

Challenge's Impeding Regional Integration in Southern Africa

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Abstract: Regional integration through the establishment of regional groupings has been taunted as a gateway to regional development and growth, the coming together of countries to share and contribute to knowledge, policy development, peace and security, trade and educational development is undoubtedly seen as the key to the development of Southern Africa. However, regional integration in Southern Africa has been hampered by numerous challenges which have derailed the quest of regional countries to deepen integration and cooperation. By strictly analyzing relevant literature related to regional integration in Southern Africa, it became evident that the region is engulfed with serious challenges that are hindering the quest for deeper integration, and often this is further compounded by internal economic challenges that members' states are faced with. The study uncovered the fact that regional integration has been difficult to entrench as member states are confronted with numerous internal challenges which are diverting their need to focus on regional matters. Consequently, regional integration is under threat in Southern Africa as many countries are not effectively prioritizing the development of policies aimed at aiding its entrenchment, mainly because of the significance of the challenges that they are facing and this will further affect members' states regarding socio-economic development. The study underscored the importance for regional governments to cooperate on issues of common threats and urgently develop and institute policies/mechanisms that would ensure the entrenchment of regional integration and more importantly its sustainability.

Keywords: *Regional integration, Socio-economic development, Challenges, Cooperation, Policy*

1. Introduction

For decades, the concept of regional integration has been rallied and preached by many countries globally and regionally, the concept was seen as key in promoting regional growth and development through the implementation and adoption of policies that would be mutually beneficial for a particular region. Indeed, regional integration has been largely beneficial for countries in Europe and Asia. While the latter is characterized by most developing countries, they have, however, been able to jointly negotiate and develop policies that would enable the region to experience economic growth, were all countries would benefit, and undoubtedly, growth in countries such as Singapore, Taiwan and Malaysia serves as a testament to what regional integration can do for regional development. Policies associated with regional integration are usually centred on the liberalization of the markets, free movement of labor and the increase in cooperation between regional states (McNamee et al., 2015). While many countries in the world have been able to put aside their differences and negotiate policies that would be regionally beneficial, countries in Africa who are also part of regional groupings have not witnessed the benefits associated with regional integration compared to their European and Asian counterparts, mainly due to many challenges affecting the region.

Political instability, member state disagreements, and trust issues have been major factors which have affected the ability of regional groupings in Africa to fully benefit from regional integration. While countries in Southern Africa, through the Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan (RISDP) have advocated for an increase in regional coordination and integration, many member states are challenged economically, hence member states may have difficulties in fully prioritizing regional integration as national issues come first. Southern Africa with its vast embedment of natural resources faces many challenges which are impeding regional economic growth mostly in the areas of trade liberalization and labor movement. The RISDP advocates for the quick harmonization of trade and labor movement policies, however, final decisions regarding the development and implementation of such policies come down to individual member states (Miller, 2010). The paper, therefore, argues that while the region has been continuously advocating for the entrenchment of regional integration and many protocols have been enacted to heed to this call, there are many challenges that hinder its successful consolidation, and these challenges hinder member states from fully prioritizing regional integration in Southern Africa.

The European Union which has over 28 members has over the past 20 years been able to collectively develop, negotiate and implement various developmental policies through commitment and dedication. Hence these policies have aided rapid development within the European Union. The Association of Southeast Asian Nations has also been able to implement economically friendly policies which have greatly contributed to regional development. These examples show that despite the many challenges that confront regional groupings, with commitment and cooperation, countries can overcome challenges and implement mutually benefiting policies. The Southern African Development Community is characterized by the vast availability of natural resources which could spur regional development. However, the region has failed to collectively implement socio-economic policies that would rapidly attract investments, increase regional trade and cooperation. Regrettably, the region trades more with external partners rather than prioritizing regional trade, while there are challenges that aim to hinder deeper regional integration in the region, the Southern African Development Community has unfortunately not shown the political will and dedication to deepen cooperation and implement economic policies that would accelerate development and growth (De Lombaerde, Estevadeordal, & Suominen, 2008). The study, therefore, analyses that challenges impeding regional integration in Southern Africa and what possible mechanisms can be implemented to spur regional development and eliminate these challenges.

2. Methodology

The study relied on extensively secondary data as a means of collecting relevant and required information. It employed strict textual analysis of the available literature relevant the concept of regional integration in Southern Africa. The qualitative research approach was employed in the course of analyzing the data for this study. The purpose of this approach was to put into context of understanding the underlying concept of regional integration in Southern Africa and whether this approach has been successful in contributing to the growth and development of member states within the Southern African Development Community, furthermore the study aimed to understand to what extent have challenges impeded the rapid consolidation of regional integration. Kawulich (2005) asserts that qualitative research uses methods such as participant observation or case studies which result in a narrative, descriptive account of a setting or practice. While relevantly new, various scholars have tried to understand the concept of regional integration in Southern Africa. Therefore, there are rich sources of information, though some of these sources may not comprehensively speak directly on regional integration in Southern Africa. They nonetheless offer views on the subject matter which will be utilized to enrich the study further.

Theoretical framework: A theoretical framework provides a particular perspective, or lens, through which a topic is examined (Miller, 2010). To understand regional integration in Southern Africa, the study used the theory of Regionalism. In the context of international relations and political studies, regionalism is the expression of common sense (by countries, people, or organizations) of identity and purpose combined with the creation and implementation of institutions that express a particular identity and shape collective action within a geographical region, the main aim is to economically advance the growth of the region through cooperation (Zeb, 2012). We can, therefore, opine that the creation of the SADC was a sign that regional states in Southern Africa wanted to increase cooperation and economic development. The creation of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) was the expression of regionalism as member states of the BLOC share numerous similarities and developmental traits. We can, therefore, study the cooperation of these countries from the regionalist point of view, also taking into account the numerous bilateral agreements and protocols that have been erected to ensure the consolidation of regional cooperation, so the provisions and groundings of this theory are relevant in explaining regional integration in Southern Africa despite the challenges currently facing the region. The regionalism theory rests on the notion that governments and stakeholders must contribute effectively to the development of a particular region, this could be done by increasing trade, regional investments and creating policies that deepen regional cooperation and integration (Söderbaum, 2004). The theory asserts that to a great extent, the ideologies of regions are inter-connected and that regional countries should harness these ideas and work together to contribute to the overall development of the region as a collective. The theory asserts that national governments have a huge role to play in this regard. Undoubtedly, SADC states have in the face of constant challenges advocated for the deepening of regional integration to spur economic growth and development; hence the idea of regionalism

in Southern Africa is very well alive, despite the many challenges that are impeding its successful consolidation.

3. Literature Review

Regional integration SADC: An Overview: There have been numerous efforts continentally which have been aimed at increasing regional integration, some of these efforts go back to as early as 1963 when the organization of African unity was formed (Elhiraika et al., 2016). This period saw many African states coming together with the aim of advocating for greater integration and harmony in terms of policy. This led to the creation of the OAU, which was unpinned by the need to ensure that African states achieved economic growth, increased levels of cooperation on issues of peace and security (Oppong, 2011). Regional and continental cooperation has been an ongoing phenomenon for decades now in Southern Africa, results and commitment from member states have been observed and the results have been rather satisfactory, clearly this shows that there is a huge room for improvement in terms of ensuring that regional groupings are contributing to the socio-economic development of member states (De Lombaerde et al., 2008). Greater cooperation among states is very imperative in order to have greater regional and continental development, especially considering that Africa is currently faced with numerous issues such as infrastructural challenges, illiteracy and poverty and more recently the increase in terror-related issues among others (Gutowski et al., 2016), therefore regional groupings have a huge role to play in aiding member states effectively tackle these challenges (Copson, 2007).

Undoubtedly, the establishment of the SADC in 1990 was underpinned by the idea that regional coordination and cooperation would undeniably lead to socio-economic development and faster integration among member states (Kararach & Besada, 2016), and fortunately; when one observes the positive rates of development that regional communities have brought to other countries in the world, it becomes evident that regional communities are in fact a pathway to growth and development, they encourage cooperation between member states and surely contribute significantly to regional stability and security (Yin, 2012). Furthermore, the successful entrenchment of regional integration contributes to decreasing poverty levels, unemployment, increases the standards of living and finally supports the socially disadvantaged through regional cooperation and integration (Tekere, 2012). Madyo (2009) opines that the fundamental aim of regional communities in Africa should be to ensure mutual cooperation, more especially because the colonial past that many African countries share. Therefore, the Southern African Development Community as regional body was meant to rapidly accelerate the development of regional policies that would cement socio-economic development for the region, and ever since its establishment (Ramutsindela, 2007), the SADC has incorporated many policies which aim at encouraging regional growth, debatable though, one may argue that the success rate of these policies in the region have been rather doubtful. Some of the most important protocols/policies developed by the SADC to promote integration and cooperation include:

Preferential Trade Agreement: It was greatly debated and agreed that to increase trade between member countries, customs duties had to be reduced as they were a huge barrier, hence the development of the Preferential Trade Agreement (PFA) (Khandelwal, 2004). Furthermore, eliminating tariffs and tariff quotas was also imperative in enabling member states to increase trade regionally. The SADC through the Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan (RISDP) advocates for member states to agree on policies that would promote trade regionally and countries must eliminate trade barriers that suffocate trade in the region (Gathii, 2011). Trade liberalization has been associated with economic growth and employment; hence the SADC has encouraged member states to harmonize trade policies (Moreira, 2004). The reduction in tariffs and customs duties will enable member states to increase their exports to other countries which will be beneficial economically for the region (Than & Gates, 2001). While the PFA has not been fully entrenched regionally itself, the SADC has continued the call for its full realization as it would contribute significantly to development regionally. Plummer et al. (2011) also opine that globally, countries are embracing the idea of free trade and the SADC should not be left behind in this regard. Kühnhardt (2010) further, states that for the SADC to fully reap the rewards associated with regional integration, the region must:

- Reduce regional trade tariffs, customs and duties, however, their total elimination would be brilliant for the region
- Limit regional bureaucracy when it comes to agreeing on mutually benefiting policies and

- Work together to rectify any challenges in the region that might be hindering economic growth and development

Monetary union: Sorgenfrei (2011) states that one factor which has contributed significantly to the development of the European Union (EU) was the establishment of a monetary union. As countries in the EU use one single currency, regional trade is very easy to undertake and furthermore the currency protects the region from market uncertainty. The SADC through the RISDP acknowledges that importance and benefits of a monetary union and aimed at formally establishing one (Ferreira, 2011). However, one main problem with the SADC is the mistrust between member states, since its inception the SADC should have long instituted a monetary union in the region to increase growth and economic stability (Nathan, 2013), however, till his day, there is no union and implementing a monetary union may face resistance from some member states as they may feel it will encroach their sovereignty and integrity. The author does, however, agree that its implementation would be beneficial for the region.

Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA): It was a historic day on the 12th June 2011, when various heads of state from Southern African Development Community and East African Community officially welcomed the inauguration of the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) free trade area (Khandelwal, 2004). The aim was to further entrench the idea of regional integration through trade policies that would enable the easy flow of goods, services and capital, factors which are very important in contributing towards job creation and increasing trade regionally between member states (Elbushra et al., 2011). USA International Business Publications (2011) opines that while there have been very significant and important policies which have been developed by the SADC to promote regional integration, often their implementation has been very slow and their benefits to member states have been questionable. This may be because the required technical and infrastructural capacity needed to support these policies is lacking in the region and moreover, the ever-growing economic disparity in the region will further impede the entrenchment of regional integration. Additionally, a constant delay in the implementation policies is also contributing to the region's inability to achieve rapid socio-economic development.

Regional integration in SADC: Current status: Increased trade volumes would be a great indicator that SADC countries are deepening and prioritizing regional integration. However, statistics show that regional trade is dismally low, roughly 15-17 percent (Tralac, 2017). Chidede (2017) further opines that SADC intra-regional trade is only 10 percent which is very low compared to 24 percent in Asia and 40 percent in the European Union. This implies that SADC trades 90 percent with external countries. What's more, the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) opines that regional trade and growth will be a problem going forward mainly because of tariffs, duties, lack of infrastructure, poor economic growth and the slow ratification of regional policies meant to induce growth in Southern Africa (Jenkins, 2001). McNamee et al. (2015) argue that while the SADC is very good at developing policies aimed at encouraging regional development; the unwillingness to quickly implement these policies are another compounding factor affecting regional development and growth. An increase in intra-regional trade can create employment, support and expand markets and aid in the attraction of foreign direct investment. Moreover, it ensures competition for local firms enabling countries to have a diversification of products which surely contributes to innovation (Hallaert, 2007). From observation point of view, one can surely observe that the SADC has prioritized trade with external countries rather than investing in increasing trade from a regional perspective. Hence the region does not really accrue benefits associated with regional trade compared to countries in the European Union (Narlikar, 2011). Lewis (2001) also states that regional trade is dominated by South Africa, which enjoys a huge surplus in the region, thus achieving equal rates of economic growth becomes merely difficult. While there are many challenges to be addressed, the SADC has not taken drastic steps to commit itself in increasing regional trade.

Labor Movement: Rönmar (2011) opines that as a result of the European Union's policy on free labor movement, countries like Germany, Britain, France and Austria have tremendously benefited from the free labor movement policy as millions of skilled individuals for the bloc have migrated to these countries, which has resulted in skills transfer, innovation and development, while the increase remittance flows has been a great source of income for sender countries, who are mostly from Eastern Europe. Deacon et al. (2009) posit that the provision of a free labor movement policy in SADC remains a controversial topic, despite many

agreements and commitments by governments of the region to reduce the barriers associated with regional labor movement, many countries in the bloc are still opposed to a policy advocating for the free movement of people. McNamee et al. (2015) mention that an effective policy framework to manage labor movement would help spur development in the region, however, Nshimbi & Moyo (2017) opine some countries would be huge receivers, while some will be huge senders, hence perhaps the probability of the unequal rates of labor movement in the region is another factor preventing its establishment let alone implementation. Mayr & Peri (2009) emphasize that while the free labor movement policy of the European Union been hailed, it has its drawbacks, most notably because Eastern European countries lose a considerable amount of skills to the Western part of Europe and no matter how much remittances are sent back, unfortunately, they alone cannot compensate the loss of so many skilled professionals, moreover unlike the SADC, the EU has is characterized by rapid development and industrialization, hence implementing regional policies is easier as there are adequate technical and infrastructure capabilities to support these polices in terms of their implementation, operation and monitoring (Takács, 2015).

Regional integration in SADC: Possible benefits: Due to many regional and internal member state barriers, regional integration in Southern Africa has not been fully realized as member states would have anticipated. Regional integration in many parts of the world has been aided by the liberalization of trade and the free movement of labor policies, and regrettably, for Southern Africa, the region has not fully prioritized the implementation of these important elements (Chingono & Nakana, 2009). The SADC (2012) submits that should member states overcome challenges that are hindering the entrenchment of regional integration; it's successful consolidation would:

- Contribute to increasing in member states market development
- Increase regional trade and investments flow
- Promote the transfer of technology and expertise
- Create and sustain employment
- Improve standard of living and
- Increase cooperation on issues of common threat

Jabara et al. (1996) however, mention that SADC member states are very slow in ratifying regional protocols, mainly because they put national interests first than that of the region. Furthermore, there are numerous challenges that are hindering the region from successfully entrenching regional integration. Southern Africa is confronted with numerous barriers in promoting and realizing economic growth and development, and most importantly the provision and entrenchment of clear channels of communication which will ensure the region meets its regional and international commitments, particularly in relation to trade liberalization, poverty eradication, the entrenchment of regional integration and improving standards of living. Kawendu (2009) further states that the major problem affecting socio-economic development in Southern Africa is that member states have failed to attract the much-needed capital investment, this is mainly due to the absence of robust regional policies that prioritize trade and investments. Additionally, the lack of infrastructure to support trade policies has also been a major contributor. Chimnga (2009) also alludes that Southern Africa is one of the hardest hit regions in terms of brain drain, the region losses numerous skilled professionals to mainly developed Western countries, and this itself has significantly contributed to the failure of the region to achieve sustainable socio-economic development. Skilled professionals have been known to contribute extensively in a country's development; they contribute immensely in sectors such as research, construction, education, science and technology and manufacturing, and therefore, their migration negatively impedes development.

Tekere (2007) blames the increasing rate of HIV in the region as a huge stumbling block in terms of entrenching regional integration, governments have had to allocate billions of dollars to fight the disease, yet it is on the constant increase, and unfortunately, numerous people have died as a result of the ever-spreading disease. Governments have had to divert a lot of resources in trying to control the disease, which ultimately affects trade as resources are diverted to tackle the epidemic. Belshaw (2002) acknowledges that while the region is grappling with series of issues which are affecting regional development, the region however needs to urgently implement sustainable macroeconomic policies that will improve the business environment for investment and regional trade, more ever, the political instability in some resource-rich countries in the

region will further be a barrier to attracting the necessary investments and growth. In conclusion, Tekere (2007) states that HIV/AIDS pandemic poses a stern challenge regionally and if is not severely dealt with, it will result in numerous resources being diverted hence affecting the fight against other challenges such as poverty, education and limited trade.

Challenges facing regional integration in Southern Africa: The following challenges have greatly affected regional integration in Southern Africa. They have continuously impeded regional efforts by governments to integrate and increase cooperation; these challenges are a combination of socio-economic and surely, their continued existence will keep on impeding the successful consolidation of regional integration in southern Africa.

HIV/AIDS: The HIV epidemic has remained one of the biggest challenges facing regional integration in Southern Africa. Zungu-Dirwayi (2004) state that within the region, South Africa has the largest and highest profile in terms of the prevalence of HIV in the world, with 7.1 million of the population living with the disease in 2016. In the same year, there were a reported 270 000 infections and 100 000 South Africans died from HIV. Morna&Dube (2014) state that member states have spent billions of dollars on trying to combat the disease, member states have diverted funds meant for education, healthcare and infrastructure development in order to fight the disease, which has further hampered the successful entrenchment of regional integration in Southern Africa, and this further prolongs the cycle of underdevelopment and poverty. Southern Africa has alone accounted for 64 percent of people living with HIV; furthermore, the life expectancy has been greatly reduced because of the ever-increasing rate at which the disease is spreading (Jamison, 2006). Mbuya (2000) states that countries such as Zambia, Zimbabwe, Namibia, Swaziland, Malawi, Botswana and South Africa have a high percentage of citizens who are living with the disease, and regrettably, the infection rate in the region is on the continuous increase, despite the huge amounts of monies which have been spent by regional governments. While many SADC states have poured significant resources in the fight against HIV, factors such as illiteracy, alcoholism and poverty are major contributors to the spread of the disease in the region.

Poverty: Another great challenge hindering the successful entrenchment of regional integration in Southern Africa is the high levels of poverty experienced by member states. Aris & Wenger (2013) opine that nearly half of the SADC population lives below \$1 per day. According to the intentional council of social welfare, hunger, gender inequalities, exploitation, marginalization and HIV are the major contributors to the ever-increasing rates of poverty in the region (Skoet & Stamoulis, 2006). While the SADC through the RISDP, prioritizes the eradication of poverty through effective policy, the poverty rate in the region appears to be on the constant increase, and according to Jenkins et al (2000) this is mainly because SADC states are unable to effectively deal with the root factors that are contributing to the increasing rate of poverty regionally. According to Kanyenze & Jauch (2016) 45 percent of the total population in Southern Africa live in poverty. The region accounts for 9 percent of extreme poverty worldwide, surprisingly though, the region only accounts for 2.5 percent of the world population. Extreme poverty in the region is set to increase drastically over the next 40 years (Porter, 2017), hence, the urgent need for regional governments to develop policies that would contribute to the reduction of poverty levels.

Human capital development: Human capital development is another problem affecting regional integration in Southern Africa. The difficulty in accessing education makes it extremely difficult for citizens of member states to contribute effectively to the consolidation of regional integration and development (Fosu, 2015). Maumbe (2009) opines that accessibility of education in the region is still a huge problem, as most of the population was still finding it difficult to access quality education. Only 20 percent of children completed secondary education in SADC, less than 5 percent of secondary school graduates went to college. Ross (2008) opines that the illiteracy levels in Southern Africa are very challenging for the region and have contributed to the cycle of poverty and underdevelopment. Omamo& von Grebmer (2005) opine that there the region is characterized by a huge number of uneducated people and this means governments have a reduced number of educated professionals to aid in the implementation and sustaining of policies related to regional integration, hence further affecting its consolidation in Southern Africa.

Economic growth: The fundamental challenge for the SADC is to create an environment that will be conducive enough to ensure the attraction of foreign direct investment which will contribute to socio-

economic development in the region (Mundial, 1992). The region has to reduce or perhaps eliminate policies that hinder the attraction of foreign direct investment. Mapuva & Muyengwa-Mapuva (2014) state that the region has drastically failed to increase inter-regional trade in order to promote economic growth, more especially considering that the region itself is characterized by huge unequal rates of development. Deeper levels of integration require an environment that is characterized by economic growth, and unfortunately, many countries in the region are currently experiencing sluggish rates of economic growth, therefore debatable, one may argue that the region's quest to rapidly integrate may not be feasible in the current economic climate (De Bruyn, 2012). Economic growth ensures countries are able to increase investments in fundamental sectors such as education, health and infrastructure, however with the region struggling economically, Mapuva & Muyengwa-Mapuv (2014) opine that the goal of the SADC to achieve equal rates of economic growth in the region would be extremely difficult going forward, unless policies to attract investment, harmonize trade and allow free labor movement are implemented.

Corruption: Africa is considered to be a very corrupt continent, where leaders are continuously accused of syphoning off public funds for self-enrichment at the detriment of the African people (Mekonnen, 2015). Undeniably, while such statements have often been in contradictory with each other, African leaders have indeed amassed millions of dollars in personal wealth. Hence their corrupt ways have contributed in the way in which the international community views Africa, as a corrupt continent. The Protocol against Corruption established by the SADC was a response to the growing rates of corruption in the region. A report by Transparency International (2011) stated the corruption was on the constant increase in the region and urged governments to enact tougher national laws that would aim at combatting corruption. Furthermore, from a regional perspective, the region needs to invest more in regional policies that would aid in eradicating corruption.

The rise of Multinational cooperation's: Chiozza & Goemans (2011) mention that currently, the political and governance system in some regional countries have only benefited those in power, while the masses linger in poverty, malnutrition and degrading standards of living. Tangri & Mwenda (2013) state that the influx of multinational cooperations (MNC's) in the region has exacerbated the corruption problem in the continent, especially because of money hungry politicians. Gekonge (2013) mentions that cases of corruption reported in countries such as Angola and the Democratic Republic of the Congo have significantly decreased the growth potential of Southern Africa. Numerous MNCs are operating in many countries and many have been caught up in scandals of bribery and intimidation, surprisingly though no action has been taken, mainly because of their partnerships with politicians, and unfortunately this has devastated the socio-economic development prospects of Africa, further increased the rate of poverty and failed to improve the standards of living for the African people at large. Vlassenroot & Raeymaekers (2004) mention that the Democratic Republic of Congo which is rich in diamonds and coltan has been engulfed in never-ending sectarian wars, and often MNC's have been fingered as perpetrators of such wars, to gain access to the vast resources that are currently embedded in the country's land. The rise of multinationals in Southern Africa will threaten good governance, transparency and accountability in the region because of their exploitative nature of doing business.

Limited participation of civil society in governance: Civil society is undoubtedly an important element in promoting good governance, stabilizing democracy, contributing to policy development and holding the government to account. Civil society plays a key role in pushing for new laws, programmes, policies or strategies on promoting good governance and growth; they have the power to hold governments to account on their commitments and promises. Unfortunately, many governments are yet to fully understand and accept the role of civil society in governance and development and in Southern Africa, not all countries have welcomed the role played by civil society especially in terms of contributing to the formulation of government policy. Many countries restrict the holistic operation of civil society organizations especially those that are concerned with governance and human rights issues (Teferi, 2010). While many governments in SADC have welcomed the establishment of local civil society organizations, some SADC member states are sceptical of civil society. However, globally, the role of civil society in governance has been welcomed and surely governments in Southern Africa will going forward understand the importance of civil society on governance and policy development.

4. Findings and Discussion

Regional integration has been at the forefront in terms of countries aiming to promote regional growth, cohesion and development in the past 50 years (Soesastro, 2006). The SADC has understood the importance of regional integration and has challenged itself to develop and implement policies that would ensure regional development and growth. However, challenges have to a great extent impeded the realization of the benefits associated with regional integration and hampered its effective consolidation.

Economic growth and development: The failure or perhaps the reluctance of the SADC to implement policies aimed at harmonizing trade policies, labor movement, investment policies and regional policies aimed at rapidly increasing integration will further impede economic growth and development going forward (Oosthuizen, 2006). Despite the existence of disagreements, countries in Asia and Europe Union have forged ahead with regional implementation policies aimed at enhancing and contributing to economic development. However, SADC countries have not prioritized the implementation of economically friendly policies that would induce growth and development. Faye et al. (2004) however, mention that many countries in Southern Africa are confronted many internal challenges; hence many countries are focusing in fighting internal challenges rather than focusing on policies meant to consolidate regional integration further. While the RISDP clearly stipulates what needs to be done in Southern Africa in order for the region to achieve growth and development, regional structural challenges in member states impede the successful consolidation of regional integration in the region. These challenges, unfortunately, contribute extensively to underdevelopment and poverty in SADC, hence the call for the region to prioritize the development and implementation of policies that will induce growth and development in SADC.

Poverty and HIV: Economic growth automatically improves the standard of living and a country's ability to provide public services. Unfortunately, the SADC through its failure to implement robust economic policies to spur growth has, in turn, exacerbated the poverty and HIV problem (Tekere, 2012). The region is characterized by a high number of people living in poverty and this has affected the ability of regional member states to prioritize regionalism as they have had to divert resources in order to combat the increasing rate of poverty in the region (Zungu-Dirwayi, 2004). Furthermore, the ever-increasing rates of HIV infections in the region pose a significant challenge. HIV will undoubtedly decrease the availability of skilled human capital and this will further hamper regional integration efforts. Poverty and HIV will increase the rate of under development in the region; it will increase the failure to consolidate regional integration in Southern Africa fully.

Infrastructure challenges and the late ratifying of protocols: The provision of free trade and the liberalization of trade policies require robust and functional infrastructure for them to be fully entrenched and beneficial for member states. Weak infrastructure provision characterizes the region and a low rate of industrialization and of course, with the region experiencing poor rates of economic growth, investing in infrastructure development becomes very difficult (Khandelwal, 2004). Infrastructure availability is the driver of international trade and market development, hence the lack of infrastructure development and availability in Southern Africa further hampers the goal of increasing regional trade, affects the growth potential of regional economies and ultimately the regions ability to attract foreign direct investments (Huang, 2010). Crush & Dodson (2017) state that from a technical point of view, the SADC has not prioritized the quick ratification of policies and this further creates a hindrance to the aim the SADC which is to rapidly foster regional integration and growth. The late implementation of agreed policies, according to Aall& Crocker (2017), is because of mistrust or unwillingness of member states, for example, the free labor movement policy has not been ratified despite the continuous call by the SADC to implement such a policy.

5. Conclusion and Suggestions

Undoubtedly, Southern Africa had pinned its hopes that the formulation of the SADC would propel the region towards sustainable and equal rates of economic growth. Having seen regions such as Europe and Asia develop significantly because of regional integration, the SADC has hoped the same level of growth will be witnessed in Southern Africa, however, with so many challenges, the realization of equal rates of economic growth in Southern African has been rather difficult to achieve. Undoubtedly, regional groupings such as the

European Union and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations are enjoying the benefits of jointly implementing policies that are aimed at spurring regional development, and as a result, they have over the past decades experienced positive rates of economic development. However, while regional groupings have at times being criticized for overriding the national sovereignty of member states, nonetheless, they have been praised for consolidating deeper levels of integration between regional countries. Unfortunately, though, many challenges prevalent in Southern Africa have not permitted the region to enjoy the benefits that are associated with regional integration. Furthermore, the region has been rather slow in terms of enacting economically friendly policies to attract investments. Southern Africa to a great extent is experiencing increasing rates of economic disparity which further hinders the regions capacity to consolidate closer levels of regional integration as member states are preoccupied with national issues rather than prioritizing regional problems. Regional protocols meant to spur growth have also been hindered by economic and infrastructural challenges experienced by member states. While the region will surely strive to achieve greater levels of regional integration, it is quite evident that as long as these challenges persist, regional integration in Southern Africa will be difficult to achieve. It is with these findings that the study suggests the following:

Establishment of inter-regional trade committee: Barriers are hindering closer trade and the attracting of economic investment should be centralized, and a special committee on trade should be established. The committee will be different from that of the Committee of Ministers of Trade which is already in existence. The trade committee will be responsible for conducting extensive research to determine the nature of the barriers that are hindering trade and then develop the best solutions to respond to them. Trade experts from each member state will contribute to the formation of this committee and it will work hand in hand with the Committee of Ministers of Trade to rectify challenges affecting regional trade.

Harmonization of trade policies and consolidate the SADC free trade area: The region has the potential to increase regional trade, however, because of member state bureaucracy and the failure of states to regionally prioritize the reduction of trade tariffs and duties, inter-regional trade is at an all-time low, underdeveloped and not prioritized by the region. Trade policies should be aligned with national policies of member states in order to avoid any disagreements, the elimination of tariffs will surely increase regional trade, therefore countries should implement policies to increase trade and harmonize trade policies. While the continental free trade area is still in the pipeline, the SADC should strive to consolidate a regional free trade area and ensure that all member states are involved in its development and consolidation. The SADC has regional free trade area, however, regional trade remains very low and dominated by South Africa, Furthermore, not all SADC members have joined the free trade area, hence this call for the revitalization of the FTA to ensure that all members state are participating, this has to be done through effective policy coordination and cooperation between member states. Moreover, the SADC has to ensure that the free trade area does not affect individual member states policies on trade.

Improve the provision of good governance: Undoubtedly, good governance is key in promoting regional integration. Transparency and accountability need to be at the forefront when developing policies and mechanisms aimed at enhancing regional economic cooperation. The region should deal decisively with corruption as it has been identified as the major hindrance of regional integration, and it has hindered regional integration as many SADC countries are confronted by rampant corruption, embezzlement and maladministration.

Invest infrastructure development: One of the major challenges impeding greater regional integration in the SADC is the unavailability of robust and well-functioning infrastructure in the region. Telecommunications, road, rail and modern trade facilities are all imperative necessities needed to spur growth and development. Perhaps to alleviate this problem, SADC states could establish an investment fund, where member states would on a monthly contribute a certain amount needed to fund regional infrastructure in member states, of course the criteria for which type of infrastructure is urgently needed would be left to the SADC, but nonetheless this would contribute effectively in ensuring the provision of quality infrastructure in the region and it will also benefit the region in the long run.

Institute a regulated border policy: European countries undertook great sacrifices to ensure the creation of the EU's free labor movement policy. The SADC should jointly implement policies that would ensure the uninhibited movement of labor across the region, however, the mere fact that countries in the region are characterized by unequal rates of migration, perhaps this has been one of the major stumbling blocks that has prevented the region from implementing a free labor movement policy. However, Hepple (2005) mentions that a regulated labor movement policy will surely contribute to innovation and the transfer skills, hence developing and implementing a free labor movement policy would be beneficial for the region.

Rectify regional policies and coordinate the fight against HIV and poverty: The problem of delaying the ratification of regional policies is another problem impeding the successful consolidation of regional integration. The SADC must ratify policies in a timely manner to ensure that regional integrating is consolidated effectively. Regional integration can only be successful if member states ensure the fight against HIV which has been a huge factor affecting regional cooperation and growth. The SADC should strive to collaborate with international partners to ensure the fight against HIV, this could be in the areas of training of medical staff, construction of medical facilities and prevention programs as this would aid the region in its fight against the disease, especially considering that regional governments have spent billions of dollars fighting the disease. Furthermore, poverty has been devastating for the region, it has not aided the region in its quest to achieve development, therefore regional governments should establish policies that would contribute extensively to the reduction of poverty, these policies may be centered on education, trade and investments as these three elements have been proven to contribute to the reduction of poverty. While these suggestions may go a long way in aiding the entrenchment of regional integration in SADC, ultimately the will has to come from individual member states as they are the decisions makers when it comes to the adoption of policies agreed at regional level, and until the region has prioritized regional economic development through observable actions, challenges such as HIV, poverty and the lack of adequate infrastructure will continue negatively impacting socio-economic development in the region.

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