

**BINDURA UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE EDUCATION
FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES**



**OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES FOR ZIMBABWEAN YOUTH
ENTREPRENEURS IN THE AFRICAN CONTINENTAL FREE TRADE AREA**

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A Dissertation Submitted to the Department of Peace and Governance in partial fulfilment for
the requirements for the Master of Science in International Relations Degree

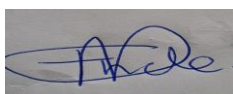
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Abstract

The study was on "Opportunities And Challenges For Zimbabwean Youth Entrepreneurs in the AfCFTA." AfCFTA is the second largest, from WTO, economic integration bloc in the world. AfCFTA seeks to boost intra-regional trade. It came after a lot of false starts by predecessor RTAs owing to stalemates on tariffs and non-tariff barriers. The study sought to assess opportunities and challenges for Zimbabwean youth entrepreneurs in the AfCFTA in Harare metropolitan. The study used qualitative methodology aligning with an interpretivist research paradigm in seeking to collect qualitative data on the subjective experiences of the selected study participants. The research engaged 10 male and 10 female youth entrepreneurs and a 10-member focus group discussion with non-youth entrepreneurs in order to gain insights on changes and discontinuities on RTAs. The study used in-depth interviews, key informant interviews, focus group discussions observations to collect primary data, two separate interview guides were used, one for entrepreneurs and the other for officials. The research adopted a case study research design. The study made use of both liberal economic interdependence and neofunctionalism to account for the challenges and opportunities presented by AfCFTA, particularly supranationalism, interdependence and spillover effects of integration. For Zimbabwe it was noted that cereals, tobacco, and agro-processed goods are likely to have impact in the economic bloc. However, Zimbabwe's youth are being weighed down by powercuts, multi-currency makes their products less competitive compared to others that use 'soft money,' the problem is compounded by many roadblocks and checkpoints, the personnel manning them solicit for bribes, causing unnecessary expenses and delays. The research found out the AfCFTA is hyped by government officials saying that there are loads of opportunities, these opportunities are in a distant future and is punctuated by 'will' yet on the ground Zimbabwe has a negative balance of trade owing to Deindustrialisation which traces back to structural adjustment programmes and other economic challenges. The researcher recommends Zimbabwean youth entrepreneurs in the same trade must consider pooling together their resource together in order to purchase in bulk and later break-bulky once the imported container reaches the country. This in turn brings comparative advantage to Zimbabwe youth entrepreneurs and bridge a gap between them and foreign nationals operating in the country.

DECLARATION

I Fortunate Mukonde, hereby declare that the information herein publication, Opportunities and Challenges for Zimbabwean Youth Entrepreneurs in The African Continental Free Trade Area, submitted in partial fulfillment of Master of International Relations Degree, submitted in the Department Peace and Governance, has never been presented, submitted or published in this nature or part. Previous works on the research topic have been fully accredited and properly referenced.

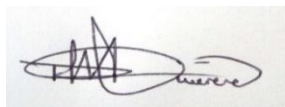


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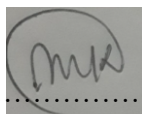
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Supervisor Dr Makwerere



Signature Date signed...08/09/25.....

Chairman Dr Kurebwa



Signature Date signed ...19/09/2025.....

Dedication

To my beloved wife Ropafadzo Mukonde and our charming children Ethan, Eliette and Evan.

Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge the guidance and invaluable support received from my supervisor Dr D. Makwerere who guided the writing of this thesis. His guidance and advice carried me through all the stages of writing the dissertation. It was a great experience to do this research under his mentorship. I also extend my gratitude to the Bindura university of Science Education's Department of Peace and Governance Staff for their guidance in various modules that set the foundation for research. Special thanks goes to my wife and children Ethan, Eliette and Evan, family and friends for their endless support and understanding when I was undertaking my research and writing my dissertation. Your prayers sustained me. I also want to appreciate all my classmates for their support through my study period. Furthermore, I would like to express my gratitude to all the research participants, who made this research successful.

List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

AEC: African Economic Community

AfCFTA: African Continental free trade area

ATU: African Telecommunications Union

AU: African Union

COMESA: Common Market for East and Southern Africa

EAC: East African Community

ESAPs: Economic Structural Adjustment Programs

FDI: Foreign Direct Investment

GDP: Gross Domestic product

ILO: International Labour Organisation

NEPAD: New Partnership for Africa's Development

OECD: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

PAYE: Pay-As-You-Earn

RECs: regional economic communities

RTAs: Regional Trade Agreements

SADC: Southern African Development Community

SMEs: Small, Medium and Enterprises

SSA: Sub-Saharan Africa

UN: United Nations

UNCTAD: United Nations Conference on Trade and Development

US: United States

VAT: Value-Added Tax

WTO: World Trade Organisation

ZIMRA: Zimbabwe Revenue Authority

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the study

Entrepreneurship refers to the ability and enthusiasm to develop, organise and run a business enterprise, along with any of its uncertainties in order to make a profit (Mazikana, 2023). Entrepreneurs are a fundamental constituent of economies worldwide (Pasteur: 2001). According to Block and Sandner (2019) an entrepreneur is an innovator, repository of fresh ideas, products, business and services. Entrepreneurs are a significant constituency in any economy, they harness expertise and resourcefulness in anticipation needs and bringing fresh positive concepts to the market (Alexandru and Elisa, 2017). Entrepreneurship has been in existence since time immemorial (Pasteur, 2001), and varies in scope, quality and time. In contemporary times, entrepreneurship has largely become a livelihood and survival strategy associated with the informal economy (Magidi: 2024, 2). Hart (2007) argue that the informal economy is the major economic sector in Global South. Notably in Africa, many people are excluded from participating in the formal economy, some end up eking a living through a complex mix of low set up cost entrepreneurial activities.

For International Labour Organisation (ILO, 2022) entrepreneurs are people who provide ‘goods’ or ‘services’ in public sphere, that is, pavements and thoroughfares. In Global South entrepreneurial activities earned the name small, medium and micro enterprises (SMEs) (Magidi 2019). Zimbabwe has a high incidence of SMEs and street entrepreneurship activities that the ordinary people normally resort to due to constricted economic situation with limited opportunities. Street entrepreneurship constitute a huge chunk of the urban informal economy

in response to perpetual poverty and high rates of unemployment, consequentially, many people resorted to informal trading as a means of livelihood. Thus many African countries are characterized by informal entrepreneurs.

Goodfellow (2016) notes that most informal entrepreneur activities are easy to enter and requires relatively low capital to start a business. They are also largely dependent on local raw materials. It largely uses free labour from family members who usually work long and flexible hours to maximize profits. In addition, SMEs uses adapted technology that is cheaper to access and use. Most street entrepreneurial activities are unregistered, suggesting that, they have fewer restrictions. The business enterprises include petty trading activities with entrepreneurs selling products like fruits, vegetables, snacks and handicrafts such as flower vases, brooms and mops, garment and shoe repairing and making among others. Activities by small scale producers and retailers are also very prevalent. Some entrepreneurs work on big projects in light manufacturing sectors like furniture, clothing and metal fabrications (Magidi, 2024 p.5).

The informal sector constitutes about 70% of the sum of employment and one third of the GDP in the Global South economies (Magidi, 2024). Zimbabwe fit in these statistics, with the informal economy constituting more than 80% employment and more than 50% GDP in 2018. Ohnsorge and Shu Yu posit that the size of informal entrepreneurship varies across regions and countries and Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) having the highest prevalent. Many scholars contend that in SSA and in Zimbabwe, in particular, the high incidence of entrepreneurial activities can be attributed to massive deindustrialization, 'socio-economic' and 'political' crises that has been experienced across the region for more than three decades (Coltart, 2018. Ndiweni and Verhoeven, 2013; Mbiru, 2015).

Africa suffers from trade and industrial development constrains that are unique to what other regions encounters. Much of Africa's development problems have roots in historical

exploitation under colonial rule and strong roots in poor governance in the post-colonial era (Adewole, 2014, p 297). The post-independence challenge of African countries was to chart the pathway to rapid development. Many African countries were essentially agrarian in nature in the immediate post-independent years, and in fact many are still at that state. The endowments of natural resources such as crude oil, diamonds, cobalt, lithium and gold created further bottlenecks for industrialisation beyond the Dutch diseases syndrome usually discussed in the literature. Having inherited weak and extractive economies from colonial regimes, early post-independence governments failed to improve the political and economic institutions but made policies that exploited the institutional weakness of the country they sought to lead. According to Adewole (2014) the shift from protectionist policies (1960s-1980s) to more open, externally-focused strategies (1990s) via Economic Structural Adjustment Programs (ESAPs) did not yield the intended results (Adewole 2014 p 330). ESAPs' de-industrializing impact wiped out many promising companies, erasing their hard-earned knowledge and potential for future development (Stein, 2014).

Poor road infrastructure in Africa, characterised by high percentages of unpaved roads and low density, hinders economic development, isolates communities and impacts trade and access to essential services. After independence, countless infrastructure projects were launched, including the 'Trans-African Highway' (TAH) network, which was conceptualized in the 1970s. Despite this, the TAH still has gaps, particularly at border crossings, decades after its inception. Most roads are unpaved and in poor conditions (Howard Stein, 2014, 278). For example, in 2005, only 34 percent of the roads in the COMESA sub region were paved while 68 percent were unpaved and in poor conditions. Similarly, for CEMAC 34 percent (%) were tarred roads and 55% were not paved and in bad conditions in the same period (Memfih, 164).

In addition to poor road network, the interconnections of railway network are poor compared to other regions in the world. There are predominantly three railway gauges across the continent

which are 1,000m 1,067m and 1,435m. This causes challenges to real integration of the railway systems in many sub-regions. Incoherent railway networks cause recurrent loading and offloading of merchandises, which increase transport expenses and delays (Memfih, 164). The deplorable state of transport infrastructure increases the overheads of transporting goods and services across borders (Kassa et al, 273). According to ECA (2004) landlocked countries in particular and Africa, in general, experiences high transport costs with an average export value of 14% as equated to 8.6 % for all emerging economies. Like many other studies, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) report indicates that transport costs in Africa are the highest world over (UNCTAD 2002).

Security checkpoints and roadblocks is an impediment to trade in Africa. Consequentially, results in the increase in transport costs and delays. In West Africa for example, many countries maintain various checkpoints, at which drivers experience administrative harassment and extortion by corrupt security officials (Asongu and Odhiambo (2018) (Grimm et al, 2013). Furthermore, Africa lags behind other regions in the adoption of contemporary or automated information and communications technology in both internal and external trade goings-on. This causes further delays, costs and inefficiencies because both presentation of paper documents and verification of submitted documents would take place at the time of border crossing. To compound things, the region has the lowest internet connectivity in the world (Memfih, 169). Its telecommunication services are either inadequate, expensive or non-existent in some rural areas.

In view of the above, Africa experiences constrained intraregional trade. This is largely attributed to 'high tariffs' and 'non-tariff' barriers in the form of underdeveloped regional transport infrastructure, inefficient ports characterised by red-tape, archaic official processes, insufficient use of automated systems, inadequate market information and reliable utilities (electricity and telecommunications) and inconsistency in customs activities (N. M Mamfih,

160) among other factors. Equally, World Trade Organisation (WTO) is of the view that the high cost of Africa's intraregional trade is partly driven by poor trade logistics which includes; 'customs, infrastructure, international shipment, logistics quality, and competence, tracking and tracing and timelines that performs worse than other regions' (WTO, 2015).

In spite of the post-independent industrialization drive, Africa remained underdeveloped with low level of industrialization characterized by lack of visible success in skill intensive export markets, severe under-investment in public infrastructure, inability to diversify the export base, increased cost of production, revenue and expenditure volatility, high levels of inflation and unemployment, fewer economic opportunities for the rural populace leading to massive rural-urban migration associated with a rapidly rising informal sector and the general underdevelopment of productive entrepreneurship (Adewole Musiliu Adeolu, 2014, p 329).

Consequently, Africa's intraregional trade had remained extremely marginal compared with other regions. For the past twenty years, the middling share of internal Africa trade in total exports stood at '12%, as matched to 56% of exports being intraregional in Asia, 58% in the Americas and 71% in Europe' (UNCTAD, 2013). In addition, Africa is still a peripheral trade participant across the globe. Africa's stake in the global trade stood at 2% (period 1995-1999) and it only rose to 5% (period 2011 - 2017). Conversely, Asia's share for example, increased from 27% during 1995-1999 to 37% between 2011 and 2017 (UNCTAD, 2018).

Over the years efforts to facilitate intra-African trade have been undertaken at national, bilateral, sub-regional, regional as well as international level. The efforts include among others, the signing and ratification of 'conventions', 'protocols' and 'agreements' and the 'establishment of institutions and trade facilitation initiatives.' At sub-regional level, COMESA and SADC (eastern and southern Africa respectively) have protocols covering the area of transport. COMESA and SADC has measures in place for transport and transit between

member states. In West Africa, 'ECOWAS' and 'UEMOA' have adopted the 'Inter State Transport Convention' and the 'International State Road Freight Convention in 1982' (Bove et al 2018)

There are also initiatives towards enhancing communication networks and promotion of intraregional trade in Africa. These include among others 'the African Telecommunications Union (ATU) and the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD).' ATU had broad objectives covering joint capacity building, regional policy convergence, information exchange and standardization of tariffs and technology. It was established in 1999 and it sought to improve service access and interconnectedness among African countries and Islam (Ekekwe 2012). NEPAD is a wholesome and integrated sustainable development initiative for Africa's socio-economic development which was formed in 2001. Its primary objective is to eradicate poverty in Africa, to enhance intraregional trade and to place Africa on the trajectory of sustainable development (Mamfih, 176 Ekekwe and Islam (2012). (NEPAD has prioritise transport and trade facilitation in its action plan. In spite of these initiatives by many African countries are hindered from meaningful progress owing to resource and capacity constraints, in turn, makes Africa's intraregional trade to remain very low. This background information helps to understand the 'social' and 'economic' under currencies of Africa's policy regime which is essential to appreciation of the opportunities and challenges of AfCFTA to African states.

AfCFTA seeks to form a single continental market for goods and services, with free movement of business persons and investment among 54 African countries (Kassa, Edjigu and Zeufack, 245). The draft agreement was signed in March 2018. It is currently the 'world's largest free trade area, and is envisioned to change the trade and investment framework of African countries.' Hereunder are some of its major objectives;

- To create a single continental market for goods and services, with free movement of business persons and investments.
- To expand intra-Africa trade through further harmonisation and coordination of trade liberalisation and facilitation regimes across regional economic communities (RECs).
- To resolve the challenge of multiple, overlapping REC memberships and expedite the processes of regional and continental integration
- To enhance competitiveness at the industry and enterprise levels by exploiting opportunities for scale production, continental market access and better allocation of resources (Kassa et al, 245).

Under the AfCFTA countries agreed to ‘strike-off tariffs on 90% of goods during the first five-year-period, tailed by subsequent eradication of tariffs on the remaining products and also reduction of non-tariff barriers.’ It is estimated that upon operationalization of the AfCFTA, Africa’s internal trade is tipped to surge by 52% in 2022 owing to the elimination of tariffs. It is also envisaged that through promotion of internal trade, the AfCFTA will develop a robust ‘manufacturing sector’ and encourage ‘economic diversification.’ This will accelerate the development of industries in region’s countries and enhance economic growth and create welfare gains. (Kassa et al, (2022) like many other researchers, (Ndonga et al, (2020); Joseph, (2023) notes that the AfCFTA presents both challenges and opportunities to boost Africa’s internal trade. It is against this background that in the context of the ongoing Zimbabwean economic crisis punctuated by the dominance of small and medium informal enterprises this thesis explores the opportunities and challenges for Zimbabwean youth entrepreneurs in the AfCFTA. The study uses a case of Youth entrepreneurs in Harare metropolitan province, tapping into its cosmopolitanism.

1.2 Statement of the problem

Africa encounters a lot of security issues that impede her growth and stability. According to Joseph (2024 p.138), the continent experiences challenges, including violent conflicts largely caused by terrorism and military takeovers (Joseph, p.138). As violent conflicts become rampant, African states remains susceptible to human security threats including poverty,

inequality, diseases and pandemics, limited access to essential infrastructures such as water, electricity and sanitation, transport networks, digital platforms, customs infrastructure, excessive reliance on natural resources (Joseph, p. 138). Despite the vastness of Africa's market hovering around 1.3 billion people and abundant resources, intra-African trade remains critically low (Vhumbunu, 2021) For the past two decades, the total exports of Intra-Africa trade were 12 %, as compared to '56% of exports being intra-regional in Asia', '58% in the Americas' and '71% in Europe' (Kassa et al, 2022 p. 251). Africa is also a marginal participant in world trade. Africa's intercontinental trade share was 3% in 2017 compared to Asia's share of 37% during the same year. This low performance in intra-Africa trade is associated with the 'high tariff and non-tariff barriers.' UNCTAD (2013) indicates that 'Africa has an average protection rate of 8.5 % for intraregional exports compared with 2.5 % when exporting to markets outside the region.' In addition, 'African borders are marred with non-tariff barriers in the form of excessive and unnecessary document requirements, unnecessary delays, inefficient ports and underdeveloped infrastructure', which all increase the cost of trading within the region.

The unsatisfactory state of growth in African countries necessitated the establishment of AfCFTA (Vhumbunu & Rudigi, 2020:130). AfCFTA seeks to 'enhance intra-African trade, industrialisation and promote the free movement of people on the continent' (Vhumbunu & Rudigi, 2020:129). It is believed that reduction 'in tariff and non-tariff barriers on intra-regional trade provided by the AfCFTA will benefit the informal sector by enhancing trade for the 99% of Africans with SMEs, young entrepreneurs and women in business.' (Obeng-Odoom:2020, 169) Despite the AfCFTA's ambitious goals, almost five years after its operationalisation intra-African trade remains disproportionately low. Kassa, Edjigu and Zeufack, (2022:246) noted that the creation of AfCFTA presents both major opportunities and challenges to boosting intra-Africa trade. This thesis explores the challenges and opportunities

presented by AfCFTA to the Zimbabwe youth entrepreneurs, 43,6% of the employed youth are in the informal sector (ZIMSTAT, 2024). Zimbabwe presents an ideal case study for the past three decades, it has been experiencing perpetual economic crisis characterised by Deindustrialisation, poverty and unemployment (Magidi, 2024). This culminated in the growth of an informal economy, which is largely comprised of ‘illegal and unlicensed small scale retailing and street vending as the youth battle for survival under conditions of extreme vulnerability’ (Mbulayi, Makuyana & Kangethe, 2020). In view of the foregoing, the research sought to explore the opportunities and opportunities that come with the advent of AfCFTA.

1.3 Purpose of the study

The study sought to assess opportunities and challenges for Zimbabwean youth entrepreneurs in the AfCFTA.

1.4 Objectives

- To explore opportunities for Zimbabwean Youth in the African Continental Free Trade Area.
- To analyse the challenges facing the youth in Zimbabwe in penetrating the African Continental Free Trade Area.
- To examine how the African Continental Free Trade Area affects the competitiveness of young Zimbabwean businesses.
- To explore policies in Zimbabwe that support youth participation in the African Continental Free Trade Area.

5.0 Research Questions

- What are the opportunities for Zimbabwean youth in the AfCFTA?

- What are the challenges being faced by Zimbabwean youth entrepreneurs face within the AfCFTA?
- Are there policies in Zimbabwe that support youth participation in the AfCFTA?
- How does AfCFTA affect the competitiveness of young Zimbabwean businesses?

6.0 Assumptions of the study

The study is anchored on the belief that interventions to deal with entrepreneurship development and stronger economic integration are most powerful when they are informed by the entrepreneurs' perspectives. As such the study used qualitative methodology aligning with an interpretivist research paradigm in collecting qualitative data on the subjective experiences of the selected study participants. Another assumption is that the majority of youth entrepreneurs in Zimbabwe may not adequately benefit from opportunities presented by the AfCFTA package. Despite, 'the high anticipations and optimism, there exist genuine and legitimate political, economic, structural and technical factors that may prevent effective implementation of the AfCFTA' (Vhumbunu, 2020). African Union member states in their distinct capacities or jointly have to address these salient issues in order to successfully implement the AfCFTA.

7.0 Significance of the study

The proliferation of informal entrepreneurship both in urban and rural areas, sparked extensive scholarly interest on the subject. However, few studies, if any have actually attempted to examine the 'opportunities' and 'challenges' emanating from the operationalization of AfCFTA to youth entrepreneurs in Zimbabwe in the context of the ongoing economic crisis.

A few examples of studies on entrepreneurship in Zimbabwe include, Nyathi (2022) who evaluates the impact of entrepreneurial activities on employment creation in the town of Gweru. Sibanda (2005) explores the contribution of SMEs to the manufacturing sector in Bindura. While Ndiweni and Verhoeven (2019) explore the nature of strategic and entrepreneurial activities in the informal economy, as well as their concomitant effects. The research findings contribute to the academic field by offering qualitative insights into the possibilities for industrial development, increased ‘intra-regional trade’ and enhanced ‘economic growth’ following the operationalization of AfCFTA. These insights are valuable for both academic researchers, policy makers and industry practitioners aiming to develop ‘a more competitive manufacturing sector and promote economic diversification.’

Additionally, there is limited research on the relationship between entrepreneurship and RECs. A few examples of these studies in Zimbabwe include Tendai, Madziva and Shonhiwa (2021), who looked at the motivating factors for entrepreneurship in Harare, Magidi (2024), who analyzes ‘the evolution and development of the informal sector in Norton, Zimbabwe from, a disorganized small business to an organized sector that substantially contributes to job creation and economic growth’ (Croce, Derera, Phiri and O’Neill 2020) explore motivations for women entrepreneurship in Zimbabwe ‘opportunities’ and ‘challenges’ facing informal entrepreneurs. Despite the proliferation of diverse and complex youth entrepreneurship in small urban centres and rural areas, the literature has not sufficiently explored the opportunities and challenges presented by AfCFTA to youth entrepreneurs in the context of entrepreneurship activities in a small town. This evident knowledge gaps constraint the development of effective strategies and policies to fostering entrepreneurial development. This research used the case of Harare for its cosmopolitan effect and can provide a fair assessment of AfCFTA’s impact on youth entrepreneurs.

It is imperative to highlight that the opportunities presented by the AfCFTA to entrepreneurs both at local and regional context have been often told from secondary stakeholders' perspective rather than by participants who articulate their experiences of entrepreneurship. This study will present an opportunity to youth entrepreneurs to add their voices regarding the challenges they face in the business environment, and their creativity in the face of challenges as well as opportunities presented by stronger regional economic integration. A study of this nature adds an important voice to the numerous calls for empirical studies and strategies to promote entrepreneurship and to boost industrial productivity and market competitiveness among member states. The study is anchored on the belief that interventions to deal with entrepreneurship development and stronger economic integration are most powerful when they are informed by the entrepreneurs' perspectives.

8.0 Delimitations of the study

Theofanidis and Fountouki (2019) states that 'delimitation of the study refers to the scope of the research aims and research questions. Further, it reflects the researcher's intentions in terms of what the researcher will and won't try to achieve with the study.' The research was limited to youth aged between 18 and 35 years, because the constitution of Zimbabwe considers anyone 18 years and above as an adult and at the same time anyone below 18 years as a 'minor'. An 18-year-old individual is can make independent decision and legally face the consequences of his or her own decisions if they contravene the municipal law and the international equally. Therefore, the Zimbabwe youth entrepreneurs who will be considered in this research are the one who are 18 to 35 years of age (those who have reached the age of majority), when looking at opportunities and challenges for this cluster. The research will not look at entrepreneurs below 18 years and above 35 years.

9.0 Limitations of the study

According to Theofanidis and Fountouki (2019) ‘research limitation refers to weaknesses of the study based on factors that are usually outside the researcher’s control.’ These factors may include things like time, access to funding, equipment, data or participants. The fact that the research involves entrepreneurs who are much concerned with maximising every hour of the day, this present a challenge in making time for the researcher (Theofanidis and Fountouki 2019). To mitigate this challenge, the researcher will mail interview guides to the research participants to respond at the convenient time.

10.0 Definition of key terms.

10.1 AfCFTA by definition is an instrument of trade which favours ‘goods originating from within the continental free trade area over non-originating goods’ (Simbanegavi and Gwatidzo, 2024 p236) It’s a trade agreement established by the African Union to ‘form a single-market for trade in goods and services, as well as the free movement of people and capital across the African continent’ (AU, 2024). It seeks to facilitate ‘investment and trade among African countries by reducing tariffs and other trade barriers.’

10.2 Informal economy also known as ‘the informal sector’ or ‘shadow economy’, it encompasses activities that are not officially recorded or regulated by government, meaning they are not subject to taxation or official monitoring (Magidi, 2024, Higon et al 2024, UNCTAD, 2024) According ILO (2023) ‘informal economy’ refers ‘to all commercial undertakings by workers or economic units that are in law or in practice not covered or insufficiently covered by formal arrangements’ (ILO 2023). ‘It thrives mostly in a context of high unemployment, underemployment, poverty, gender inequality and precarious work’ (ILO, 2023, Magidi 2024).

Trade Policy also known as ‘commercial or international trade policy’, is a government’s set of rules and actions that ‘govern the exchange of goods and services between countries’. It defines how a country interacts with other nations in terms of buying and selling. Trade policies can range from free trade to protectionist policies (Zeufack et al, 2024). Hossain (2018) posits that trade policy defines values, goals, rules and regulations with regards to trade relations between countries. These policies are specific to each country and are formulated by its public officials. Whose aim is ‘to boost the nation’s international trade.’ For Jean-Baptiste (2019) trade policy consist of ‘managing the international exchanges of goods and services between national and regional economies. Trade policy falls into two broad categories, that is, the regulation of imports and the management of export, which itself is divided into export promotion and controls’ (Jean-Baptiste, 2019).

10.3 Trade participation refers to ‘the country’s involvement in International trade, including both exportation of goods and services to other countries and importation goods and services from others’ (Anon-Higon and Bonvin, 2024).

10.4 The definition of ‘youth’ is elusive and ‘there is no single’, and ‘unanimously’ accepted definition of ‘youth.’ The definition differs from one country or organization to another. For instance, ‘the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) defines ‘youth’ as ‘individuals aged between 15 and 19 years,’ whilst the Islamic Development Bank uses 15-35 years. The AU Charter has a broader age range and its definition put into cognisance people between 15 and 35 years old. In Kenya ‘youth are individuals aged between 15-34-year.’The United Nations (UN) defines ‘youth’ as ‘individuals aged between 15 and 24 years’ (UN-Migration 2023, UN 2024). The term ‘youth’ according to the Zimbabwe’s constitution Amendment (No.20) Act of 2013 section 20, ‘youth’ is defined as people of the ages of 15-35 years (Constitution of Zimbabwe, 2013). While it is plausible to include persons aged 15-17 as youth, the legal age for majority in Zimbabwe is at 18 years, the age at which an

individual is believed to have mature and could make sound and independent decision and are allowed to enter into paid labour. This research will consider youth from 18 -35years worth being included in the research.

10.5 Olawoyin and Chiwetu (2024), argues that ‘**entrepreneurship** is a multidimensional notion that involves a number of business-related processes.’ Thus, ‘entrepreneurship’ involves the ‘ability and willingness’ to establish, oversee and develop a business venture along with associated risks, with the aim of making profit (Mafini et al, 2021, Ayamga et al 2023, Olawoyin and Chiwetu 2024). Magidi (2024) used **informality and entrepreneurship** interchangeably, postulating that, informality is a term coined by Hart (1971) referring to economic livelihoods outside the formal economy that ordinary populace normally resorts to when faced with constricted economic situation with limited opportunities. Alternatively, informality was defined as “private unincorporated enterprise owned by individuals or households ...constituted as separate legal entities independent of their owners and for which one complete are available that would permit a financial separation of production activities of the enterprise from other activities of the owner” (Hussmanns cited in Magidi, 2024). For the purposes of this thesis, entrepreneurship of informal activities refers to engagements by individuals or household to guarantee domestic food security.

10.6 Deindustrialisation has been variedly defined, it may mean a clear-cut fall in the employment or manufacturing or output (Strangleman, (2024). It may refer to ‘a transformation from manufacturing to the service sectors, such that manufacturing has a lower share of a total employment output’ (Indrajit, 2022, Strangleman, (2024). ‘Deindustrialisation can be explained in terms of a declining of share of world trade in manufactured goods’ (Taguchi and Abdullaev (2022), Indrajit, 2022), such that ‘there is a progressive failure to achieve a positive balance of trade’ (Strangleman, (2024). This research regards de-industrialization as both the

decline in industrial output and the decline in the expansion of industries to areas where there are few or no industries at all.

12.0 Dissertation outline

This dissertation is organized into five chapters. The first chapter presents the introduction and the background of the AfCFTA. It discusses the primary aspects driving the decision of African Union member states to adopt the AfCFTA, focusing on factors linked with Africa's desire for deeper integration and trade facilitation. The second chapter provides an empirical literature review and theoretical framework of the study. The chapter presents a mixed theoretical framework using the liberal economic interdependence and neofunctionalism theories. The theories provide lenses through which to explore the opportunities and challenges of the AfCFTA's initiative to promote economic growth and development in Africa. The third chapter outlines the research design and methodology employed in the study. The chapter presents reasons for the adoption of the qualitative methodology to achieve the objective of the study. The fourth chapter, is concerned with data presentation, analysis and discussion of findings. Finally, chapter five provides the summary, conclusions, recommendations and areas for further research.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction

This chapter was broken down into the following, conceptual framework of Entrepreneurship, theoretical framework (liberal economic interdependence and neofunctionalism), the regime of AU trade policies (tracing the historical evolution from ‘the Lagos Plan of Action 1980, Abuja Treaty 1991, the Tripartite Free Trade Area 2015 to the AfCFTA 2018’), Youth participation in continental trade and Zimbabwe’s trade policies vis-à-vis regional and continental policies. And is framed within the liberal economic interdependence, and neofunctionalism theories. Neofunctionalism is influenced by democratic pluralism and functionalism. Neofunctionalism, was pioneered by Ernst B. Haas (1948) and explored by scholars like Leon Lindberg (1963), stressed ‘the importance of functional cooperation and integration in driving regional economic growth’ (Kuhn, (2024), Schimmelfenning, (2024). Neo-functionalism views ‘the state as an arena in which people operate to realize their interests differing from classical realist who emphasized state interests’ (Amartya, 2023). Further, neofunctionalist are in agreement with functionalist on the idea that ‘international cooperation is a response to scale economies in the provision of public good.’ ‘Neofunctionalism pay attention to the effects of supranationalism’ (Kuhn, 2024). ‘Supranational actors engineer policy spillover as policy entrepreneurs by brokering agreements and by coopting national bureaucrats or interest group leaders.’ They expect the ‘integration’ path to be jagged (Kuhn, (2024), Amartya, (2023), Kuhn, (2024), Schimmelfenning, (2024).

2.2 Theoretical framework

Theoretical and conceptual frameworks ‘form the base on which research credibility, acceptance and generalisability of concepts and theories, which one develops from previously tested and published knowledge builds on’ (Hussein and Agyem cited in Chukwuere, 2021). In other words, ‘theoretical framework is the structure that can hold or support a theory of a research. The main reason for developing a theoretical framework in research is to have a scholarly foundation and sense making of the meaning contained in one’s data’ (Crawford, 2020) Further, ‘conceptual framework is the rational conceptualisation of one’s research project’ (Crawford, 2020, Chukwuere, 2021). In light of the foregoing this research will make use of neofunctionalism, and the liberal economic interdependence theories when exploring the opportunities and challenges for Zimbabwe Youth entrepreneurs within the AFCFTA.

2.2.1 Liberal economic interdependence

Liberal economic interdependence was defined as the reciprocal dependence between two or more economies. It reveals the extent to which states rely on each other to attain the means of production in a bid to sustain their economic growth and stability. Further, economic interdependence matters for several reasons (Arkin, 2022, Magliulo 2024). Firstly, it encourages regional or global cooperation, as countries have vested interests in each other’s economic success. When countries depend on each another for critical components, goods, or services, they are more likely to foster diplomatic relationships, which can help reduce the probability of conflicts (Levy and Mulligan, (2022), Arkin, (2022)). Secondly, it enables specialisation and the efficient distribution and utilisation of resources. Countries can focus on producing goods and services where they have ‘comparative advantage’ and trade for what they need, leading to more efficient regional or global production and higher standards of living. However, this interdependence also means that economic shocks, like the financial crisis

of 2008 (Hamdaoui et al, (2022), can quickly spread regionally or globally, demonstrating how interconnected and vulnerable countries are to each other's economic health (Hass, (2021), Hamdaoui, Ayouni, and Maktouf, (2022). Thus, if one of the trading countries catches the cold the rest will also sneeze, meaning the integrated economies have the power to make or unmake the regional integration. Economic interdependence was useful in accounting for the 'challenges' and 'opportunities' faced by Zimbabwean 'youth entrepreneurs' in the AfCFTA

Liberal economic interdependence is a theory that promotes economic relations and free trade, adding that economic interdependence can reduce conflict (Laruelle, (2022). The theory suggests that countries are more likely to co-exist peacefully when they are economically interdependent. Liberal economic interdependence is a sub theory of liberalism. And the major tenets of liberalism include, international cooperation, support free-market-economy, emphasis on individual rights, believe in limited government intervention in individuals' lives and economy, pluralism among others (Ferguson, 2023). For this research, liberal economic interdependence theory is vital to grasp how economic cooperation, trade liberalisation, and regional integration within the AfCFTA can generate opportunities for Zimbabwean youth entrepreneurs to thrive in a dynamic and interconnected African Market. By embracing liberal economic principles, the AfCFTA has the likelihood to expedite economic empowerment, foster entrepreneurship, and promote sustainable development for youth entrepreneurs in Zimbabwe and across the continent.

2.2.2 Neofunctionalism theory

The application of neofunctionalism to the study of opportunities and challenges for Zimbabwean youth entrepreneurs in the AfCFTA provided invaluable insights. Neofunctionalism emphasises the role of supranational institutions in nurturing cooperation and integration, provides lens through which to understand how regional economic integration

impacts entrepreneurial activities in Zimbabwe (Schmitter, (2005). Thus, AfCFTA serves as a supranational institution Bergmann, (2018), setting trade rules that can benefit Zimbabwean youth entrepreneurs by expanding market access and facilitating cross-border trade. Furthermore, neo-functionalist framework emphasises the concept of spillover effects is crucial. Economic integration within the AfCFTA can create spillover (Nicoli, 2019) effects that positively influence various aspects of entrepreneurship, such as market expansion, trade facilitation, and regulatory harmonization (Nicoli, 2019 and Bergmann, 2018). In addition, neofunctionalism underscores the importance of functional differentiation, highlighting the need for entrepreneurs to navigate diverse policy domains, including trade regulations and business standards, to leverage the potential opportunities obtainable from the free trade area (Nicoli, 2019).

Rockson and Kwabena (2020), using neofunctionalism, suggests that successful economic integration within the AfCFTA may lead to societal transformation for Zimbabwean youth entrepreneurs. Increased participation in the free trade area can foster business networks, market exposure, and opportunities for innovation, contributing to the broader economic development of Zimbabwe. By applying neofunctionalist principles to this study, researchers can explore how regional integration mechanisms shape the entrepreneurial landscape in Zimbabwe and examine the ways in which economic integration influences the ‘challenges’ and ‘opportunities’ experienced by youth entrepreneurs within the framework of a Pan-African trade agreement like the AfCFTA.

‘Opportunities’ and ‘challenges’ faced by Zimbabwean youth entrepreneurs in the AfCFTA can be analysed using the lenses of liberal economic interdependence theory, and neofunctionalism. These theories offer a nuanced perspective on the structural constraints and opportunities within the regional integration framework. The dependency theory sheds light on how historical economic dependencies and unequal power relations have hindered Zimbabwe's

access to capital and technology (Rockson and Kwabena 2020). Conversely, liberal economic interdependence theory, influenced by scholars like Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye, provides a basis to examine trade barriers and regulatory complexities that impede Zimbabwean youth entrepreneurs' participation in cross-border trade within the AFCFTA. This theory underscores the benefits of reducing such barriers to enhance economic cooperation and entrepreneurship. Policy recommendations may include initiatives to harmonize trade regulations and facilitate intra-African trade, aligning with the liberal economic interdependence perspective on mutual gains from increased economic interaction (Arkin, 2022). Therefore, applying neofunctionalism helped in identify areas where cooperation among African nations is lacking, inhibiting entrepreneurship and innovation among Zimbabwean youth. Thus, policy implications may include encouraging collaboration in significant functional areas such as trade facilitation, investment promotion, and skills development, in tandem with neofunctionalist ideals of spillover effects and the role of supranational institutions in fostering cooperation (Mensah 2023).

By integrating views from the aforementioned theories and scholars, policymakers may develop targeted policies that speaks to the problems faced by Zimbabwean youth entrepreneurs in the AFCFTA. This comprehensive approach considers historical dependencies, trade dynamics, and functional cooperation to enhance the entrepreneurial ecosystem and leverage the opportunities presented by regional integration. The academic contributions of liberal economic interdependence advocates, and neofunctionalism scholars offer valuable frameworks for understanding and addressing the policy challenges impeding youth entrepreneurship in the AFCFTA context.

2.2.3 The International Political Economy

AfCFTA can be examined within the International Political Economy (IPE) framework. IPE is a field of study that examines the complex relationships between politics, economics, and international relations. Major concepts within IPE include realism (classical and neorealism) mercantilism (classical mercantilism and neo-mercantilism), liberalism and structuralism (Marxism and world systems) (Cohn and Hira 2025). Mercantilism and realism emphasises amassing wealth and power, it emphasises bullionism. Whilst structuralism emphasizes the idea that the world is what it is owing to set structures and it has a binary view of the world, that is the ‘core and periphery’ or the ‘oppressed and the oppressor.’ (Cohn and Hira 2025). And the liberalist thinking, which argues that democracy is the driver of world peace and cooperation among states is the key to economic growth (Cohn and Hira 2025). Liberalism emphasises that international institutions have power to constrain state behaviour as opposed to realist and mercantilist views. Therefore, this research is premised on liberalism’s tenets of liberal institutionalism and liberal economic interdependence.

2.3 Conceptual Framework of Entrepreneurship, Trade and Competitiveness

Olawoyin and Chiwetu (2024), argue that entrepreneurship is a complex notion that involves a number of processes related to business. Thus, ‘entrepreneurship involves the ability and willingness to establish, oversee and develop a business venture along with associated risks, with the aim of making profit’ (Mafini et al, 2021, Ayamga et al 2023, Olawoyin and Chiwetu 2024). Burns, (2022) and Blank, (2020) identify ‘entrepreneurship as the relentless pursuit of opportunity, regardless of any existing resources.’ For Burns (2022), the diverse definitions of entrepreneurship depict its complex nature. Furthermore, Lynch and Corbett (2023) and McGrath and MacMillan (2021), argued that, ‘many definitions tend to focus on objectives such as profit-making, risk management and innovation.’ Some scholars have pointed out that

‘this complexity may pose challenges for entrepreneurs in their pursuit of success given to the multiple components they are typically required to master’ (Stevenson and Jarillo, 2020, Olawoyin and Chiwetu 2024). These definitions and characteristics helped this research in situating Zimbabwean youth entrepreneurs in intra-continental trade.

Calderon, et al (2020) examines ‘the influence of trade integration in sub-Saharan Africa arguing that International trade integration has deepened over the past decades, both in the world and Sub-Saharan. Global trade has grown almost twice as global output (6 and 3.2% per year respectively) during 1983- 2008 and Gross domestic product (GDP) of Sub-Saharan Africa rose from about 40% in 1983 to 69% in 2008 (an increase in real terms 6 and 3.3 percent per year trade and economic activity, respectively)’ (Ibrahim and Vo (2020) and Calderon, et al (2020) Joseph, (2024). This trend was ‘attributed to countries’ efforts to liberalise trade, and engage in free trade and regional integration agreement’ (Calderon, et al 2020, Nixon 2020). Therefore, this research explored how the Zimbabwean youth entrepreneurs are harnessing the opportunities of economic integration. Andres et al (2020) argues that ‘regional integration generates impacts not only in member countries but also in third parties.’ Nare and Alhassan (2024) suggest that, ‘regional integration plays an integral role in regional development and strengthens international relations among countries.’ Stack et al (2023), investigated if economic integration is a developmental tool and their major argument was that economic integration can be regarded as one of the developmental approaches in Africa. Ofori et al (2022), weighed in saying ‘economic integration induces inclusive growth adding that economic integration inspires inclusive growth for Africa.’ However, Ofori et al and Stack et al seem to have overlooked the fact that African states are at different stages of economic development, regardless of the fact that almost all of them belong to the Global South. This research examines challenge and opportunities of AfCFTA to Zimbabwe youth entrepreneurs in the South-South cooperation.

2.4 Regime of African Union Trade policies:

2.4.1 Historical Evolution

Leshoele (2020) traces the evolution of AfCFTA beginning with identifying two contesting groups that emerged in the 1960s, namely the ‘Casablanca Bloc’ fronted by Kwame Nkrumah and the ‘Monrovia Bloc’ led by Nnamdi. The two blocs differed on how to integrate the African states post-colonial era. The Casablanca wanted a wholesome integration of African state both economically and politically. Meanwhile, the Monrovia wanted a gradualist approach, with economic integration preceding political integration (Stender and Vogel, (2022), Leshoele (2020). Leshoele’s (2020) major argument is that ‘all regional integration efforts and agreements, (from the Lagos Plan of Action 1980, the Abuja Treaty 1991, the Tripartite Free Trade Area (TFTA) 2015, the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) 2018, and the 8 official Regional economic communities (RECs) in Africa, disproportionately focused on trade and economic integration while saying little concerning political integration and subsequent unification of Africa in form of a centralised union Government’ (Leshoele (2020), Stender et al (2022). The bumpy implementation of AFCFTA can be attributed to lack of political will. Leshoele’s work provided insights in regards to the influence of politics on Zimbabwe’s youth entrepreneurs full participation in the AFCFTA.

2.4.2 Regional integration efforts

2.4.2.1 The Lagos Plan of Action 1980

The Plan of 1980 to 2000 sought to ‘establish base for self-sufficiency in Africa. And major areas of focus included agriculture, industrialisation and regional cooperation with the view of enhancing economic security’ (Nshimbi and Moyo, 2020). however, it was marred by the following; external debt burden negatively impacting African economies, lack of political will-

power from member states, inadequate funding and technical support and internal conflicts within several African states (Boon, 2009).

2.4.2.2 The Abuja Treaty 1991

The Treaty sought 'to establish a fully-integrated African Economic Community (AEC) and this encompassed the formation of a customs union, single-market, monetary union and to achieve unity across the continent' (Aniche, 2020). The Treaty had a phased approach to integration, starting with strengthening existing RECs and then move towards a continental customs union (Katz-Lavigne et al, 2019, Mensah 2023). The major aspects of the Treaty included, 'elimination of trade barriers between African States, promoting regional industrial development, cooperation in key sectors like communication, energy and transport, and facilitating free movement of capital and people' (Katz-Lavigne et al, 2019, Aniche, 2020). Albeit, the pitfalls that befell the 'Lagos Plan of Action' came to haunt the Abuja Treaty too. And these include political instability, slow implementation of agreed policies as well as funding constraints (Aniche, 2020, Mensah 2023). The Abuja treaty came at the time Africa was experiencing Deindustrialisation following the implementation of ESAP.

2.4.2.3 The Tripartite Free Trade Area (TFTA)

'TFTA was launched in Sharm-el-Sheikh, Egypt in 2015. The free trade agreement was between the common market for East and Southern Africa (COMESA), the East African Community (EAC) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC)' (Riedel and Slany, (2019). TFTA aimed at integrating African countries, rationalise multiple memberships of African countries in RECs, consolidate market potential, harmonise investment and trade aspects, enhance inter-regional economic cooperation (Visagie and Turok, 2020). However, TFTA faced the following challenges, that is, the need to harmonise trade policies among diverse African economies, infrastructural deficits, lack of political commitment from member

states to implement the agreement (Riedel et al (2019), Visagie et al, 2020). However, Aniche (2024) ponders whether AfCFTA was a game changer or was going to suffer the same predicaments experienced by preceding treaties. Rhetorically, Aniche said ‘old wine in new bottle?’

Ofori-Amoah (2024), argues that while the AfCFTA is viewed as a major development for African countries and organisations, albeit, ‘it was not for the first time Africa have offered a new organisational and institutional structure for development. Prior to AfCFTA, Africa signed about thirteen regional trade agreements (RTAs) for intra-regional trade since 1959. However, track records of these groupings has been relatively mediocre compared to other RTAs elsewhere. Africa has the lowest percentage of intracontinental trade in the world’ (Ofori-Amoah 2024). Mchani (2022), ranked RTAs as follows, ‘top performing being the European Union (EU), North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) which has since been replaced by the United State Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA), the Association of East Asian Nations ASEAN), the Southern Common Market (Mercosur), and the AfCFTA is the least performing.’ (Mchani 2022) However, Mchani points out that AfCFTA needs not to be written-off because it holds a lot of potential. Therefore, this research sought to understand how Zimbabwe youth entrepreneurs can tap from the said potential. Aniche departed from Afro-optimism and the Afro-pessimism by introducing ‘Afro-realism’ to the investigation of the ‘implications of the prospects and challenges of AfCFTA for achieving the objectives of regional integration as encapsulated in the aspirations of the African Union’s (AU) Agenda 2063’ (Aniche 2020). Aniche’s major argument is that ‘AfCFTA fits into the frameworks and goals of the AU regional integration and Agenda 2063.’ Therefore, Aniche’s work provides a firm foundation on which this research build on and situate Zimbabwe’s youth entrepreneurs within the broader discourse of regional economic integration. Asante and Amenumey (2024) drew learnt from both Afro-pessimists and Afro-optimists in relations to the implementation

of AfCFTA. Oloruntoba (2023) arguing from the Afro-pessimist, noted that ‘the post-colonial economy of African countries has continued to exhibit all the characteristics of its colonial background in terms of its structure, composition and direction.’ Thus, Masuku et al (2023), argues that AfCFTA came into existence to plug the identified structural problems through value-added production and colonial legacy as identified by Oloruntoba. Afro-optimists emphasizes the significance of ‘economic growth, industrial development, job creation and sustainable development to harness the potential of AfCFTA Africa’ (Asante and Amenumey 2024). Similarly, Zimbabwe youth entrepreneurs can draw significant lessons from the aforementioned schools of thought to derive maximum benefits from AfCFTA.

2.5 Youth participation in Continental trade

Chigudu, (2021), postulate that youth unemployment, universally, is becoming problematic, with 185 million are unemployed globally adding that nearly 50% of this number represents youth between 15-24 years. Further, Chigudu (2021) argues that in Zimbabwe youth unemployment is morphing into a political, social and economic crisis. For Chigudu unemployment problem is a ticking time-bomb with a potential to dislocate peace and stability economic development and national cohesion. (Chigudu, 2021, Afolabi et al 2022, Joseph, (2024). Many youths are venturing in the informal sector for livelihoods. The foregoing literature is helpful in understanding the Zimbabwe’s youth entrepreneurs’ operational environment. Olawoyin and Chiwetu (2024), are of the view that entrepreneurship has the potential to deal with youth unemployment. “Youth entrepreneurship serves as a critical key to economic development and poverty reduction, potentially offering an efficacious solution to unemployment dilemmas faced by Nations worldwide. Zimbabwe, a country acutely affected by unemployment, youth entrepreneurship possesses immense untapped potential” (Olawoyin

and Chiwetu 2024) The article by Olawoyin and Chiwetu is helpful to the study in that it shed light on how the youth can utilize the potential in the AfCFTA.

Makudza et al and World Bank. (2020) acknowledged that Zimbabwe is grappling with unemployment and suggested that students ought not to solely pin their hope on the tertiary qualification, rather, they need to create employment adding that education is not enough for economic prosperity irrespective of one's gender. Mukudza et al proposed what is termed entrepreneurial education. Similarly, Kabonga and Zvokuomba (2021) concurs with Makudza, looking at the underlying causes, the nature and the outcomes of student entrepreneurs. While Makudza et al (2024) Kabonga and Zvokuomba (2021) provide important information on entrepreneurship in Zimbabwe, they focused on tertiary students who in most cases engage in entrepreneurial enterprises to augment upkeep funds and in extreme cases to get both tuition upkeep funds, excluding non-tertiary entrepreneurs who in most cases are trying to eke out a living, for non-tertiary entrepreneurs the venture is a source of livelihood. Therefore, this research sought to take it further by adding the voice of non-tertiary entrepreneurs and how AfCFTA presents a fair share of challenges and opportunities for them.

Mutsindikwa and Gelderblom (2023), analyse the strategies the Zimbabwean women entrepreneurs employ to manage their small-scale businesses. Similarly, Mandongwe and Jaravaza (2020) explored women entrepreneurial intentions in subsistence market places. The two articles have one thing in common, they focus on women entrepreneurs, the male entrepreneur's voice is conspicuously silent. This research benefits a lot from their works as it strives to capture both male and female voices of youth entrepreneurs in Zimbabwe with regards to AfCFTA's opportunities and challenges it presents.

2.5 Zimbabwe's trade policies vis-à-vis regional and continental policies

Obuobi et al, (2020) looked at the role played by trade liberalisation in attracting foreign direct investment (FDI) in Africa. Obuobi et al argued that institutionalisation of policies enhances the flow of FDI in African economies. Joseph (2024), is of the view that for meaningful development to take place, low-income countries needs to integrate either global or regional trade, this enables goods and services to expand. Furthermore, Joseph asserts that AfCFTA is an opportunity to enhance development and grow economies collectively. Similarly, Moyo (2023) notes that the success of AfCFTA is hinged on the success of Free Trade Areas (FTAs) like SADC. Further, Moyo argues that 'AfCFTA will achieve what preceding regional economic blocs failed achieve at regional level.'

Musabayana et al (2022) laments that the government of Zimbabwe have too many policies dealing with entrepreneurship, for example the 'Indigenisation and empowerment policy' (2013-2018), and 'Industrial policy', albeit, entrepreneurs were not made aware of the implications these policies on entrepreneurship. Musabayana et al suggested that the government of Zimbabwe 'does not have mechanism in place to distribute information in form of pamphlets, brochures, fliers or billboards pertaining these policies.' Furthermore, Musabayana et al contends that 'government policies have very little on the performance of SMEs in Zimbabwe. The government does not have any policy commitment towards providing the implementers with technical assistance which they so much require and has no programmes to promote research and development.' Further, 'the government has no platforms that promote information sharing.' 'It is not involved in any support of SME activities for instance marketing the products, access to energy sources, and provide duty exemptions on the inputs' Musabayana et al (2022), World Bank 2022). Musabayana et al paints a very gloomy picture of the

operational environment for the entrepreneur, making it look like the Government of Zimbabwe is not doing anything, either to regulate or support the entrepreneurs. This research drew lessons from the foregoing in trying to understand how these policies have a bearing on opportunities and challenges for the youth entrepreneur within the AfCFTA.

Conversely, Sabao (2024), outlined legal considerations one need ‘to keep in mind before embarking on an entrepreneurial journey in Zimbabwe.’ Sabao argues that ‘Zimbabwe has sector specific regulatory requirements that business must comply with to operate legally. This includes obtaining the necessary licenses, permits and registrations from relevant government authorities. Depending on the nature of business, one may need to obtain permit from various government Departments, such as council, Zimbabwe Revenue Authority (ZIMRA), Ministry of Industry and Commerce or Environmental Management Agency (EMA).’ Sabao highlighted that, ‘knowledge of the tax landscape is an integral part of starting and running a business in Zimbabwe.’ ‘There are diverse taxes applicable to businesses, namely capital gains, royalties, corporate income tax, value-added tax (VAT) and Pay-As-You-Earn (PAYE)’ and many more. Sabao’s major argument is that ‘Zimbabwe offers boundless opportunities for innovation, and prosperity’, once a business operator complies with country’s rules and regulations. However, entrepreneurs must acquaint themselves of business structures, taxation laws and obligations, employment laws and regulations, intellectual property protection, and contractual agreements and legal documentation among other. Information provided by Sabao laid a solid foundation for this research to explore the policy impact on Zimbabwe youth entrepreneurs’ participation in the AfCFTA.

Chapter summary, this chapter consist of conceptualisation of entrepreneurship, theoretical framework liberal economic interdependence and neofunctionalism was explained, the regime of AU trade policies (tracing the historical evolution starting with the ‘Lagos Plan of Action (1980), Abuja Treaty (1991), the Tripartite Free Trade Area (2015) to the AfCFTA (2018)’),

Youth participation in continental trade and Zimbabwe's trade policies vis-à-vis regional and continental policies. The research was framed within the liberal economic interdependence, and neofunctionalism theories.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the research design and methodology explaining the various steps that were taken to tackle the research problem along with the logic behind them. It provides details on the research approach and paradigm. It contains full information on the population of the study, the research sample and why the study is using a particular sampling technique. It also gives details on what data have been collected, how it how data was collected and what particular method has been adopted. The chapter also outlined the data presentation and analysis strategies.

Research methodology refers to 'a systematic design process of collecting and analysing data for research' (Tan 2017, Leavy 2022). It can 'be understood as a science of studying how research is done scientifically' Pervin (2022), Tan (2017) and Leavy (2022). In it researchers explore "the various steps that are generally adopted by a researcher in tackling research problem along with the logic behind them." (Kothari 2004). This study adopted a qualitative

methodology aligning with an interpretivist research paradigm using a ‘case study research design.’ Qualitative research is a process of inquest to understand the meanings of social situations focusing on attitudes, perspectives, opinions, concerns, motivations, lifestyles and aspirations of the people under study. (Tan: 2022) The approach aims to answer the how and why questions describing a phenomenon in a comprehensive, in-depth and interpretive manner (Badarulzaman: 2018). It involves collecting descriptive data such as written or spoken words, observable behaviours using the less structured methods of participant observation, in-depth interviews or case studies.

Rehman and Alaharti (2016) contend that “interpretative research is premised on the assumption that social reality is subjective because of differences in culture and life experiences.’ As such, the meaning of reality is socially constructed “from the participants’ point of view as they are directly connected to the particular social context they are in” (Berryman 2019: 273) (Lather cited in Pervin and Mokhtar, (2022), Van der Walt, (2020). This enable researcher to understand what has happened and how it has happened. The interpretivist paradigm is ideal for this research because it provides direct insights of ‘opportunities and challenges of the AfCFTA’ to youth entrepreneurs in the context of Zimbabwe’s socio-economic environment.

3.2 Data collection

According to Kadasah, Galil, Kolhe and Shinde (2022: 56) data collection ‘refers to the process of gathering or acquiring relevant, accurate and sufficient information that is useful to the researcher’s quest to answer research questions and achieve the research objectives.’ ‘The researcher has to use appropriate data collection methods and data gathering instruments to provide answers that are convincing and believable to the research questions. This is vital to preserving the credibility and truthfulness of the study’ (Madondo 2021:27).

Chakraborty (2019: 14) defines ‘data collection methods as the systematic techniques used to gather information’ or data ‘from various sources for analysis’, interpretation and decision making. This study adopted the qualitative research approach, as such it largely relies on qualitative data collection methods. The aim of qualitative data collection methods is to give ‘in-depth’ research which answers the how and why questions (Bakar, 2020). Qualitative data collection techniques have the advantage of using rich multiple data sources (Tan, 2022). Furthermore, ‘they give a detailed description and a ‘holistic’ view of the research phenomena from the perspective of the people studied’ (Yusof and Mustafa Kamal). The methods are suitable for this study because data gathered in this way tends to be detailed and rich in context and scope. The use of qualitative methods gives youth entrepreneurs and responsible authorities more room to express their own views about the opportunities and challenges for youth entrepreneurs in the AfCFTA. It also enables the researcher to understand the meanings attached by the researched to the issue under discussion.

3.2.1 Primary data collection

The study used ‘in-depth interviews’, key informant interviews, ‘focus group discussions observations to collect primary data.’ Primary data refers to first-hand accounts and personal experiences of the researched (Kadasah, Galil, Kolhe and Shinde 2022: 58). ‘Interviews and focus group discussions’ were conducted using two interview schedules designed by the researcher. The ‘interview technique’ ‘is a method of collecting data’ by asking questions to individuals or groups about their experiences, opinions and attitudes related to a specific topic. In-depth interviews are an excellent source of in-depth information (Dunwoodie et al 2023). Interviews enable the interviewer to listen to what the participants say, and also watch how the participant reacts to what he is asking them. As a result, the interviewer will easily draw conclusions.

In Zimbabwe most entrepreneurs are concentrated within the informal sector (Tendai, Madziva and Shonhiwa, 2023: 423) and is characterised by petty trading activities or small scale informal retailing and light manufacturing (Magidi, 2024: 4). Data was collected through ‘in-depth interviews’ with at least 10 male and 10 female youth entrepreneurs using an interview guide with at least 10 semi structured questions. Participants were selected from across the Harare metropolitan, which epitomized informal entrepreneurship in Harare, Zimbabwe being one of the places with the highest prevalence entrepreneurial activities and it is estimated to be above 64.1% (Munjeyi and Fourie, 2024). The participants are involved in light manufacturing trades that include carpentry and metal fabrication, chemical and soft drink manufacturing. Some are involved in retailing selling ready to eat products, groceries, electrical gadgets and second hand clothes to mention just a few. These sectors were selected because they contribute enormously to the livelihoods of families and informal entrepreneurs.

Data were also collected through a focus group discussion with 10 senior entrepreneurs’. The discussions provide insights into how a group thinks about an issue, ideas and opinions and the variations that exists in communities in terms of beliefs and their experiences and practices. The research also relied on expert consultations through ‘key informant interviews’ with officials from ZIMSTATS, COMESA, ZimTrade, ‘Ministry of Youth’, ‘Ministry of Women Affairs, Community, Small and Medium Enterprises’, and the ‘Ministry of local Government and Public Works’ among others. In addition, the researcher participated in informal conversations with several actors in the sector. The discussions provided insights into business community perception of free trade area, tapping into lived experiences. Data were also collected through observations in the trading and industrial areas of the city of Harare, mainly (Magaba area and Glen view 8) to better understand how the entrepreneurs operate. The study also obtained useful data from archival records, reports produced by relevant government departments’ and newspaper articles

3.2.2 Secondary data

Secondary data refers “to data which have already been collected and compiled by some other researcher” (Kothari, 2004: 111). The study used secondary sources in the form of published material like online books and journal articles. Most of the electronic Journal Articles were sourced from ‘trade and security’ journal articles such as ‘the Journal of African Trade’, ‘Journal of African Foreign Affairs’ were accessed through the University Electronic Library platform. Further, important literature on AfCFTA provide historical background on trade facilitation and economic cooperation in Africa this was used to compare and support primary research findings of the present study. The other advantage of secondary data is that it is easy to access (Manglik, 2024 :54) Also data from recognised sources has the additional advantage of accuracy and reliability (Pervin and Mokhtar, 2022: 422). The use of ‘multiple sources of data’ enabled triangulation of ‘methods’, which in turn enhances validity and reliability of information gathered.

3.3 Sampling

Sampling is a “process of selecting a representative segment of the population under study” (Sharma,2018 :251) ‘It involves selecting units of analysis (people or groups) in a way that maximizes the researcher’s ability to answer research question’ (Baran & Jones, 2016:115). Types of sampling techniques are distinguished as” probability and non-probability sampling. Non probability sampling is also called empirical sampling. In this type of sampling, the probability of inclusion of the sample elements are unknown as such it uses subjective means to determine the extent to which a sample is representative of the entire population” (Idarrou and Douzi, 2020:188). Non-probability ‘sampling techniques are primarily used in qualitative research.’ It is defined as “selecting units based on specific purposes associated with answering

the research questions. Non-probability sampling techniques includes purposive sampling, convenience sampling and snowball sampling among others” (Sharma,2018 :265).

3.3.1 Sample size

Sample is a representative unit of a target population, which is to be worked upon by researcher(s) during their study (Sharma,2018 :251). “A sample is said to be good if it is free from bias and sufficiently representative of the research population to extrapolate the result and transpose it on this population.” (Sharma,2018) This study used a sample of 10 female and 10 male youth entrepreneurs as well as 10 non-youth entrepreneurs all operating in Harare’s industrial area. The sample size was determined by the point off data saturation and this was achieved at 30 participants. Saturation occurs when the addition of more participants does not result in new information (Naeem et al, 2024). The selected study participants were involved in different kinds of entrepreneurial activities and were owner-managed enterprises employing relatively small financial and human capital.

3.4 Study location

Data for the study was collected in Harare, Zimbabwe because Harare epitomized the entrepreneurial sector in Zimbabwe being the capital city. The choice of Harare metropolitan was informed by the concentration of youth entrepreneurs in that area and the city is the melting pot for many fortune seekers. Harare presents a cosmopolitan picture since quite a number of economic activities are manifest in the city. Harare was also home to a huge chunk of the country’s industries, albeit, deindustrialisation and some of the space is now being claimed by entrepreneurs. In light of the foregoing, the research sought to understand how these entrepreneurs in Harare perceive the AfCFTA, in terms of opportunities and challenges.

3.5 Sampling techniques

The research participants were selected using ‘purposive and snowball’ sampling techniques “Purposive sampling is a type of sampling in which particular persons or events are deliberately selected for the important information they can provide that cannot be obtained as well from other choices” (Teddie & Tashakkori, 2009:170). Purposive sampling addresses specific purposes related to research questions, therefore, the researcher selects participants that are information rich in regard to the research questions (Creswell and Plano Clark (2011), Tan 2017). ‘It focuses on the depth of information that can be generated by individual cases.’ ‘Purposive samples are typically small samples, thus it is used to obtain an inexpensive approximation of the truth’ (Badarulzaman) ensuring “that the sample is relevant and representative of the population of interest (Badarulzaman).”

The study also used Snowball sampling. The technique relies primarily on referrals to other potentially willing participants from initial participants to generate additional participants in the sample size (Parker, and Geddes, 2019, Palinkas, et al 2015). This method was useful for accessing hard-to-reach populations and promoting diversity within the sample, as it leverages social networks and referrals to identify additional participants who meet the study criteria (Parker, and Geddes, 2019). Snowball sampling was used to access hard to reach youth entrepreneurs who were less willing to identify themselves and take part in this research because they are involved in smuggling and other illicit business activities.

Linking and connecting pieces together, a combination of purposive sampling to target specific participants with relevant characteristics and snowball sampling to extend the sample size through referrals (Parker, and Geddes, 2019), ensured a diverse and comprehensive representation of Zimbabwean youth entrepreneurs operating within the AfCFTA. This sampling approach was well-suited to ‘capture a range of perspectives’, experiences, and ‘insights’ from youth entrepreneurs in Zimbabwe, enhancing the richness and depth of the study findings.

3.6 Data analysis

The collected data was analyzed using thematic analysis which encompasses coding and writing themes that emerge from results. According to Munyoro labelling and coding enables the researcher to promptly access all texts associated with a given theme as well as allow for comparison. The write up will include a summary of the collected data presented in form of narratives supported by verbatim quotes.

3.7 Ethical considerations

According Newman et al (2021), ethics are rules or regulations or laws or codes that researchers from across the world must observe when conducting research. These include anonymity, confidentiality, informed consent, voluntary participation among others. The researcher sought consent from all the participant before carrying out the research. The researcher ensure that all the participants were informed that, they were participating voluntarily and that they could withdraw at any given time without reprisals. The researcher ensured that all participants (both introverts and extroverts) were given equal opportunities to air their views without discrimination on the basis of their belief, tribe, gender or other personal characteristics. Participants were assured that the data collected shall be used for academic purposes only and shall not be shared with third parties without the participants' consent.

Chapter summary, the chapter presented the research design and methodology outlining the various steps that were taken in studying the research problem along with the logic behind them. It provided details on the research approach and paradigm. It contains detailed information on the population of the study, the research sample and why the study used a particular sampling technique. It also gave details on what data have been collected, how it

has been collected and what particular method has been adopted. The chapter also outlined the data presentation and analysis strategies.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS, AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the presentation, analysis, interpretation and discussion of all the data on challenges and opportunities for Zimbabwean youth entrepreneurs in the AfCFTA. Qualitative approach was used to gather data and analyse ‘challenges and opportunities’ for ‘Zimbabwean youth entrepreneurs in the AfCFTA.’ The research found out that, government officials, arguing from a liberal economic interdependence, are at the forefront hyping AfCFTA as a game changer bringing a number of opportunities, which include job creation in various sectors, expand into African markets, boost trade and investment, industrial development among others. From neofunctionalism perspective youth entrepreneurs argue that, they face the following challenges, stiffer competition from well-established foreign entrepreneurs (spillover effects of regional economic integration), constrained operational environment marred by incessant load shedding, taxation and a number of levies, inadequate work space (space barons) and infrastructural deficiencies.

4.2 Opportunities and challenges

The study established that the issue of opportunities within the AfCFTA is being echoed by government officials and their partners, institutions like COMESA, these opportunities are futuristic in nature ('will...' dominate their views) and is premised on liberal economic interdependence theory, which emphasises cooperation among states. For instance, the Zimbabwe Parliamentary Portfolio Committee on International Relations and trade and the 'Ministry of Local Government and Public Works' Public Relations officers are in agreement. To this end, 'Ministry of Local Government and Public Works' Public Relations officer Phyllis said,

AfCFTA, presents a lot of opportunities both at macro- (national level) and micro-level (entrepreneurial level). Firstly, it facilitates the smooth flow of both imports and exports among member states. Secondly, AfCFTA boost access to market and market information. AfCFTA is an empowering tool, particularly women cross-border traders.

In the same vein, Public relations officers from the 'Ministry of Youth Empowerment, Development and Vocational Training and Ministry of Women Affairs, Community, Small and Medium Enterprises' Matilda suggested that women should organise themselves into groups and register with them, saying the two sister Ministries can then assist women in trade and navigation of trade related hurdles. They argued that, women should take advantage of their numbers, in the case of Zimbabwe they constitute 52% of the country's population according the 2022 Population and Housing Census, to draw maximum benefits from the AfCFTA. In the wake of massive Deindustrialisation, from a liberal economic interdependence and the neofunctionalism theory AfCFTA can inspire the development of SMEs (industrial development) owing to guaranteed market and free movement of goods and people. COMESA Public Relations officer Tshepo said,

AfCFTA came at the right time, when entrepreneurs have become a driving force behind in industrial development [in the era marred by massive Deindustrialisation, many countries are smarting from the long term effects of Economic Structural Adjustment Programmes (ESAP), massive relocation by multinational companies], significantly contributing towards employment generation, wealth creation and poverty reduction.

The issue of poverty reduction resonates well with the Sustainable Development goal (SDGs, goal 1). This view is in line with Olawoyin et al (2024), contending that entrepreneurship plus a well-established market (provided for by AfCFTA) will help reduce unemployment among youth. UN envisages the world with reduced poverty prevalence by 2030 (UNDP, 2023).

AfCFTA presents an opportunity for equal development within Africa by allowing free movement of goods and people. ZimTrade officer Pedzisai agrees with COMESA and had this to say,

AfCFTA is giving chance for South-South cooperation (intra-regional trade) by enhancing and expanding markets for African countries and Zimbabwean youth entrepreneurs included. Localised markets alone restrict growth potential (AfCFTA can inspire growth). However, access to African market holds great potential not only for business growth but also for job creation, with an overall economic growth in Zimbabwe.

Contrary to Pedzisai's views, information obtained from a focus group discussion found out that there are pessimists who are of the view that economies that stand to benefit are Kenya, Nigeria and South Africa whose industries are built on solid grounding, the rest of African countries are just market places for the aforementioned economies. The challenge with AfCFTA is that, it may further entrench inequality within the south-south cooperation framework owing to asymmetrical economic power distribution. This presents a zero-sum game and to this end, critics argue that many African are producing similar goods, that is primary goods in their raw form and less finished or ready to use product, rendering south-south cooperation ineffective. AfCFTA gives Zimbabwe an opportunity to narrow her negative balance of trade (trade which is characterised by more imports and less exports). The ZimTrade client Advisor Kingston Gwatidzo did statistical analysis of Zimbabwe's balance of trade from 2013 to 2023 as outlined below.

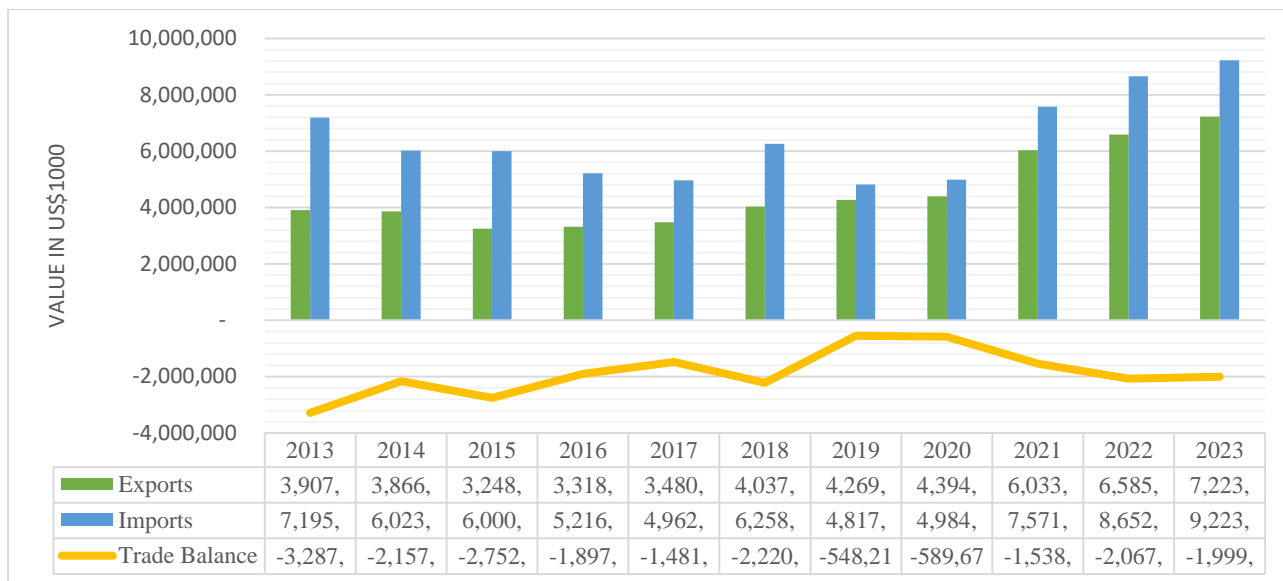


Figure 4.1 Zimbabwe's export and import trend analysis shows a narrowing negative balance of trade, graph courtesy of ZimTrade.

From the graphical presentation by Gwatidzo one can safely say Zimbabwe is utilising the expanded markets to narrow the gap between exports and imports. Gwatidzo indicated that Zimbabwean youth can tap into the expanded markets to create employment and eke a living. Gwatidzo opined that AfCFTA has shown that Africa as a whole has untapped potential, albeit, she imports more than it exports, to this end Gwatidzo did a trend analysis from 2013 to 2023

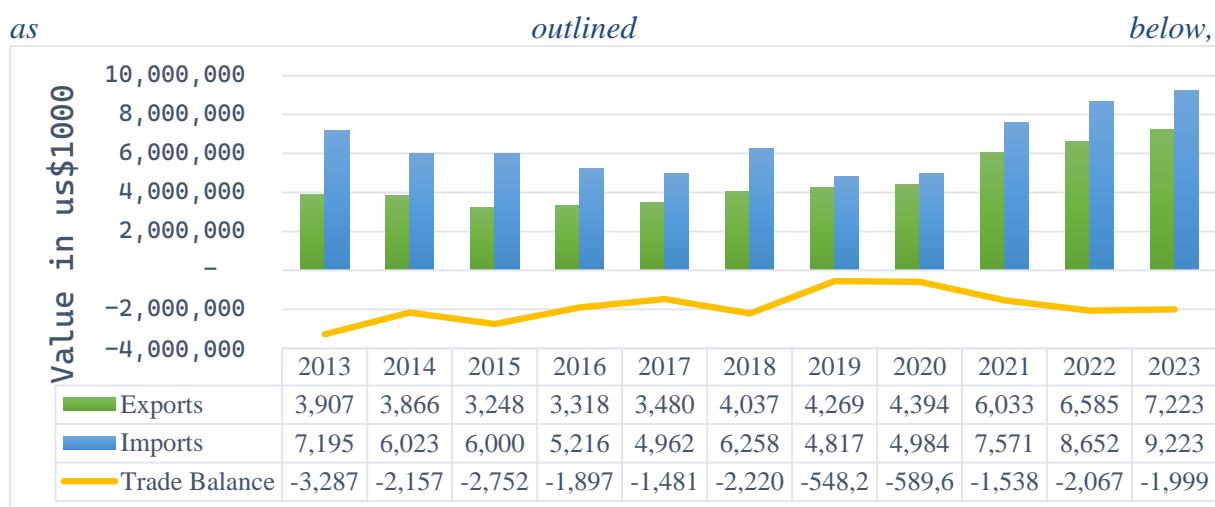


Figure 4.2 The AfCFTA Trade 2018-2022 trend analysis, courtesy of ZimTrade.

Furthermore, the study discovered that very little is known about AfCFTA among the youth and for them AfCFTA is synonymous with trade with South Africa. Kuzivakwashe a 35-year-old agro-processing entrepreneur, specialising in drying fruits and meat (biltong) for both export and domestic market. I have little knowledge about AfCFTA but my experience in the entrepreneurial journey is that,

... South Africa is the biggest off-taker of my products owing to the huge presence of Zimbabwean diaspora community, the other group that buys my product because of their organic nature. I believe AfCFTA provides a ready market for entrepreneurs and other business. AfCFTA provides a ready market for everyone in the continent and it is a matter of what one is producing and is it on demand or not in order to enjoy the benefits of AfCFTA.

With regards to challenge, Kuzivakwashe pointed out Zimbabwe youth entrepreneurs like him encounters a lot of problem one of them is lack of capital to buy modern equipment or to increase capacity utilisation. In his case he indicated that he handles perishables but does not have adequate cold chain equipment. He said,

December and January is the peak period in mango processing, but owing to cloudy and humid condition, fruits takes time to dry, so a lot of fruits goes to waste owing to shortages of the solar dryers. I am thankful to SNV (Netherlands Development Organisation) which provided me with a solar dryer in 2021). A solar drier measuring 5.5-metre-long and 1.6-metre-wide, one by 50-watt solar panel and one by 50-watt DC fan on AliExpress cost around USD1 879.99, that is before Zimbabwe Revenue Authority (ZIMRA) effects duty and other concomitant charges, transport and insurance cost. The import cost deters some youth from venturing in drying business and exploit the ready market. Locally, assembled solar drier costs about USD\$2 528. However, the locally assembled drier is beyond the reach of many given the depressed economic environment.



Figure 4.3 Sample of a backyard solar drier measuring 5.5 metre-long and 1.6 metre wide, one by 50 watt solar panel and one by 50 watt DC fan

The youth need to be conscientised the youth and other business people on tariff and non-tariff goods that can be imported into the country (Sabao, 2024). To this effect



Figure 4.4 Sample chicken being dried for biltong in the solar drier.



Figure 4.5 Sample of dried foods, beef biltong, bananas and mangoes in Kuzivakwashe's office.

Zimbabwe has low productivity and this is an impediment to the full embrace of the AfCFTA clusters particularly the productive capacity. Worth noting is that AfCFTA has seven operational clusters namely, ‘trade policy, trade facilitation, productive capacity, trade related infrastructure, trade finance, trade information, and factor market integration.’ In light of these clusters the ‘Southern and Eastern Africa Trade Information and Negotiations Institute Southern Africa co-ordinator’, Rangarirai Machedze arguing from a neofunctionalist was of the view that “Zimbabwe need to scale up its production of goods adding that in the absence of goods to trade, adding that the spillover effect of economic integration in the absence of scaled up productivity” adding that, “Zimbabwe is likely to become a supermarket for other countries” (Zwinoira, 2024). Zimbabwe’s productivity is being affected by the obsolete equipment, power cuts, inflationary operational environment among other factors. Steven* a 28-year-old entrepreneur who was an artisanal miner but has since moved into transport business (plying the Zimbabwe-South Africa route and the Zimbabwe-Botswana route)

professed little knowledge about the AfCFTA, but indicated that his business has seen significant growth over time. He said,

my transport business is booming owing to high human traffic going either to South Africa or Botswana to buy stuff for retailing. I make more money by bringing goods to Zimbabwe (*malaitsha* deals) sent by the Zimbabwean diaspora in either South Africa or Botswana. One can be forgiven to assume that the high traffic is testament of the positive effects of AfCFTA.

AfCFTA presents opportunity of accessing markets with an assortment of goods. A number of Zimbabweans in the retail industry are taking advantage of Zimbabwe's central position to travel to other African countries to buy goods for retailing, with a bias towards South Africa. In light of this observation Shamiso a 22-year-old university students who rents a table (space) at Kwame Mall in Harare Central Business District said,

I am taking advantage of modular learning system to juggle both academic and entrepreneurial life. I travel to South Africa on monthly basis. And I believes in small profits and quick returns, this the reason why I go to South Africa on a monthly basis. I am into entrepreneurship to raise fees and subsistence.

Shamiso's sentiment resonates with Kabanga et al (2021) which looked at entrepreneurship among university students saying students are into entrepreneurship to eke a living and in preparation of life after college, in a country heavily de-industrialised owing to high operational costs, economic sanctions among others. What Steven and Shamiso say is in tandem with the UNCTAD's (2024) assertion that 'AfCFTA is dominate by the following economies, Kenya, Nigeria and South Africa. In the case of Zimbabwe, trade is skewed in favour of South Africa.' Aniche (2024) is of the view that 'AfCFTA encourages the growth of cross-border trade among African countries.'

Whilst the research was looking at the challenge and opportunities for youth entrepreneurs with the AfCFTA, from the neofunctionalism point of view, it was observed that AfCFTA is also beneficial to non-entrepreneurs who are now having access to a variety of goods which are

priced competitively as compared to price distortions by the formal retailers. In view of the foregoing, Brendon 18 a year-old male son to entrepreneur who is into beverage manufacturing and a university student pursuing a Bachelor's Degree in Commerce said,

AfCFTA does not benefit entrepreneurs only, instead, the consumer in general stand to benefit as well. AfCFTA presents an opportunity to get a variety of goods at a competitive price. Tuckshops (informal traders) in the down town area of Harare are fairly pricing their merchandise unlike the big supermarket who overprice their goods in USD (to cushion them against risk posed by accepting local currency at the prevailing interbank rate), for example 2l Cooking Oil in a renowned supermarket ranging between \$4 and \$5 but from the tuckshops the same product will be ranging between \$2.80 and \$3.00. Rhetorically asked, where on earth have you ever heard of a crate of ordinary chicken eggs, even if they are large, go for over USD\$7, but our local supermarkets are doing that. Furthermore, AfCFTA is fast tracking the impact of globalisation, whereby customers' needs are satisfied irrespective of location.

From what Brendon is saying one can see that AfCFTA presents an opportunity to both entrepreneurs and consumers by widening range and choice of goods and services. However, there are unscrupulous business people who are taking advantage of AfCFTA to inject counterfeit products into the market. Susan a 29 year old female Sole Trader in Ruwa and Makiwa a 30 year old who runs a General Dealer shop in Budiro four, from neofunctionalism departure complained about the proliferation of counterfeit products (negative spillover effects of liberal economic interdependence and integration), saying while AfCFTA is there to ensure that goods reaches all the parts of the continent, albeit, there are some unscrupulous entrepreneurs operating wholesale shops [dubbed *kumatuckshops*] in the down town area of Harare [particularly along Leopold Takawira way] who are selling counterfeit products, which is in direct contravention of the ethos of AfCFTA, and the worst part is that counterfeit products are priced at par with original product to the unsuspecting public. Members of the view that, these counterfeit products are to blame for the occurrences of various cancers and other emerging diseases which were unheard of in the past.



Figure 4.6 An assortment of goods in Harare down town area (KumaTuckshops), photography courtesy of the Zimbabwean newspaper.

The research noted that implementation of the AfCFTA is yet to comprehensively deal with issues that can make life of youth entrepreneurs better within the bloc. Issues of the youth are to be addressed in phase three under the theme *'digital trade and women, and youth in trade.'* This entails that, currently youth do not fully enjoy preferential treatment in the AfCFTA. The youth receive the same treatment with well-to-do business entities owned by senior members of the community [non-youth]. This entails that youth are being treated in the same manner in which the well-established entities treated.

Youth entrepreneurs are constrained from realising their full potential within the AfCFTA owing to inadequate workspaces, the ones that are available are through third-parties who charges exorbitant rental and in turn push up the production costs. Tinashe a 34-year-old male carpenter who received training at Magamba vocational training centre and has two employees who are aged 19 and 20 years and is based in Glen View, area 8, similarly Temba aged 35-year-old male, a former Universal furniture employee, who now specialises in furniture manufacturing and upholstery and Ahmed a 22-year-old male carpenter at Siyaso lamented the issue of inadequate workspaces adding that the youth in most cases operate from rented space and this pushes up operational cost, and this has a bearing on the final pricing of products

or service. The product will be less competitive in terms of pricing as compared to same product coming outside the country [say South Africa for instance]. The Harare City Council Public Affairs officer Chris Muchena acknowledged the problem work of workspace, albeit, blame it on space barons (these are well to-do people, who at times have access to levers of power, and are prepared to use that power to grab spaces and lease them out to desperate entrepreneurs, youth included).

The research also noted that Zimbabwean youth entrepreneurs faces power supply challenge [there are long hours of load shedding owing to low energy production in the country]. Zaranyika a 33-year-old male, and former Lustnem Evo metal fabrication Pvt LTD employee, Jacob a-32-year-old male, former Priceless Steel fabrication based in Glen Lorne and Sengezo a 28-year-old metal fabricator, pointed out that prolonged hours of load shedding (power outages) eats into productive time. In most cases metal fabricators and other entrepreneurs who are into manufacturing ends up using alternative sources of energy (generators that uses fossil fuels). The use of alternative sources of energy renders the products very expensive since producers will transfer the cost on the product. These products will have difficulties in competing with products produced under favourable conditions. If the power supply is managed well ZimTrade client Advisor Kingston Gwatidzo is optimistic that youth entrepreneurs have the potential to export the following into the AfCFTA market, furniture and timber, agricultural products and implements, engineering products, mining supplies and building and construction materials.

From a liberal economic interdependence viewpoint, the research also noted that the Zimbabwean financial system is weighing down the youth entrepreneurs and it's an impediment to effective economic cooperation. Goodwin a thirty-one-year-old food science graduate and producer of meal snacks blamed the current multicurrency system, whose base currency is the United States Dollars, for making the locally produced products very expensive

and faces stiff competition from foreign products. Godwin said, the problem is further compounded by volatility of the local currency (Zimbabwe Gold [ZWG], which is in the basket of currency).

The research also noted that youth entrepreneurs are constrained by red tap in customs clearing and this is worsened by aging equipment and low speed internet and systems at most of the country's ports of entry. The prevailing operational environment is conflict with effective application of the dictates of liberal economic interdependence. In view of the foregoing, Tambudzayi a 33-year-old retailer of second hand clothes laments delays at border posts like the Nyamapanda and Chirundu border posts. She suggests that the government of Zimbabwe need to move with speed to upgrade all the country's ports just like what they did to Beitbridge border post. This reverberates, scholarly views that Africa has a serious infrastructural deficit adding that the continent need to move with speed in upgrading these (rail, road and air) taking a cue from China's Belt and Road Initiative, to ensure smooth flow people and goods.

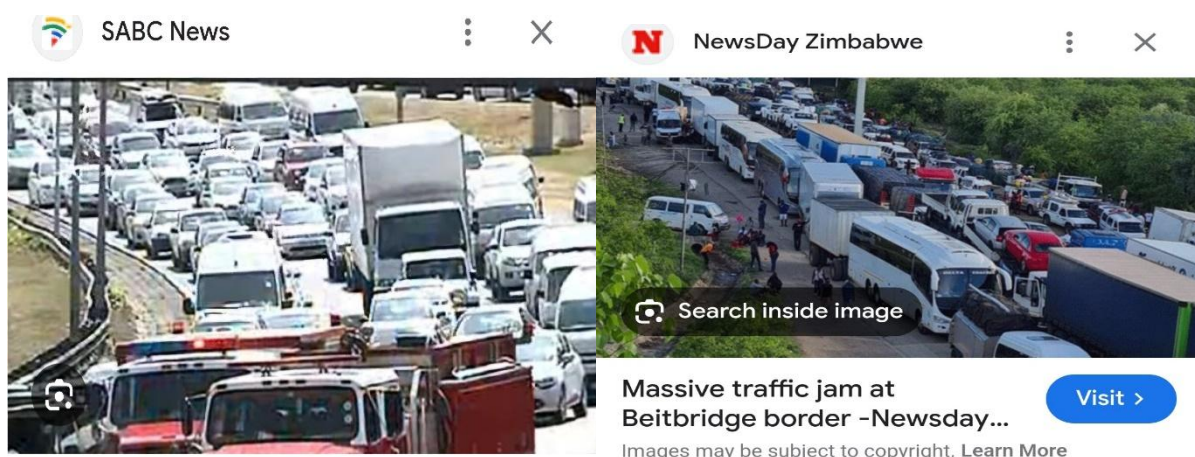


Figure 4.7 Congestion at Beitbridge border post, picture courtesy of SABC news and Newsday.

The research found out that Zimbabwe youth entrepreneurs are constrained from realising opportunities from AfCFTA owing to a huge infrastructural deficit many of the country's roads are in dire need for rehabilitation. This infrastructural gap makes Zimbabwe an unfavourable trading partner. He said, this problem is compounded by numerous checkpoints, (where

authorities manning them soliciting for bribes) Steven agrees with the foregoing view. This make other economic players shun Zimbabwe, he said,

look at the construction of Kazungula bridge is confirmation that, other countries in the AfCFTA are willing to circumvent the country and this means loss of business opportunities for youth entrepreneurs in the ready to eat food industry, overnight accommodation (BnB) operators.

Infrastructure deficit is responsible for delays in the movement of goods and this in turn inhibit growth among entrepreneurs.

4.4 Impact of AfCFTA on the competitiveness of young Zimbabwean businesses.

The Zimbabwean youth entrepreneurs faces stiffer competition from foreign national within the economic trading bloc. To this end, Sibongile* a 28-year-old female beauty therapist who runs a beauty shop in Avondale complained that,

Nigerians are taking over beauty shop operations citing a number of them in and around Harare's CBD whose pricing is insanely lower than the ones by local entrepreneurs on the same product, in other words she said the Nigerian business operators' pricing regime is pushing local entrepreneurs out of business.

Similarly, Sam a male aged 34 who specialises in the retailing of ICT gadgets, concurs with Sibongile saying

foreign nationals particularly the Nigerians are stifling their small enterprises. Sam said, there this is a Nigeria businessman by the name Baba* run five ICT retail shop in the Harare CBD and a warehouse downtown, and several shops in Chitungwiza, metaphorically said, these foreigners have 'business tentacles' everywhere and are squeezing life out of Zimbabwe youth entrepreneurs.

The foregoing finding is in tandem with Pindula and the Zimbabwe Mail reporter Utete (2025) articles in which they opined that Foreign entrepreneurs are literally taking over both the retail sector and ownership of buildings which are in turn subdivided into smaller cubicles. Utete said the following countries Nigeria, Ghana, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda, India, China, and Tanzania are reportedly expanding their presence in Harare's CBD operating

retail shops across key commercial zones such as Chinhoyi Street, Kaguvi Street, and George Silundika Avenue (Utete 2025).

Conversely, Joyce a 20-year-old female beauty therapist and Raymond 19-year-old barber plying their trade in Harare CBD praised the Nigerians and the Congolese for availing affordable products in line with their trade adding that local entrepreneurs charge exorbitant prices on the same product being sold by foreign nationals, this is support of the neofunctionalist thinking, in which consumers and budding entrepreneurs enjoy the spillover effect of regional cooperation and integration.

Contrary to Sibongile and Sam's perception of foreign entrepreneurs doing business in Zimbabwe Garikai a 32-year-old retailer in Mabvuku and Mary a 33 years old female retailer of kitchen utensils and appliance in Ruwa are of the view that, foreign nationals like the Nigerians are benefiting from AfCFTA because they are operating as united front (pooling together their resource) in the end they enjoy economies of scale by bulk-buying and breaking bulk. Mary is of the view that this is an economic way of doing business and the concomitant effect of this strategy is low pricing, the very thing which causing nightmares to Zimbabwean entrepreneurs who operates individually instead of pooling resource and reduce transportation cost.

4.5 Government of Zimbabwe's policies to support youth participation in AfCFTA

The research also noted Zimbabwe youth entrepreneurs cited fiscal policy inconsistency. From 2016 to 2024 the country has different names for the local currency, that is, bond note (which was introduced to ease shortage of change in the multicurrency economy and was rated at par with the USD in the formal sector but in the informal sector the bond noted was rated below the USD, consequentially there pricing distortions and in turn affected SMEs) the bond note was devalued in 2019 and the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe (RBZ) come up with what was

termed RGTS. The RTGS suffered the same fate of the bond note the informal forex trader devalued it while the government was making business accept it and this further sank the fortunes of both SMEs and well-established business. The RTGS continued to plummet and was abandoned and was replaced by Zimbabwe Gold [ZIG] and is experiencing the same fate that faced the preceding currencies. Entrepreneurs complained that government through the RBZ are being forced to accept the local currency using the prescribed interbank rate which is far below the obtaining black-market rates. To this end, Sandra a 35-year female retailer operating shops in Harare CBD, Ballantyne and Mt Pleasant pointed out that, Zimbabwe can do better with regards to fiscal policy and let the market determine the real value of ZIG [now ZWG] and this will end rent-seeking behaviour within the informal money market. The problems in the SMEs sector is further compounded by the government's foreign exchange management system which has set foreign currency retention to 70 percent.

The 6 February 2025 Monetary policy statement by the RBZ made it mandatory for all entrepreneurs to use the point of sale (POS) machines. This was done to increase revenue base for the government but at same time hurt the entrepreneur who cannot get adequate foreign currency when they need it and are forced to get it from the black-market, at a premium, this in turn pushes up the prices of locally produced goods. Critics accused government of focusing on revenue generation at the expense of growth of the SMEs sector, which has become a lifeline for the country in the wake of deindustrialisation.

Veronica from neofunctionalism theory opined that African countries are at various stages of implementing AfCFTA, 'South Africa announced the launch of preferential trade under the AfCFTA' in January 2024. Veronica quoted then, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, Frederick Shava who said, "Zimbabwe is now close to commencing preferential trading under the AfCFTA following the technical verification of the country's provisional schedules

of tariff concessions by the AfCFTA” (Zwinoira, 20224). Veronica said Shava said this at ‘the Zimbabwe Economics Society breakfast meeting’ held in partnership with Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, on 10 October 2024. This is in tandem with Amartya, (2023), Kuhn, (2024), Schimmelfenning, (2024) who anticipated the integration pathway to be jagged.

The government of Zimbabwe is in the process of aligning its laws to the ‘Constitution of Zimbabwe Amendment (No.20) Act of 2013,’ resonating with the dictates of economic liberal economic interdependence, so that government policies will be constitutional Zimbabwe Parliamentary Portfolio Committee on International Relations and trade said, Zimbabwe take the youth constituency very serious and as the legislative assembly are seized with aligning the country’s constitution to meet both the needs of youth and the dictates of AfCFTA. Relatedly, the Ministry of Youth adds that, the Ministry is busy fine-tuning the youth policy, the current policy was signed in 2019 and runs from 2020 to 2025, so there is need to update it to meet the new demands for the youth.

The ‘Ministry of Women Affairs, Community, Small and Medium Enterprises’, officer Matilda said the government of Zimbabwe have comprehensive funding policy for both young [youth] women and women in general said Zimbabwe’s youth entrepreneurs can access low interest loans from the following banks, Women Empowerment Bank, the Youth Empowerment Bank, the Africa Capacity building foundation, Small and Medium Enterprises Development Corporation (SMEDCO) (they provide loans provide working capital finance, capital expenditure financing, order finance, capacity building, infrastructure provision to Zimbabwean entrepreneur resident in the country, must be 18 years and must be operating or wishing to set up business enterprise). The Matilda said,

Zimbabwean youth entrepreneurs can either visit our offices between 0745 and 1645 hours Monday to Friday or make use of the Ministry’s community development coordinators (CDCs) across the country. And they [entrepreneurs and would-be

entrepreneurs] would be assisted on how to write business concept note, registration of a business, project proposal among a host of business activities.

Officials from both the ‘Ministry of Women Affairs, Community, Small and Medium Enterprises and Ministry of Youth Empowerment, Development and Vocational Training’ are of the view that, most of the Zimbabwean youth entrepreneurs shy away from knocking into formal channels for assistance and are warmer to informal financing schemes. These informal lending scheme Usury (*chimbado*) seem flexible when borrowing because it does not involve a lot of paperwork and the loan is instant, when one fails to repay in time is met with severe consequences and at times, result in forfeiture of capital goods. The duo agreed that at the heart of government policy thrust is the desire that, ‘both informal and formal entrepreneurs engage formal financier so that their business will not be threatened in the event of meeting challenges in repaying borrowed funds.’

The research observed that Zimbabwe has a lot of bureaucracy and that frustrates innovative ideas. Martin* a 34-year male, a chemical engineering graduate and a producer of assortment of chemicals including cleaning detergents, said that,

Zimbabwe has weak entrepreneurial support. The regulatory environment obtaining in the country is not conducive for innovation, and is a major drawback to the growth of a healthy entrepreneurial ecosystem in the country, [rhetorically said], look at what the government did to Daniel Chingoma’s innovation [locally assembled helicopter]...Chingoma did not receive necessary support, had it been in other countries he would have been awarded an award or sponsorship or attached to an academic institution for nurturing and mentorship... surely that man must have died a bitter man... the least government could have done was to take Chingoma to some experts and nurture that talent.

‘It is difficult for start-ups to navigate the challenging regulatory terrain, including from registering the business to managing precarious monetary policies.’ The foregoing, is in tandem with what Sabao (2024) who said in Zimbabwe there is a lot of paperwork that needs to be completed for one to be a legally constituted entity, so an entrepreneurs need to acquaint themselves with the regulatory environment.

4.6 Discussion and analysis of findings

4.6.1 Policy framework

At this juncture it is paramount to pause a rhetoric question, as to whether the AfCFTA policy is good enough for Zimbabwe in general and the youth in particular. The research found out that the country has severely de-industrialised, this entails that country has little to export and imports more (Coltart, 2018. Ndiweni and Verhoeven, 2013; Ngundu, 2010 (Stein (2014). The importation of foreign goods and services is also stifling growth of budding industries, which in most cases are capital constrained and use rudimentary plant equipment. This observation resonates well with Magidi (2024) who argues that, Zimbabwean entrepreneurs are in business to eke a living and many are focused in petty trading and less on production level. Others have contended that Zimbabwe is a supermarket in the AfCFTA, what it offers on the table is more of market than her own products.

The AfCFTA as trade policy, regionally, is at different stages of implementation since its inception, South Africa commenced implementation in January 2024 while Zimbabwe by October 2024, was still tying loose ends in order to domesticate AfCFTA (Zwinoira, 2024). AfCFTA may suffer the same fate that affected predecessor regional integration organizations like ‘the Lagos Plan of Action 1980, the Abuja Treaty 1991, the Tripartite Free Trade Area (TFTA) 2015’ among others, were implemented piecemeal and insincerely, leading to the collapse of the agreement and this is in tandem with (Stender and Vogel, (2022), Leshoele (2020). AfCFTA is ahead of its time because many African countries are not financially ready to remove tariffs which are one of the key components that states use to finance their national budgets.

4.6.2 Protectionism

Non-tariff barriers (NTBs), are regulatory measures that may be used as restrictive tariffs which may take the form of technical standards, sanitary and phytosanitary measures and complex customs procedures Magidi (2024), Sabao (2024). In as much as there was significant headway towards removal of tariffs as barrier to trade and has given way to an increase in the aforementioned NTBs that impedes trade. One may be forgiven to argue that NTBs are putting speed humps in the full implementation of AfCFTA. In the Zimbabwe's case the Ministry of Finance relies on a number of taxes to get revenue, entrepreneurs and other business operators are mandated to use point-of-sale machine so as to maximize revenue collection. In tandem with Sabao (2024) said that "Zimbabwe needs to harmonise fees requirements to obtain the necessary licenses, permits and registrations from relevant government authorities" (Sabao 2024, Musabayana et al (2022), World Bank 2022) (for example, ZIMRA, local authority among others).

4.6.3 Goods that are likely to make headway from Zimbabwe into AfCFTA and vis-versa

Goods that are likely to make it into the AfCFTA market are agricultural products such as cereals and tobacco, which are susceptible to price fluctuations, and agro-processed goods (meat products, horticultural produce [blueberries]), manufactured goods are minimal. These goods will be successful because of their organic nature owing to the country's preference of natural to genetically modified (GMO) seeds or goods. And in other countries non-GMO food is a bit pricey. However, this comparative advantage is being affected by high production cost because in Zimbabwe there are price distortions and agricultural inputs are not spared, government subsidies are not enough and are skewed in favour of crops that guarantees the

country's food security (Magidi, 2024). On the contrary, Zimbabwe is a recipient of manufactured goods.

4.6.4 Competitiveness of Zimbabwe's goods

The goods being produced by entrepreneurs are failing to be competitive on the international market owing to a number of factors, financially, the use of US dollar as a base currency amidst 'soft' currencies, for example the rand, kwacha or the pula, make Zimbabwe produced goods expensive and unattractive, at the same many foreign companies prefer to export to Zimbabwe in order to get the US dollars, this has prompted scholars to argue that Zimbabwe is bleeding her hard earned foreign currency to foreign entrepreneurs who are flooding the Zimbabwean with both original and counterfeit product in pursuit of the 'coveted' US dollar, and at the same time export job opportunities for Zimbabwean youth, since foreign goods outcompete locally produced goods. The other factor that factor pulling down the Zimbabwe is the energy sector which is exorbitant and erratically supplied, the alternative energy like diesel is even expensive. The other factor which is affecting the country's competitiveness is the issue poor infrastructure, many of Zimbabwe's roads are in poor state and the problem is further compounded by many roadblocks and checkpoints, the personnel manning them solicit for bribes, further increases operational costs. The findings resonate well with what Sabao (2024), Musabayana et al (2022) who explained the operational environment for Zimbabwe youth entrepreneurs.

Chapter summary, the research found out that, government officials, arguing from a liberal economic interdependence, hype AfCFTA as a game changer which is bringing about a number of opportunities, which includes job creation in various sectors, expanding African markets, boost trade and investment, industrial development among others. From neofunctionalism perspective youth entrepreneurs argue that, they face the following challenges, stiffer

competition from well-established foreign entrepreneurs (spillover effects of regional economic integration), constrained operational environment marred by incessant load shedding, taxation and a number of levies, inadequate work space (space barons) and infrastructural deficiencies.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND AREAS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

5.1 Introduction

This chapter provides summary, conclusion, recommendations and areas for future research. The major finding is that there are more challenges than opportunities for the Zimbabwean youth entrepreneurs. The problem is worsened by the fact that the negotiation of AfCFTA has moved from phase one which was dealing with ‘trade in goods and services, and dispute settlement’ and it is currently on phase two, whose focus is on ‘intellectual property rights, investment, and competition policy’. Issues to do with the youth are in phase three which is and it is outstanding. Therefore, one can be justified to argue that it is too early to judge a teething organisation which has not reach full operational stage and very little is known by people outside government and institutions concerning AfCFTA.

5.2 Summary

The study assessed opportunities and challenges for Zimbabwean youth entrepreneurs in the AfCFTA. The summary of each objective is discussed in accordance to the major research findings from the data gathered.

5.2.1 Opportunities for Zimbabwean Youth in the AfCFTA

The research, arguing ‘from liberal economic interdependence’, established that stakeholders are optimistic that AfCFTA presents a number of opportunities in the form of opening market for entrepreneurs, create jobs in various sectors, inspire industrial development, empowering women in the cross-border trade. The research noted that a number of youth either have little or no knowledge of AfCFTA.

5.2.2 Challenges facing the youth in Zimbabwe in penetrating the AfCFTA

The Zimbabwe youth entrepreneurs said the current operational environment in the country is acting as an impediment to full realisation of benefits from AfCFTA, a neofunctional point of view. The operational environment is characterised by incessant load shedding, infrastructural deficiencies, loads of paperwork to setup business, delays on roads (stop and search by either the ‘Zimbabwe Republic police’ [ZRP] or ‘vehicle inspection Department’ [VID] or other department like Immigration Department or Zimbabwe Revenue Authority), there are complaints that the delays are worsened by some official who solicit for bribe and this further increases operational cost. Zimbabwean youth entrepreneurs face stiffer competition from foreign national venturing in low setup trade like retailing of ICT gadget, retailing of beauty therapy products among others.

5.2.3 How the AfCFTA affects the competitiveness of young Zimbabwean businesses

The research found out that Zimbabwean youth entrepreneurs faces stiffer competition from fellow entrepreneur within the African continent. From a neofunctionalist point of view, the plight of Zimbabwean entrepreneurs is worsened by the following challenges, Zimbabwe’s multicurrency regime renders Zimbabwe’s products expensive compared to products produced using soft currencies, power outage increases cost of production, infrastructural deficiencies are responsible for delays in movement of good to and from Zimbabwe.

5.2.4 Policies in Zimbabwe that support youth participation in the AfCFTA

From liberal economic interdependence, the research found out that government as put in motion a number of measures to assist youth entrepreneurs for instance the frequently updated youth policy which is tailor-made to meet the needs of youth entrepreneurs. The research also noted that government has put in place financing mechanism like, SMEDCO, youth and women

empowerment banks, and other private partnership financiers. But there is need to upscale the dissemination of information so that would be beneficiaries will be in the know.

5.4 Conclusions

The issue of opportunities within the AfCFTA is hyped by stakeholders, who contends from a liberal economic point of view, more than the entrepreneurs and opportunities are more futuristic [for instance, AfCFTA will inspire industrial development and subsequent growth, create jobs in various sectors, facilitate imports and exports among member states] than present [whilst AfCFTA has managed to reduce 90% of tariff barrier, non-tariff measures like customs regulations continue to haunt the region economic bloc]. The implementation of AfCFTA is in second phase two, and phase dealing with the youth and women is yet to be finalized. The research found out that a number of Zimbabwean youth entrepreneurs have little or no knowledge of the AfCFTA, what they are certain is that South Africa is Zimbabwe's largest trading partner for an assortment of goods and Mozambique is a source of second hand clothing and footwear.

The research also observed that Zimbabwean youth entrepreneurs faces the following challenges, high production costs which are worsened by incessant power outages, the multi-currency system [especially the USD renders Zimbabwean products expensive and less competitive to other regional products], high transport cost [worsened by poor infrastructure and numerous checkpoints (allegedly manned by personnel soliciting for bribes)], red tape in customs, insufficient production capacity to expand export owing to limited access to working capital and aging or outdated machinery and a lack of financial mechanisms to export.

The research also noted Zimbabwean government has a number of ways to sponsor different constituencies of youth entrepreneurs, for instance women can get low interest loans from the Women Empowerment Bank, youth in general can get loans from either the youth

empowerment bank or through the Africa Capacity building foundation, ‘Small and Medium Enterprises Development Corporation’ (SMEDCO). However, the youth complained that the money offered is not enough for meaningful growth in the entrepreneurship sector, hence the issue of funding remains a major challenge for youth entrepreneurs within the AfCFTA.

5.6 Recommendations

1. There is need for the adoption of adaptive and appropriate regulation to ensure that innovation thrives at the different stages of development.

2. Zimbabwe government need to expedite reduction of non-tariff trade costs, streamlining imports and export processes, and upgrading infrastructure.

3. There is need to develop and modernise the transportation and logistics infrastructure, so that Zimbabwe maximise geo-location (centrality on the African continent) and provide regional connectivity.

4. Zimbabwean youth entrepreneurs in the same trade must consider pooling together their resource together in order to purchase in bulk and later break-bulky once the imported container reaches the country. This in turn brings comparative advantage to Zimbabwe youth entrepreneurs and bridge a gap between them and foreign nationals operating in the country.

5.7 Areas for Future Research

Future researchers may find it worthwhile pursuing research on coping strategies by youth entrepreneurs for business growth within the AfCFTA framework.

Other studies pursue a comparative study on the challenges and opportunities for youth entrepreneurs within the AfCFTA framework using a case of Zimbabwe’s metropolitan Provinces (Harare and Bulawayo)

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