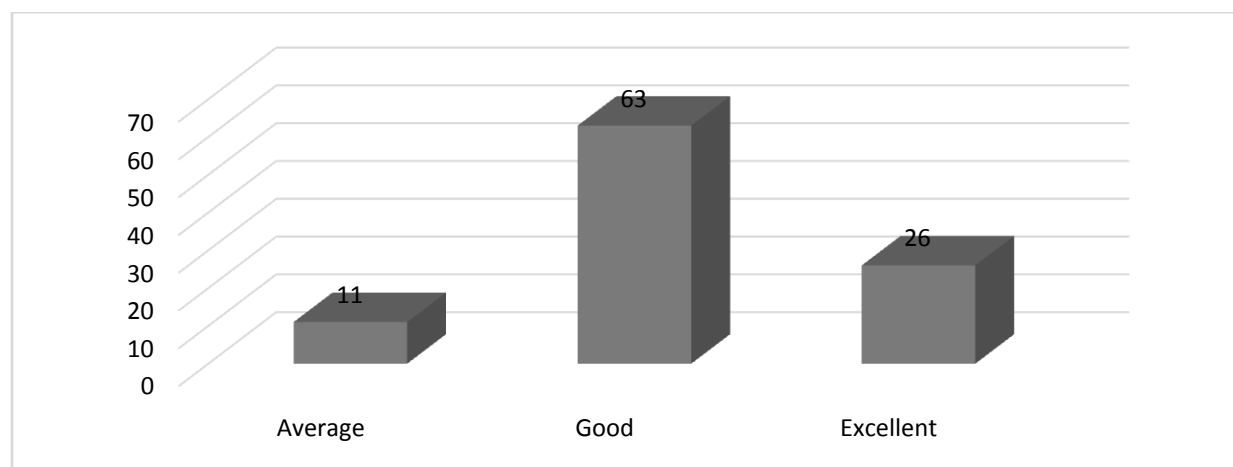
right of residence and establishment.			
The right of entry, residence and establishment which shall be established in the course of a transitional period shall be accomplished in three phases.	21	43	36
Removal of restrictions on commercial and private vehicle entry into members, subject to the possession of a valid ownership card (or log book or matriculation certificate, a valid driving licence, an insurance policy and an international customs documents.	19	48	33

Source: Field Survey, 2016

In all the four provisions cited for respondents' awareness level, it was evident that majority were aware of those key provisions and even ratings connoting negative were not rated. The total level of awareness was 82% on the community citizens' right to enter, reside and establish in the territory of Member States, on the right of entry, residence and establishment that is to be progressively established in the course of a maximum transitional period of fifteen (15) years from the definitive entry into force of this protocol by abolishing all other obstacles to free movement of persons and the right of residence and establishment had 85%. On the level of awareness on right of entry, residence and establishment which shall be established in the course of a transitional period shall be accomplished in three phases stood 79% and finally, on the level of awareness on the removal of restrictions on commercial and private vehicle entry into members states, subject to the possession of a valid ownership card (or log book or matriculation certificate, a valid driving licence, an insurance policy and an international customs documents had 81%. What is apparent here is that an average of 80% of the respondents which is very high majority are aware of the ECOWAS protocol and the various provisions contained therein. This high level of awareness among respondents contradict Razzaque and Willem te Velde (2013) and ETLs Gap Analysis – Nigeria (2010) study that there is lack of awareness from the private sector traders who indicated they had limited, detailed information on ETLs protocols. The finding as well opposes Asante and Sewor (2011) study that about one third of the people they investigated do not know anything about ECOWAS and established that the percentage is rather high when you consider the fact that ECOWAS has been in existence for over 35 years. From the researchers' point of view the reasons for the study company been aware of the ECOWAS Protocol on free movement of goods and persons are that of the location of Western Region which shares a border with Ivory Coast, it's in freight and logistics business and there is also sea port at Sekondi Takoradi where the company is established. This observation is supported by Qualitative Eurobarometer Study – Aggregate Report (2009) from EU that in most countries, members who live closer to a border with another Member State are more knowledgeable about the EU, its role and its influence than those who lived further from a border. We can therefore deduce that the proximity of the company to the border, the activities they are involved contributed to their high level of awareness of the key provisions of the ECOWAS Protocol.

Rating Respondents Knowledge in the ECOWAS Protocol

On the knowledge of the respondents in ECOWAS Protocol, 63% considered their knowledge to be good, 26% said their knowledge level is excellent while 11% indicated that their knowledge level is average. This revealed that about 89% of the respondents have good knowledge in the ECOWAS Protocol on free movement of goods and persons. This also buttress the earlier on finding that they are aware of the ECOWAS Protocol. This finding as well corroborated with Qualitative Eurobarometer Study – Aggregate Report (2009). However a contradiction from Glover (2014) CEO of the Ghana National Bureau of the ECOWAS Brown Card says a dearth of knowledge on ECOWAS Brown Card Scheme among stakeholders like motorists and the general public is inhibiting the free movement of goods and people within the sub-region. From the researchers observation it would have been very strange for the company in freight and logistics to have been revealed as lacking knowledge of the ECOWAS Protocol and also looking at the location of the company in Western Region of Ghana and their proximity to the border.



Source: Researchers' Construct, 2016

Figure 4.5: Bar chart showing respondents knowledge in the ECOWAS Protocol

Understanding of ECOWAS Protocol

To ascertain the responses of the respondents on the understanding of the ECOWAS protocol, the respondents were asked to indicate how exactly they understand the protocol. The common themes that run in their responses have been summarised as follows:

- It's a legislative enactment propounded to enable sub-regional countries trade among themselves without hindrances.
- It is an agreement by ECOWAS leaders to promote free trade.
- The ECOWAS protocol is designed to help people in West Africa stay in another country for a period without visa and also trade in specific sectors without any harassment.
- It's an agreement that is designed to remove trade barriers and enable sub-regional countries trade with themselves with relative ease

This shows that the respondents understand the ECOWAS Protocol. The revelations from awareness to knowledge of the respondents confirmed that the respondents indeed understand the key provisions in the ECOWAS protocol under study. However, the finding is inconsistent with the ETLS Gap Analysis- Mali (2011) and ETLS Gap Analysis – Ghana (2010) which established that traders within the sub-region do not understand the provisions of ECOWAS Protocol. But this finding of understanding from the study is supported from the very two key variables of awareness and knowledge of the key provisions of ECOWAS Protocol exhibited above and if the finding has been in the negative then it would have suggested contradictions of their responses on awareness and knowledge. The observation here is that better part of understanding happens when the knowledge learned is directly applied and therefore the understanding issue suggested that the study company is using the protocol.

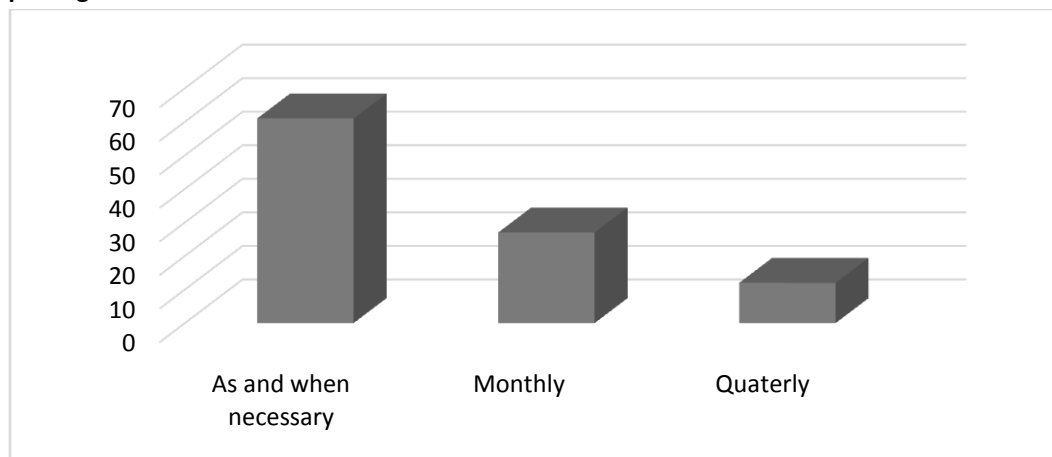
4.3 Taking Advantage of the ECOWAS Protocol on Free Movement of Goods and Person

With the respondents' understanding in the provisions in the protocol established, the study sought to find out whether Western Freight and Logistics Company Limited is taking advantage of the provisions in the protocol. Since freight forwarding company must have a sub-regional operation to even think of taking advantage of the protocol, the respondents were asked to indicate if Western Freight and Logistics Company has a sub-region wide operations. All the respondents responded in the affirmative.

Next, they were asked how often they transport goods within these ECOWAS states. As summarised in Figure 4.6 below, 61% opted for as and when necessary, 27% went for monthly and the rest 12% stood for quarterly. This is indicative that the company undertake sub-regional operations as and when necessarily. This is informed principally by business needs, the size and the very infant nature of the company. It is therefore understandable that the company does not

undertake sub-regional operations on a daily basis and also logical that the finding in anyway does not prevent them from taking advantage of the provisions in the protocol.

Periods of Exporting Products to West African Countries



Source: Researchers' Construct, 2016

Figure 4.6: Bar chart showing periods of exporting products to West African Countries

In order to establish clearly that the company was taking full advantage of the ECOWAS Protocol on Free Movement of Goods and Person within the West African Sub-Region, respondents were asked to indicate if this was done or not. Predictably, all the respondents' indicated that the company takes advantage of the provisions in the protocol.

On how the company takes advantage of the key provisions, the respondents were asked to indicate how they take advantage of the provisions in the protocol. The following themes run across their responses:

- We convey products to the landlocked countries and if not for the protocol, the paper work would have presented great hindrances to our transnational activities.
- The Company is currently working on plans to open branch offices in the sub-region and finds the waivers in the ECOWAS protocol to offer a great advantage.
- Removal of restrictions on commercial and private vehicle entry into members, subject to the possession of a valid ownership card (or log book or matriculation certificate, a valid driving licence, an insurance policy and an international customs documents.

Table 4.2: Whether Western Freight Has Benefited from ECOWAS Protocol

Statement	Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Whether the Western Freight and Logistics has benefited from the ECOWAS Protocol	Yes	18	85.7
	No	2	9.5
	Do not know	1	4.8
	Total	21	100
Whether the ECOWAS Protocol has led to Organizational Growth of Western Freight and Logistics	Yes	14	66.7
	No	5	23.8
	Do not know	2	9.5
	Total	21	100
Whether the ECOWAS Protocol has led to Increased Profits in Western Freight and Logistics	Yes	14	66.7
	No	4	19
	Do not know	3	14.3
	Total	21	100

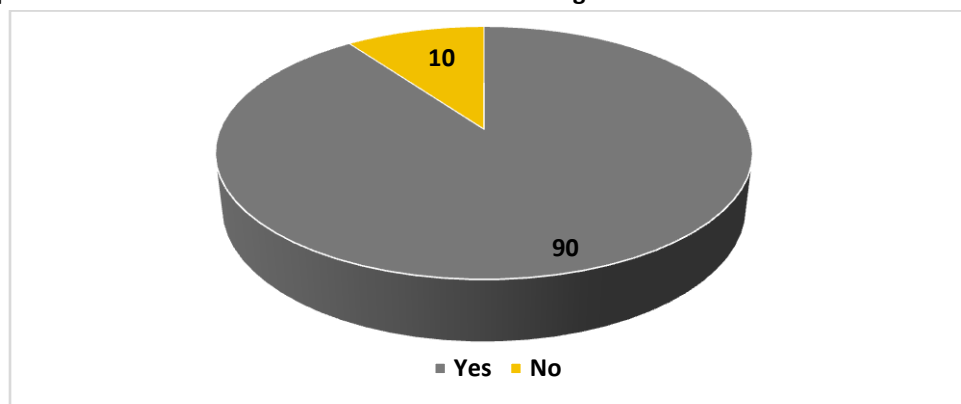
Source: Field Survey, 2016

In confirming or not the advantages the company has been taking per the provisions of the ECOWAS Protocol, the researchers decided to establish whether the company has been benefiting from the ECOWAS Protocol. From table 4.2 on whether the Western Freight and Logistics has benefited from the ECOWAS Protocol, Yes had 85.7%, No got 9.5% and Do not know stood 4.8%. On whether the ECOWAS Protocol has led to organizational growth of Western Freight and Logistics, Yes stood 66.7%, No had 23.8% and Do not know had 9.5%. On Whether the ECOWAS Protocol has led to increased profits in Western Freight and Logistics, Yes was 66.7%, No was 19% and Do not know had 14.3%. From the table the Yes had an average of 73% that suggest that the company has been benefiting from the ECOWAS Protocol which goes to substantiate the earlier on finding on taking advantages of the provisions of the ECOWAS Protocol.

4.4 Challenges Freight and Logistics Companies face in Operationalising the ECOWAS Protocol

This section captures the challenges of the company faces in operationalising the ECOWAS protocol.

Whether the Implementation of the ECOWAS Protocol faces Challenges



Source: Researchers' Construct, 2016

Figure 4.7: Pie chart showing whether the implementation of the ECOWAS Protocol faces challenges

The respondents were asked if they faced challenges in operationalising the protocol. The Yes had 90% and No got 10%. This is an indicative of the fact that the company faces a lot of challenges in operationalising the provisions in the protocol. This acknowledgement of the challenges faced in the implementation of the ECOWAS protocol is further accentuated in the work of Adepoju (2012) who highlighted that the ECOWAS trade harmonisation ideals that were etched in the various protocols were not without its problems, especially as far as implementation were concerned. It's even been acknowledged that these challenges have reduced intra-regional trade in the West African bloc to an abysmal low fraction of 11% of the total or cumulative trade volumes of countries in the sub-region (Agyei & Clottey, 2008; Adepoju, 2007). Adepoju (2012) also recognized that the low implementation of the ECOWAS protocol has led most of the sub-regional intra-border trades to be informal and hence largely goes unrecorded.

Respondents in addition were then asked to indicate to what extent they agree or disagree with the challenges common in the operationalisation of the ECOWAS protocol.

Table 4.3 below exhibits the mean ratings of each item on the scale of challenges in operationalising the ECOWAS Protocol. There were no ratings for strongly disagree. The computed or calculated means show that operationalisation is hindered by the existence of different official languages at border posts with a mean score of (4.67), followed closely by the erection of several border checks which facilitate the extortion of money with a mean score of (4.61), uncoordinated economic programmes and fiscal policies had a mean score of (4.46), poor infrastructure in some countries in the sub-region had (4.42), delay in implementing trade liberalisation policies had a mean score of (4.14), multiplicity of organisations that charges different taxes in the sub-regional ports had a mean score of (3.96) and political instability had a mean score of (3.43). These findings indeed from the highest mean to the lowest mean points out that the above challenges are indeed serious issues that need to be tackled to smooth the operationalisation of the ECOWAS protocol. These findings authenticate the views of Fuseini-Bart (2008) that the problems militating against free movement of goods in ECOWAS are extremely serious, Adepoju (2012) as well emphasised that these challenges exist and further noted that ECOWAS is divided along two key language lines - francophone and Anglophone. Ojo (1999) too confirmed that the lack of

political will and political instability among others are making ECOWAS ineffective. However, the respondents disagree on torturing and killings of other nationals by security personnel with the mean score of (2.65) and fractured national economies with the mean of (2.31) as challenges in the operationalisation of the protocol.

Adepoju (2012) emphasised that though the ECOWAS protocol holds big prospects to companies in the sub-region like freight forwarding and logistics companies, these challenges make the implementation of its ideals problematic.

Table 4.3: Challenges in Operationalising the ECOWAS Protocol

Variable	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean
The erection of several border checks which facilitate the extortion of money	-	-	64	36	4.61
The existence of different official languages at border posts	-	-	70	30	4.67
Torturing and killings of other nationals by security personnel	47	29	24	-	2.65
Delay in implementing trade liberalisation policies	25	8	54	13	4.14
Political instability	38	12	50	-	3.43
The multiplicity of organisations that charges different taxes in the sub-regional ports	13	5	67	15	3.96
Fractured national economies	60	10	30	-	2.31
Poor infrastructure in some of countries in the sub-region	-	-	78	22	4.42
Uncoordinated economic programmes and fiscal policies.	-	-	86	14	4.46

Source: Fieldwork, 2016

4.5 Summary of Findings

From the analysis of the data, it became apparent that the workers (respondents) in Western Freight and Logistics have a better understanding of the ECOWAS protocol on free movement of people and products. The disclosure from awareness to knowledge of the respondents confirmed that the respondents indeed have a better understand of the key provisions in the ECOWAS protocol under study. However, the finding is inconsistent with the ETLS Gap Analysis- Mali (2011) and ETLS Gap Analysis-- Ghana (2010) which established that traders within the sub-region do not understand the provisions of ECOWAS Protocol. But this finding of understanding from the study is supported from the very two key variables; awareness and knowledge of the key provisions of ECOWAS Protocol by the respondents.

The study as well established that the company has been taking advantage of the provisions in the ECOWAS Protocol by operating as and when necessary. The finding shows that the company undertake sub-regional operations as and when necessarily. This is informed principally by business needs, the size and the very infant nature of the company. It is therefore obvious that the company does not undertake sub-regional operations on a daily basis and it is also evident that the finding does not prevent them from taking advantage of the provisions in the protocol.

The study also revealed among others that the company has been taking advantage by conveying products to the landlocked countries and if not for the protocol, the paper work would have presented great hindrances to their transnational activities. The company is currently also working on to open branch offices in the sub-region and finds the waivers in the ECOWAS protocol to offer a great advantage and they also referred to the removal of restrictions on commercial and private vehicle entry into members countries subject to the possession of a valid ownership card or log book or matriculation certificate, a valid driving licence, an insurance policy and an international customs documents which in a way are helping them criss- cross the sub region. It was also found out that the company has been benefiting from the ECOWAS Protocol which goes to substantiate the earlier on finding on taking advantages of the provisions of the ECOWAS

Protocol. This is contrary to the observations of Agyei and Clotey (2008) and Adepoju (2007) who noted that relative to trade with other economic blocs, intra-regional trade in the West African bloc is abysmal and it's estimated at a low fraction of 11% of the total or cumulative trade volumes of countries in the sub-region.

On the challenges the company faces in operationalising the ECOWAS Protocol, the researchers discovered that the company faces a lot of challenges in operationalising the provisions in the protocol. This acknowledgement of the challenges faced in the implementation of the ECOWAS protocol is further emphasized in the work of Adepoju (2012) who highlighted that the ECOWAS trade harmonisation ideals that were etched in the various protocols were not without its problems, especially as far as implementation were concerned. It's even been accepted that these challenges have reduced intra-regional trade in the West African bloc to an abysmal low fraction of 11% of the total or cumulative trade volumes of countries in the sub-region (Agyei & Clotey, 2008; Adepoju, 2007). Adepoju (2012) also recognized that the low implementation of the ECOWAS protocol has led most of the sub-regional intra-border trades to be informal and hence largely goes unrecorded.

The study additionally identified among others common challenges in operationalisation of the ECOWAS protocol. Among them are: implementation is hindered by the existence of different official languages at border posts, erection of several border checks which facilitate the extortion of money, uncoordinated economic programmes and fiscal policies, poor infrastructure in some countries in the sub-region, delay in implementing trade liberalisation policies, multiplicity of organisations that charges different taxes in the sub-regional ports and political instability. These findings authenticate the views of Fuseini-Bart (2008) that the problems militating against free movement of goods in ECOWAS are extremely serious, Adepoju (2012) as well emphasised that these challenges exist and further noted that ECOWAS is divided along two key language lines - francophone and Anglophone. Ojo (1999) too confirmed that the lack of political will and political instability among others are making ECOWAS ineffective.

However, the study found out that torturing and killings of other nationals by security personnel and fractured national economies are not challenges in the operationalisation of the protocol.

Adepoju (2012) emphasised that though the ECOWAS protocol holds big prospects to companies in the sub-region like freight forwarding and logistics companies, these challenges make the implementation of its ideals problematic.

5. Conclusions

The purpose of this study is investigating the implication for freight and logistics companies in operationalising the ECOWAS Protocol on free movement and persons. This in effect creates awareness and interest in the provisions of ECOWAS Protocol and the inference for logistics' companies within the sub-region. With the findings firmly established and summarised in the preceding section, the researchers make the following conclusion that the workers in Western Freight and Logistics Company have better understanding of the ECOWAS protocol on free movement of people and products especially as it relates to community citizens' right to enter, reside and establish in the territory of member states; right of residence and establishment; removal of restrictions on commercial and private vehicle entry into members and an international customs documents. And they have been taking advantage of the provisions in the ECOWAS protocol through undertaking sub-regional operations as and when necessary. Notwithstanding, the company faces a number of challenges in operationalising the ECOWAS protocol which include the erection of several border checks and toll booth, the existence of different official languages at border posts, poor infrastructure in some of countries in the sub-region, uncoordinated economic programmes and fiscal policies. Though the challenges posed by the Protocol in deepening the process of integration are great and can be costly, the potential benefits of such efforts far outweigh their costs (Milner et al. 2005). And as such the operationalisation of ECOWAS Protocol of free movement of goods and persons, the implication for the freight and logistics company per the findings showed that the benefits are abound aside the challenges. The purging of tariffs and the ultimate exclusion of many non-tariff barriers to trade will make logistics companies experienced cost savings and offers for homogeneous country of origin provisions where the process of determining where goods are coming from will be streamlined in so doing will reduce their workload. Fully implementation of the protocol in integrating the sub region will help greatly reduce barriers to the movement of component and finished goods and persons across borders and give logistics companies a great leap in the performance of their activities in the sub-region.

Whereas the findings of the study could be useful in most cases particularly in the freight and logistics industry, there is notable exception primarily not many participants (companies) were involved. The researchers nonetheless believed that the findings and its recommendations can be used to advance the freight and logistics companies in the operationalisation of the ECOWAS Protocol in the sub-b region.

6. Recommendations

The following specific recommendations are made based on the findings and conclusion.

With specific reference to Western Freight and Logistics Company, the following recommendations are made for policy implementation.

- Western Freight and Logistics Company should liaise with transport companies in other countries in the sub-region where its operations are needed to reduce its transportation cost. This will further call for the registration of these companies under an umbrella organisation to enable other operators have access to such services without the added cost of taking the vehicles all the way to the countries where goods are needed.
- Western Freight and Logistics Company should modify its employment policy modalities to give opportunities to those who are bilingual or multi-lingual. This will ensure language barriers are overcome to a very large extent looking at the location of the company (Ghana) which has been by sandwich francophone speaking countries.
- Western Freight and Logistics Company should continue with its branch offices operations in the sub region where its operations are predominant. Besides this will reduce its cost of operation, it will help the organization grow faster.

In addition, the researchers make the following recommendation for sub-regional leaders:

- ECOWAS needs to enforce the usage of the ECOWAS travellers' cheques to harmonise the sub-region's monetary policy. This could precede the proposed adoption of a common currency to facilitate cross-border trade transactions and, along with it, the introduction of Brown Card travel certificates as ECOWAS passports. Once this becomes operational, most of the problem associated with exchange and interest rates will be minimised.
- As part of facilitating the free movement of goods and persons in the sub-region, ECOWAS should harmonise its custom duties across the sub region and create borderless economic block among member countries where tariffs are free or reduced tariffs are charged. Although this recommendation is contained in later additions to the ECOWAS protocol, it is hardly effected. In fact, the ECOWAS Trade Liberalisation Scheme (ETLS) which was tasked to, among others, progressively establish a customs union that totally eliminates customs duties and taxes, removes non-tariff barriers and establish common customs external tariff to protect goods produced in member states is hardly operational. This however should be effected to reduce the challenges that goes along with the free movement of people and goods in the sub-region.
- ECOWAS should also implement the proposed coastal rail route that links Accra, Lome, Cotonou and Lagos and the Sahelian rail route that links Lagos to Niamey and Ouagadougou to facilitate the movement of goods and people.
- In addition, the resolution in the Abuja summit, pertaining to the dismantling of all check points on international highways within the ECOWAS bloc should be enforced and rather use few essential agents (i.e., customs and immigration officials) where absolutely necessary, modernising border procedures and removing rigid border formalities of member states should be implemented by sub-regional leaders with immediate effect.
- Also, ECOWAS should harmonise its shipping laws to promote the liberalisation of maritime services, establishment of free trade zone and as stated earlier, application of zero per cent duty rate on approved industrial goods or products and traditional handicrafts which will further enhance the free movement of goods and people.

For future study, the researchers recommend a comparative study that takes the views of freight forwarding companies from other countries in the sub-region and assess their reaction on the challenges resulting from the operationalising of the ECOWAS protocol on free movement of goods and persons.

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