Implementation of Ecowas Protocol on Free Movement of Persons, Goods and Services and its Implications for Economic Security in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

This paper examined the implementation of ECOWAS Protocol on Free Movement of goods, persons and services and its implications for economic security. Free trade theory was use adopted as a framework of analysis. Methodologically, cross-sectional survey design with the aid of descriptive statistical method was adopted. Purposive Sampling method was adopted to select Seme and Niger borders because of their peculiarity to the research problem. 380 questionnaire and 20 interviewees were used to elicit data. Data was analyzed with aid of descriptive statistical tools such as frequency and simple percentages to analyze the data. Findings revealed strategies adopted by Nigeria in the implementation of ECOWAS protocol on free movement of goods, persons and services to include, modernization of border management techniques, periodic engagement of stakeholders, security cooperation with immediate neighbours, phased implementation approach avenues for the execution of the protocol. Findings further indicates numerous challenges facing the implementation of the ECOWAS Protocol on Free Movement of goods and persons: they include lack of political will, bribery & corruption of security operatives, porosity of Nigeria borders, poor infrastructure and financing as well as lack of common currency. The study recommended that Nigeria government should periodically review and re-evaluate her strategies on the implementation of ECOWAS protocol on free movement of goods, persons and services in order to ascertain areas that need to be strengthened for maximum result taken cognizance of the times and seasons. Nigeria government should collaborate with neighbouring countries so as to address these issues of smuggling, illicit migration, and inefficient border management systems rather that implementing protectionist measures that are detrimental to regional integration effort such as the land border closure under the Buhari Administration.

Introduction

The economic, political and social challenges of today's world present a scenario where no country is likely to survive without cooperating with other countries One defining feature of the contemporary global system is, therefore the desire or efforts by states to form regional integration/cooperation, which is considered the well accepted means towards economic development and prosperity. Efforts made during the post World War II era culminated in the establishment of a number of communities such as The European Coal and Steel Community

(ECSC) in 1951, the European Economic Community (EEC) in 1957 (now the European Union (EU)), the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) in 1996', among others (Sowale, 2018). The idea of regional co-operation became attractive to the political and economic leaders in African in the late 1950 and early 1960. With the establishment of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), the importance of economic cooperation and the need to develop strategies for a continental development was advocated. The latter part of 1960s saw the birth of many regional groupings which included Preferential Trade Area for Eastern and Southern African (PTA) now Common Market for East and Southern Africa, the Southern African Development Coordination Conference (SADCC) now the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)', among others (Teye, Awumbila & Nikoi, 2019).

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Protocol on Free Movement of Persons, Goods, and Services was adopted in 1979 with the aim of promoting regional integration, economic development, and cooperation among member states in West Africa. The protocol seeks to facilitate the movement of people, goods, and services across borders within the ECOWAS region, thereby enhancing trade, investment, and socio-economic development.

The protocol guarantees the rights of ECOWAS citizens to enter, reside, and work in any member state without discrimination, as well as the removal of barriers to trade and the provision of services. It also includes provisions for the harmonization of customs procedures, the establishment of a common external tariff, and the promotion of regional production and industrialization.

Nigeria, one of the largest economies and most populous countries in the ECOWAS region shares borders with several ECOWAS member states, leading to challenges in securing her borders against illegal activities such as smuggling, human trafficking, and terrorism. The porous nature of the borders makes it difficult to effectively control the movement of people and goods, leading to security concerns. It has been observed by scholars such as Ochoga (2019) that inadequate transport infrastructure like roads, railways, and border crossing facilities, hinders the smooth movement of goods and people across borders. Poor infrastructure limits trade and commerce, increases transit times, and raises the cost of doing business within the region. Hence this study

sought to address strategies adopted in attempt to deal with challenges confronting the implementation of the ECOWAS protocol on free movement of goods and services in Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

The implementation of ECOWAS Protocol on Free Movement was aimed at facilitating regional integration and economic development by allowing free movement across West African borders. However, its implementation has raised concerns about Nigeria's security with implication on the strategies adopted. The protocol potentially enables uncontrolled migration, smuggling of goods, and cross-border criminal activities, which may threaten Nigeria's economy, job market, and internal security. In addition, the increasing incidence of trafficking in persons and illegal arms smuggling across and within the West African sub region has contributed in undermining Nigeria's security architecture and has hindered effective implementation of the ECOWAS protocol on free movement. Trans-border crime is increasing at alarming rate in modern time, due to the porosity of borders and unpatriotic activities of security agencies thereby threatening economic security of Nigeria. For Ochoga (2019) the Free Movement Protocol reduces barriers to the movement of goods and services within the ECOWAS sub-region. This can lead to increased economic activity, brings about job creation, and revenue generation for businesses in Nigeria. Idenyi, Adadu, and Baban'numaa, (nd) argue that with the implementation of the protocol Nigeria has been the new hub for most forms of trans-border crimes ranging from women and child trafficking, internet fraud smuggling, among others. Balancing the benefits of regional integration with the need to protect Nigeria's economic interests and maintain border control presents a significant challenge for policymakers.

Research Objectives

The study sought to address the following objectives

(i) To assess the strategies adopted by the Nigerian government towards the implementation of ECOWAS protocol free movement persons, goods and services and how it affected economic security in Nigeria.

(ii) To identify challenges facing Nigeria's implementation of the ECOWAS protocol on free movement persons goods and services.

Conceptual Clarification

Economic Security

The state of economic maturity, which is defined by economic growth and exponential expansion to the utmost degree without any threat of internal or external strangulation, is referred to as economic security in this study. Through the contribution of highly qualified human resources and policies adequate for a functional and sustainable political economy that is self-sustaining without any detrimental external economic meddling, such a secured economy is brought from its infancy to maturity. Economic security, according to Shiitu and Adenike (2018), is a sophisticated, autonomous economy that is adequate for citizens' objectives for both personal and national development without any threats of strangling or internal or external setbacks.

According to Mollenkamp (2022) economic security refers to the capacity of people to meet their needs on regular bases. Consequently, economic security is connected to the concept of the modern welfare state, the notion of economic well-being of citizens and a government that commits itself to the provision of baseline assurances for its peoples' security. The concept is accordingly important for nations and individuals. For nations, economic security is a factor in measuring national security. Cultural yardsticks are also utilized in the determination of economic security. On the opposite side of economic security is economic insecurity, which again refers to the absence of enough resources to pay for medical care, food, housing and other necessities. Because cultural yardsticks play roles in the determination of what is covered in the list of necessities for economic security, what counts as economic security and how it is computed have continued to change (Mollenkamp, 2022).

ECOWAS

ECOWAS means Economic Community of West African States. It is a sub-regional integration organization that is committed to removing encumbrances that are capable of preventing free movement of persons and goods across border within the community. ECOWAS has the protocol for free movement of persons, and protocol for free movement of goods. These protocols are to enhance the free mobility aim of the sub-regional body. On the other hand, this study critiques the free trade theory which provides an analytical tool to understand the nature and character of subregional, regional, or global integrative organizations. The theory assumes the removal of tariff and non-tariff barriers among member states, a common external trade policy, free movement of

goods and services, harmonisation of policies, unification of national monetary policies, and acceptance of a common currency. Atah and Ochonga (2024) argued that economic integrative schemes can be pursued for various reasons, including enhanced economic growth and development. The theory delineates the welfare impact of regional economic integration from two perspectives: static effects in terms of productive efficiency and consumer welfare, and dynamic effects in terms of member states' long-term growth rates.

Economic integration encompasses various aspects, including free trade areas, customs unions, common markets, economic unions, and regional integration. The free trade theory of economic integration is particularly relevant to the workability of ECOWAS as a regional economic integration organization. The theory emphasizes the free movement of goods and services among member states and the free movement of production factors across national borders within the economic bloc (Opanike, Aduloju, & Adenipekun, 2015). The ECOWAS Protocol on the free movement of persons is a reflection of this theory, as it aims to remove encumbrances against movement factors among member-states. This promotes factor mobility, which equalizes returns on factors of production throughout the market. The primary reason for promoting factor mobility is to lead to a more efficient allocation of labour and capital within the economic bloc, enhancing the bloc's total level of production, income, and welfare.

Proponents of ECOWAS integration policy believe that the essence of free factor movement is to create wealth towards poverty reduction in the region. However, the study stands differently from proponents of economic integration theory, as it does not consider the security complexity that could come with the free movement of persons under the auspices of the Protocol on free movement Moreover, the establishment of ECOWAS as a model of a common market did not take into consideration the need to empower member states against challenges such as illegal migration, undocumented migration, arms smuggling, and drug trafficking that accompany the movement of factors across borders.

Empirical Review of Related Literature

Nigeria's Strategies for Implementation of ECOWAS Protocol on Free Movement of Persons, Goods and Services

Nigeria has adopted a multifaceted approach to implementing the ECOWAS Protocol on Free Movement of Persons, Goods and Services. The country has focused on modernizing its border management systems, including the implementation of integrated border management technologies and upgrading of border post infrastructure (Adeleke, 2017). Efforts have been made to harmonize national immigration laws with ECOWAS protocol provisions and develop supportive policies (Oyo-Ita, 2016). Nigeria has also promoted cross-border trade through simplified customs procedures and participation in ECOWAS trade liberalization schemes (Adepoju et al., 2007). To address security concerns, the country has engaged in enhanced intelligence sharing and joint border patrols with other ECOWAS member states (Adeola and Oluyemi, 2012). Public awareness campaigns and institutional capacity building have been crucial components of Nigeria's strategy, with programmes aimed at informing citizens about their rights and obligations under the protocol (Ikhide, 2019). The country has actively participated in regional cooperation efforts, including ECOWAS meetings and working groups on free movement (Fawcett, 2016). Infrastructure development has also been a priority, with investments in transportation networks and cross-border market facilities (Adeniran, 2014). Nigeria has improved its migration data collection and analysis capabilities to better track and manage cross-border movements (Akinrinade, 2015). Notably, the country has adopted a flexible implementation approach, phasing in protocol provisions based on national readiness and occasionally applying temporary safeguard measures to address economic or security concerns (Opanike et al., 2015). Through these strategies, Nigeria demonstrates its commitment to regional integration while navigating the complex realities of implementing the free movement protocol.

Challenges Encountered in the Implementation of the ECOWAS Protocol on Free Movement Persons, Goods and Services in Nigeria

Agwu and Ogali (2023) assessed the perception, impact and challenges of ECOWAS Protocol on free movement. Cross-Sectional research design with the aid of descriptive statistical method was adopted. The study population was made up of security agents of Nigeria and Benin Republic, Traders, Transporters and Residents of the Seme border community. The study utilized purposive

sampling method. Seme-Krake border was selected as the major study area because of its peculiarity to the research topic. The research involved administration of questionnaires, interviews, and observations that are vital to the research. Data Analytical technique was the adopted descriptive statistical approach. The study revealed that the implementation of the protocol, has produced mixed results. It also revealed the level of perception of the protocol among border officials and other critical stakeholders, and the emerging challenges facing the free trade programme of ECOWAS. Some of the challenges include, lack of personnel, logistics problem and lack of political will by leaders compounded the protocol's implementations problems. Furthermore, it was recommended that the ECOWAS protocol should be promoted by member States via conferences, seminars, campaigns and the use of electronic and print media, as this would achieve a high level of awareness, and in the long run enhance economic and security growth of the sub region. The strength of Agwu and Ogali's study is that they were able to advance concrete explanations as why the implementation of the ECOWAS protocol on free movement persons goods and services produced mixed results. The major shortfall of the study was that it relied on Seme border which did not give room for comparison of the results for the purpose of cross validation. The present study closed this gap by focusing essentially on seme-Niger borders respectively.

Onyemakonor, Aliegba and Baban'umma (2023) examined the effect of ECOWAS Protocol on Nigeria's economic development. State First Approach was adopted as a theoretical framework. The method of data collection was premised on both primary and secondary methods. Questionnaire and Personal Interview were employed as instruments for primary data, while for secondary method, sources like research papers, policy papers, documents, journals, magazines, seminars, workshop papers and handbook were utilized. The study established that the lack of political will among ECOWAS members to submit part of their sovereignty and the lack of trust among member-states are challenges facing proper implementation of the policies and protocol under review. It was recommended that the commission should review the provisions of the movement of goods, persons and right of establishments, economic development and trade liberalization policies to meet up with the current economic needs of her member-states. Onyemakonor et al was able to highlight lack of political will and the fear of member state relinquishing their sovereignty to the ECOWAS as major challenges. However, study did not look

at other issues of such as lack of common currency and criminality which have stared development in member state of ECOWAS.

Teye, Awumbila and Nikoi (2019) examined the challenges to the implementation of the ECOWAS Protocol on Free Movement, with particular reference to Ghana and Sierra Leone. The study was based on a desktop review and in-depth interviews with selected ECOWAS migrants and officials of institutions responsible for managing migration in Ghana and Sierra Leone. The findings suggested that Ghana and Sierra Leone have made modest progress in the implementation of the protocol. Apart from abolishing visa and entry requirements for 90 days, both countries have adopted the standardized ECOWAS Travel Certificate. Despite a few achievements, the following challenges affect the implementation of the free movement protocol in both countries: Policy ambiguities resulting from contradictions between national laws on employment and the ECOWAS Free Movement Protocol; harassment of migrants; migrants' lack of travel documents; low level of knowledge about the ECOWAS protocol; resource constraints; fears of competition with immigrants, especially in Ghana; securitization of migration and migrants; weak labour market and migration information systems, economic challenges and political instability. In conclusion, the future implementation outcomes of the ECOWAS protocol largely depend on the commitment of the member states and financial support that they receive from ECOWAS and its development partners. While ECOWAS should continue to lobby states to implement agreements and protocols, mechanisms must also evolve to deal with states that continue to violate the rights of citizens and migrants. The weakness of the study is that it was limited to Ghana and Sierra Leone while ignoring challenges the implementation of the ECOWAS protocol caused for Nigeria's economic development.

Theoretical Framework

Free Trade Theory

The study adopts theory free trade as its theoretical approach to x-ray the work. Free trade is the unrestricted importing and exporting of goods and services between countries (Longley 2018:2). Traditional theory both classical and neo-classical asserts that free trade in goods between different regions is always to the advantage of each trading country and is therefore for the best arrangement from the point of view of the welfare of the trading world as a whole as well as each part of the world taken separately (Kaldor, 1980:87). The Theoretical case for free trade is

based on Adam Smith's argument that the division of labour among countries leads to speculation, greater efficiency and higher aggregate production. Since the mid-20thcentury, countries have increasingly reduced tariff barriers and currency restrictions in international trade and other barriers that may hinder effective movements of goods and services.

Classical political economy, as well as Neo-classical theory embrace free trade. It postulates that free trade is advantageous as it allows nations to specialize in production that requires relatively fewer factor inputs (Exploring Economics Team, 2016:1). The free trade theory is mostly associated with scholars such as David Ricardo, Adams Smith, David Hume (1971), Keynes (1936), Krugman (1987), Olson (1982), Robert (1991). The linkage of the theory to the study is that Nigeria and other member states of the African Union need and requires free trade, free movement of goods and services and free market amongst African Countries. African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AFCFTA) will be a platform to strengthen economic and monetary integration with Nigeria and other states. However, it has its own shortcoming like free trade agreements which are criticized as a means to break local or national environmental protection laws and states might green their economies not by altering production and consumption pattern but by outsourcing environmentally harmful production to other parts of the world and then import goods whose production entails wastes.

It can be said that the free trade theory suit in the thinking of the researcher as its place premium on the trade being the vehicle that would stimulate economic growth and development among member states with absolute peace. This thus informed the use and applicability of the free trade theory to explain the study under investigation.

Method of Data Collection and Analysis

This paper adopts cross sectional survey design which is a form of descriptive research that is aimed at collecting, finding, discussing and interpreting data based on the existing conditions, prevailing practices, beliefs, attitudes held, on-going processes and trends. The population for this study consists of 2137 people (Human Resource Unit of Nigerian Customs Service, Immigration and Ministry for Trade and Investment 2023.) The sample size for the study was 400 using Taro Yamane.

To determine the appropriate sample size for the study,

The formula is expressed below:

$$n = \frac{N}{1+N(e)^2}$$

Where:

n = the sample size (required)

N = the population size (universe)

e = Degree of Freedom (0.05 or 95%)

1= Constant

$$n = \frac{N}{1+N(e)^2}$$

$$\frac{2137}{1+ 2138 \times 0.0025}$$

$$\frac{2137}{2138 \times 0.0025}$$

$$\frac{2137}{5.345}$$

$$n = 400$$

Sample size = (400)

Data for the study were collected through a structure questionnaire and in-dept interview. Data from questionnaire was analyzed with the aid of statistical tools such as frequency and simple percentages while interview elicited was analyze thematically. However, 380 were allocated to questionnaire and 20 to interview. Out of the 380 questionnaire that were issued to staff of Nigerian Custom Service, Nigerian Immigration Service, Police at Seme/Niger border as well as officials

of ECOWAS secretariat Abuja, only 365 were duly completed and returned. Therefore, analysis were based on 365 respondents.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Table 1: Strategies adopted by the Nigerian government towards the implementation of ECOWAS protocol free movement persons, goods and services

Statements	Frequency and Percentage of Respondents									
	Strongly Agree		Agree		Undecided		Strongly Disagree		Disagree	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Phased Implementation Approach improved Implementation of ECOWAS protocol on free movement	150	41	111	31	34	9	52	14	18	5
Modernization of border management enhanced Nigeria implementation of the ECOWAS protocol on free movement	160	43	80	22	42	12	46	13	37	10
Nigeria's security cooperation with her immediate neighbours is one of the strategies adopted in the implemention of ECOIWAS protocol on free movement	170	46	69	20	40	11	43	11	45	12
Strengthening institutional capacity building is one of the strategies	180	50	50	14	35	10	72	20	20	6

for effective execution of ECOWAS protocol on free movement										
Periodic engagement of critical stakeholder usher new alternatives in the implementation of ECOWAS protocol on free movement	170	47	97	27	40	11	34	9	24	6

Source: Field Survey, 2024.

The result in table 1 indicates that 150 (41%) of the respondents strongly agreed that phased implementation approach is one of the strategies for the implementation of ECOWAS protocol on free movement of goods, people and services, 111 (31%) agreed while 34 (9%) were undecided. The result further demonstrates that 52 (14%) strongly disagreed and 18 (5%) disagreed respectively. This implies that phased implementation approach through prioritization of specific aspects based on national readiness and capacity helps in the implementation of ECOWAS protocol on free movement of goods and services. On whether

modernization border management is one of the strategies adopted by Nigerian government towards the implementation ECOWAS protocol majority of the respondents representing 160 (43%) strongly agree, 80 (22%) agreed, 41(12%) were undecided while 46 (13%) strongly disagree and 37 (10%) disagree. The implies a general acceptance of modern border management tools in monitoring influx of people, goods and service into Nigeria.

As regard whether security cooperation between Nigeria and her neighbours enhance effective implementation of ECOWAS protocol, majority of the respondents representing 170 (46%) strongly agreed, 69 (20%) agreed, 40 (11%) were undecided, while 43 (11%) strongly disagree and 45 (12%) disagree. As regards strengthening institutional capacity building for effective implementation of the ECOWAS protocol on free movement of goods, people and services, a significant number of the respondents representing 180 (50%) strongly agree, 50 (14%) agree

whereas 35 (10%) were undecided while 70 (20%) strongly disagree, 20 (6%) disagree. As to whether people knowledge of ECOWAS protocol facilitate it implementation 170 (47%) strongly agree, 97 (27%) agree, 40 (11%) were undecided, while 34 (9%) and 24 (6%) strongly disagree and disagree respectively.

Interview held with the respondents concerning the subject matter indicate that a good number of the respondents express that Nigerian government over the years has adopted various strategies towards the implementation of the ECOWAS protocol on free movement of goods, people and services. Some of the strategies identified by the study include phase implementation approach, modernization of border management, cooperating with neighbouring countries in talking insecurity, strengthening of institutional capacity building as well as periodic engagement of critical stakeholders on best alternatives on the implementation of ECOWAS protocol on free movement. In an interview with one of the respondents a Nigeria Business man Haruna Balla expressed his views on the subject matter as follows:

The Nigerian government has been doing her best to ensure ECOWAS free movement protocol was implemented in a manner that would reinforce the aim of the protocol. In achieving this, several strategies have been utilized such as the introduction of modernized border management tools to monitor the influx of people, goods and services into the country. Periodic engagement of critical stakeholders so as to advance best alternative approach to it.

Similarly, Mr. Uche Chukwuma who was interviewed at Seme border argues that even though Nigerian government is cooperating with other neighbouring countries to address security lapses the country is facing, this problem continued to linger which made the Federal Government of Nigeria under President Mohammed Buhari to announce the closure of land borders on 23th August 2019, the aim was to address issues of insecurity where contraband goods are smuggled into the country. He added that there were concerns about arms smuggling and other illicit activities across the borders, which the closure aimed to curtail.

These strategies demonstrate Nigeria's multifaceted approach to implementing the ECOWAS Free Movement Protocol. The country aims to foster regional integration while addressing its unique challenges and national priorities. For example, border closure was a controversial measure that had mixed economic and diplomatic consequences. It signified Nigeria's willingness to take drastic

measures to address perceived economic and security challenges, even at the cost of regional cooperation and trade relationships.

Table 2: Challenges hindering Nigeria's Implementation of the ECOWAS Protocol on Free Movement Persons, Goods and Services

Statements	Frequency and Percentage of Respondents									
	Strongly Agree		Agree		Undecided		Strongly Disagree		Disagree	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Porosity of Nigeria Borders	178	49	100	27	34	9	42	12	11	3
Lack of Political will	162	44	78	21	42	12	46	13	37	10
Poor infrastructure and financing	170	46	75	21	35	10	43	11	45	12
Bribery and corruption among security operatives at the border	160	44	50	14	35	10	72	20	40	11
Lack of common currency	161	44	97	25	40	11	44	14	24	6

Source: Field Survey, 2024.

The result according to challenges hindering Nigeria's implementation of the ECOWAS protocol on free movement persons goods and services indicates that 178 (47%) strongly agree, 100 (25%) agree, whereas 34 (9%) were undecided while 42 (12%) strongly disagree, and 11 (3%) disagree. As regards whether lack of political will is one of the major obstacles to ECOWAS implementation of free movement protocol, a significant number of the respondents representing 162 (44%) strongly disagree, 78 (21%) agree whereas 42 (12%) undecided while 46 (13%) strongly disagree and 37 (10%) disagree. Moreso, on whether poor infrastructure and financing is one of the challenges affecting the smooth implementation of ECOWAS protocol on free movement of persons, good and services majority of the respondent 170 (46%) strongly agree, 75 (21%) agree whereas 31 (10%) were undecided while 43 (11%) and 45 (12%) strongly disagree and disagree respectively. On whether bribery and corruption among security operatives at the border challenges affecting the smooth implementation of ECOWAS protocol on free movement of persons, good and services significant number 160 (44%) strongly agree, 50 (14%) agrees whereas 35 (10%) were undecided, 72 (20%) strongly disagree and 40 (11%) disagree. On whether lack of common currency affect the implementation of the protocol majority of the respondents representing 161 (44%) strongly agree, 97 (26%) agree whereas 40 (11%) were undecided while 44 (14%) strongly disagree and 24 (6%) disagree respectively. The above shows that there are numerous challenges facing the implementation of the ECOWAS protocol on free movement of goods and persons in Nigeria.

The above result conforms with interview response conducted with a staff of the Nigerian Customs who pointed out that African states have lacked the political will to make their aims and ambitions a reality. The inability of regional organizations to carry out integration measures independently is a significant barrier to operationalizing supranationalism in Africa. Instead of achieving the organization's lofty goals, these institutions are supposed to function in line with the whims of member states, which are frequently ruled by autocrats with their own interests at stake. Therefore, it is not unusual to witness the breakdown or derailment of integration efforts due to personal disagreements among heads of state or changes in government within member states.

Interview held with Alh. Inua Mustapha on the subject matter shows that the porosity of borders in West Africa and Nigeria has significantly impacted the implementation of the ECOWAS Protocol on Free Movement of Persons, Goods, and Services. This permeability facilitates

informal trade and smuggling, undermining formal trade structures and causing revenue losses for governments. He added that security challenges arising from porous borders, including arms trafficking and movement of criminal elements, often lead to stricter border controls that contradict the free movement principle. The ease of unofficial crossings also contributes to irregular migration, straining inter-state relations and prompting periodic border closures. Additionally, inadequate border control allows for the movement of substandard goods, posing health and safety risks and necessitating increased inspections that impede the free flow of goods. Economically, porous borders can lead to market distortions due to smuggled goods, undermining local industries and complicating regional integration efforts.

This clearly indicates that the numerous challenges hampered Nigeria's implementation of the ECOWAS free movement protocol of free movement of goods, persons and services.

Discussion of Findings

The first objective of the study beamed its search light on the strategies adopted by the Nigerian government towards the implementation of ECOWAS protocol on free movement persons, goods and services. The free trade as adopted implied the easy accessibility of markets and trades relations across ECOWAS countries however, many member state of ECOWAS Nigeria inclusive have adopted multiple strategies which include, phased implementation approach, modernization of border management techniques periodic engagement of stakeholders, strengthening institutional capacity building as well as security cooperation with neighbouring countries for synergy towards effective implementation of the ECOWAS protocol on free movement of goods, persons and services. This finding conforms with that of Joseph (2021); Atah and Ochonga (2024) who espoused that periodic review of strategies adopted is one of the best approach to the implementation of the ECOWAS protocol on free movement. As that would provide ample opportunity for review and evaluation of strategies and revert to the ones producing maximun result.

In the second objective, the task of the researcher was to ascertain some of the challenges preventing the complete implementation of Nigeria's adherence to the ECOWAS protocol on the free movement of people and goods.. Findings from the study indicates that ECOWAS members' unwillingness to completely execute the free movement of people, goods, and people's rights, as well as their lack of political will, porosity of Nigeria borders, poor infrastructure and bribery and

corruption, lack of common currency, among others. These disparities provide obstacles to the correct implementation of the ECOWAS protocol on free movement of goods, persons and services. The finding is in agreement with those of Onyemakonor, Aliegba, and Baban'umma (2023) who posit that lack of political will among ECOWAS members to submit part of their sovereignty, lack of trust among member-states, refusal to fully implement the free movement of goods, persons and right of establishment provisions by member-states, language barrier, and colonial differences that hinder the smooth implementation of the policies and protocol under consideration.

Conclusion

Like other integration instrument around the world, ECOWAS Protocol on Free Movement was an attempt to advance economic integration in the sub-region. However, the hostility that is often recorded between ECOWAS migrants and citizens of the receiving states revolved around economic misfortune that has affected all of the member states of the organization. The implementation of ECOWAS Protocol on the Free Movement of Persons, faced some challenges which required collaborative effort in tackling issues that impact negatively on everything regarding the protocol.

Recommendations

i. Nigeria government should periodically review and re-evaluate her strategies on the implementation of ECOWAS protocol on free movement of goods, persons and services in order to ascertain the ones that need to be strengthened for maximum result taken cognizance of the times and seasons.

ii. Nigeria government should collaborate with neighbouring countries so as to address these issues of smuggling, illicit migration, and inefficient border management systems rather than implementing protectionist measures that are detrimental to regional integration effort such as the land border closure under the Buhari Administration.

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