

**REGIONAL TRADE STRATAGEM INFLUENCING KENYA'S DIPLOMATIC
ENGAGEMENTS WITHIN THE EAST AFRICAN COMMUNITY PARADIGM**

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DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis is my original work and has not been presented at any other institution.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

RTS-	Regional trade stratagem
DE -	Diplomatic engagements
EACP -	East African Community paradigm
AU -	African Union
EAC -	East African Community
FDI -	Foreign Direct Investment
RECs -	Regional Economic Communities
COMESA -	Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa
IGAD -	Intergovernmental Authority on Development
BRI -	Belt and Road Initiative
SDGs -	Sustainable Development Goals
MDGs -	Millennium Development Goals
SOEs -	State-Owned Enterprises
EU -	European Union
USA -	United States of America
USTR -	U.S. Trade Representative
AGOA -	African Growth and Opportunity Act
SGR -	Standard Gauge Railway
LAPSSET -	Lamu Port-South Sudan-Ethiopia-Transport Corridor
AfDB -	African Development Bank
AfCFTA -	African Continental Free Trade Area
WTO -	World Trade Organization
UNCTAD -	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
IMF -	International Monetary Fund
ICT -	Information and Communication Technology
SPSS -	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences

- SADC** - Southern African Development Community
- KIPPRA** - Kenya Institute for Public Policy Research and Analysis
- KNBS** - Kenya National Bureau of Statistics
- NGO** - Non-Governmental Organization
- MNC** - Multinational Corporation
- TFEU** - Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union

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ABSTRACT

Many countries around the world use economic diplomacy to exert their influence. Kenya is a major economy in Africa ranking currently among the biggest economies in East Africa Community. It's robust economy and advanced infrastructure development compared to other neighboring states has earned her the title "the Gateway to Africa." While many studies explore Kenya's economic growth, few interrogate its efficiency as a tool for economic diplomacy in the EAC. This necessitated an urgent inquiry into strategies on how to interrogate the influence of regional trade stratagem on Kenya's diplomatic engagements within the East African community paradigm. The specific objectives include, to analyze the effect of trade policies on Kenya's strategic diplomatic engagements in the East African Community Paradigm, to examine the influence of economic partnerships on Kenya's strategic diplomatic engagements within the East African Community Paradigm, to identify challenges facing Kenya's diplomatic engagements within the East African Community Paradigm and to suggest strategies to enhance Kenya's diplomatic engagements within the East African Community Paradigm. The Interdependence, Neoliberal and Neo-Marxist theories guided the study. This study used exploratory research design. The target population included Kenya's Ministry of Trade and Industrialization with Key Informants from other departments. The study used purposive, stratified and random sampling methods. Qualitative data was collected through desktop reviews and Key Informant Interviews (KIIs), while questionnaires were used to collect quantitative data from the respondents. SPSS was used as the statistical tool and quantitative data analysis was done through descriptive statistic using frequency, percentage and presented in tables. Content analysis was used to analyze qualitative data and was presented in narration and verbatim format. The study found that trade policies ($b=0.245$, $p<0.001$), economic partnerships ($b=0.278$, $p<0.001$), and strategic approaches ($b=0.289$, $p<0.001$) played a significant role in promoting Kenya in the EAC, whereas the persistent challenges ($b=0.236$, $p=0.001$) like tariffs and logistical barriers acted as a limit to progress. The study concludes that Kenya has its regional influence based on good policy alignment, economic integration, and strategic partnerships. The research recommends that Kenya enhances policy harmonization with EAC protocols through strengthened implementation of trade facilitation instruments, regional value chain development, and export competitiveness frameworks and should deepen bilateral and multilateral economic cooperation by institutionalizing structured engagement with EAC partner states and diaspora economic networks. For further research, the study recommends a comparative study across EAC member states and sector-specific analysis of economic diplomacy and as well the need to explore the role of non-state actors in regional diplomacy

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Overview

This chapter presents the introduction of the research study that is the influence of regional trade stratagem on Kenya's diplomatic engagements within the East African Community paradigm. The study examines the study's background information in the context of global, regional and national, local perspectives with the aim to give context and gaps in the area of research. It also provides the study's statement of the problem, study objectives, research questions, and justification of the study, significance, and scope of the study.

1.1 Background of the Study

Regional trade strategies refer to the policies, agreements, and diplomatic mechanisms adopted by countries within a specific region to promote trade, investment, market access, and economic integration. It involves the use of economic diplomacy through bilateral and multilateral negotiations, trade liberalization policies, and regional cooperation frameworks to advance national and regional economic interests (Bayne & Woolcock, 2007). In today's globalized and interconnected world, regional trade policies are becoming more affected by globalization and economic interdependence, and thus economic diplomacy is playing an integral role in international relations (Çika & Veshi, 2024).

Diplomacy has grown beyond political engagement to encompass the economic, trade, digital and environmental aspects. This change has helped the development of economic diplomacy as an important instrument in the process of the management of international economic relations. Yakop and van Bergeijk (2011) define economic diplomacy as the practice of using trade and commerce to promote country interests and influence. Economic diplomats therefore encourage trade and investment opportunities and enhance international partnership building. States, through ministries of foreign affairs, finance and trade, and non-state actors like multinational corporations and NGOs are active in achieving economic objectives through diplomatic relations (Rajapakse & Samaratunge, 2002). The World Trade Organization (WTO) is a major forum through which major powers pursue their economic and geopolitical agendas through negotiations, trade rules and dispute settlement procedures. The WTO is used by the countries like the United States and China to control the global trade governance, create market conditions that are favorable for them and build their economic power in the international market. These states employ economic diplomacy to enhance their diplomatic influence over smaller economies through trade agreements, tariffs,

subsidies, and the ability to leverage negotiating within the WTO framework (Bayne & Woolcock, 2007). The WTO is thus a trade organization as well as a forum for negotiating competitive influence and strategy. As emphasized by Odell (2000), the major powers tend to manipulate multilateral trade negotiations for their own national interests, while employing diplomacy to create alliances and to influence the decision-making process. This illustrates the connection between economic diplomacy and global trade governance in international relations.

1.1.1 A Global Perspective of International Trade Stratagem and Diplomatic Engagements

Economic diplomacy has been instrumental in shaping the global economic order. Major economies in the developed countries have used economic diplomacy to develop distinct strategies to navigate international trade and investment landscapes and push their national economic goals. With this tool, the developed nations have been in a position to make multi-million deals using trade agreements and partnerships as demonstrated in the following examples of the European Union, the United States and China. In China, unlike their European and American counterparts, economic diplomacy is a new component of its diplomacy in the 21st century (Kafle, 2022). This is credited to globalization and the new economic strength of China. The history of economic diplomacy in China goes back to August 2004 when a meeting between the Chinese premier and representatives of third world countries was held with the aim of achieving an independent foreign policy of peace through economic development (Fuchs, 2016).

The European Union being the strongest economic integration unit in Europe with 27-member states was greatly involved in international trade. The function of the European Union (EU) in the economic diplomacy is established by the treaty of Lisbon (Treaty on the Functioning of European Union-TFEU) signed in December and became effective in December 2009. It delved in Foreign Direct Investments as a regional bloc not as individual member state (Herrmann, 2010).

The EU's economic diplomacy comprises of decision making and all member states having common objectives to promote EU's influence globally (Çika & Veshi, 2024). The Economic diplomacy of EU is molded by its various institutions that deal with policy making and negotiating processes: - the European council, the European commission and the European Parliament all supported by a common currency, the Euro (€). The EU member states have also developed an internal integration process to respond to the ever-changing global issues.

The EU's economic diplomacy is characterized by its extensive network of free trade agreements, development assistance, security, and regulatory frameworks (Çika & Veshi, 2024). Furthermore, the nature of regional arrangements determines the extent of trade liberalization agenda of regional economic diplomacy arrangements like the EU with administrative mechanisms determining the liberalization agenda and defining the role of trade or economic diplomacy (Rajapakse & Samaraturunge, 2002). The EU uses economic diplomacy to maintain global competitiveness, enforce sustainability standards, and promote regional stability. The EU also has more external policies focused on matters of diplomacy, defense, development and trade including eradication of restrictions of international trade (Cardwell, 2015). The Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) with African, Caribbean, and Pacific (ACP) nations serve as a key diplomatic tool, enhancing trade relations while fostering economic integration.

The United States (U.S.) employs economic diplomacy as a fundamental pillar of its foreign policy, utilizing trade agreements, financial aid, sanctions, and strategic investments to maintain its global economic dominance (Çika & Veshi, 2024). The U.S. State Department is placing economics and market forces at the center of U.S. foreign policy. To the U.S., Economic Diplomacy means both harnessing global economic forces to progress America's foreign policy and using the tools of foreign policy to support America's economic strength, while advancing the strategic and security interests of the United States (American Foreign Services Association (AFSA), 2024). The U.S. Trade Representative (USTR) is a key player in the negotiation of trade agreements that guarantee protection of U.S. business interests and ensure trade terms are favorable. The African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) is one of the programs that gives African countries preferential market access with the aim to promote economic development and reduce China's growing power in the African continent (Çika & Veshi, 2024).

The United States' economic diplomacy is closely tied to its transatlantic relationship with the European Union. The EU and the U.S. have strong economic relations, based on trade, investment and regulatory cooperation, which influence global trade norms (AFSA, 2024). Their economic ties have sometimes been strained, however, due to issues like tariff conflicts and plans for digital taxation. Nevertheless, the two entities remain committed to developing the multilateral trade agreements, as well as to responding to world economic crises (Çika & Veshi, 2024). Ting (2017) reports that China has used its economic leverage within the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) as a tool for strategic diplomacy to extend its Southeast Asian and international footprint. China has advanced its foreign policy goals and enhanced economic interdependence

with the ASEAN member states through trade agreements, infrastructure financing, and regional investment schemes. The ASEAN-China Free Trade Area (ACFTA) has not only strengthened ASEAN-China economic connectivity, but also brought China to become one of the biggest trading partners of ASEAN. Furthermore, China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) facilitates infrastructure initiatives like energy investments, railways, and ports in Southeast Asia, strengthening its diplomatic ties through economic cooperation (Kafle, 2022). China also leverages multilateral forums that engage ASEAN, for the purposes of regional stability, securing strategic partnerships, and balancing U.S. influence in the region. This is a reflection of the interplay between China's economic diplomacy and regional trade policy in order to enhance geopolitical influence and diplomatic leverage.

1.1.2 Regional Perspective of International Trade Stratagem and Diplomatic Engagements

U.S. economic diplomacy in Asia and Africa includes efforts to manage China's economic rise and build ties with other regional partners like Japan, South Korea, and India (AFSA, 2024). The Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF) is one of the most significant initiatives for bolstering economic cooperation, bolstering supply chain resilience and challenging China's influence in the region. On the other hand, U.S.-China economic cooperation is complicated by trade wars, technology competition, and strategic competition for world market leadership. The imposition of tariffs on Chinese goods and restrictions on technology exports illustrate the competitive nature of their economic engagements, reflecting broader geopolitical tensions (Çika & Veshti, 2024). Moreover, U.S economic statecraft and diplomacy is far more extensive than the U.S aid for firms and businesses abroad or the investments Americans make in other nations. They also involve the application of economic sanctions to penalize or discourage bad actors in the international arena, which includes terrorist financiers and drug traffickers, as well as corrupt officials. They entail mobilizing foreign aid and funding to partner nations that are formed as a result of war or natural calamities. They also entail establishing support to establish and implement international regulations to make corruption and bribery less acceptable (AFSA, 2024).

Diplomacy is the conduct of relations between sovereign states and a mode in which they articulate, coordinate and secure their national strategic interests in relation to other actors (Anderson, 2014; Bayne & Woolcock, 2007). Over centuries, political diplomacy has become the most prevalent form of diplomatic practice and is understood as the prerequisite to evading states' antagonistic circumstances and wars (Wanyama, 2013). Diplomacy was never foreseen

to include collective security or economic bargains *inter alia*. However, more recently, with the new international developments, including modernization, globalization, international trade and technology, diplomacy has been bound to stretch from the political cage. Consequently, modern diplomacy includes cultural, social and economic concerns of state(s) on top of political ascriptions (Anderson, 2014). Diplomatic relations have refocused on protecting the respective country's economic and regional interests, making diplomacy a tool to facilitate political relationships and charter economic relationships (Bergeijk et al., 2011).

Economic diplomacy is defined as using a country's international political tools to achieve economic objectives for national interest focusing on increasing trade and exports, attracting foreign investments (FDI) and facilitating regional integration to affirm the economic interests of a country (Bayne & Woolcock, 2007). For instance, Bergeijk et al. (2011) argue that diplomatic relationships take the form of states introducing trade missions and embassies in countries or regions where they have economic interests. Thus, states that exhibit strained political relationships have a deteriorated trade flow (economic relationship) between them, and states with strained trade relationships do not enjoy warm political relations (Anderson, 2014; Bayne & Woolcock, 2007).

In this regard, Afman and Maurel (2010), economic diplomacy is based on four pillars: trade promotion, investment promotion with FDI, attracting suitable technologies and management of economic aid, which is important for most developing countries as a recipient and for donors mainly from developed nations (Bergeijk et al., 2011). Afman and Maurel (2010) denotes that facilitation of trade, exports and FDI emerge among the explicit missions of foreign diplomacy as sole justifiable economic rationale to pursue diplomatic relationships among countries.

Huda and Muchatuta (2022) understanding of African diplomacy show a clear style of diplomacy different from the rest of the world. Justifiably because majority of African states attained their independence very close to each other over the past five decades. African states developed an incentive for the continent's multilateral relations expressed collectively with view for liberation from foreign subjugation (Akopari, 2016). African states remain cognizant of the pluralities that characterize the continent (Huda & Muchatuta, 2022). Notably, culture diversity, slavery and colonialism immeasurably affect every African life and African states utilize diplomacy for their foreign policies through the years. It is, however, clear that diplomacy in Africa has some partial success stories of states and regional bodies in

accomplishing their foreign policy goals (Akopari, 2016). The breakdowns of African diplomacy are not solely explained by the role of external actors but can also be seen through intra-African diplomacy as a result of the combination of factors, including: the quality of diplomacy and mediators; the prevalence of conflicts; the international helplessness of the continent; the dependence of Africa on external actors and; the resultant lack of assertiveness and inability to stand up to errant leaders in the region. (Akopari, 2016).

In 2019, the African Union (AU) launched the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) to establish Pan-African economies of scale on a free trade footing. The initiative is meant to enhance development and prosperity by diversification of industries, opening of new markets, and intensification of production within regional value chains (Langan & Price, 2025). The AfCFTA, main objective is to widely strengthen African countries' trade collective position within the global economy (African Union, 2021a). Economic integration through the AfCFTA is a milestone towards greater political solidarity (Amanor-Wilkes, 2021). Botha and van Wyk (2024) assert that Africa's trade diplomacy is influenced by global institutions such as the WTO, UNCTAD, and the African Development Bank (AfDB), that provide policy frameworks, financial assistance, and technical expertise. External actors, including the EU, China, and the U.S., also play a crucial role in shaping African trade policies through bilateral agreements and investment programs (Huda & Muchatuta, 2022).

1.1.3 National perspective of International Trade Stratagem and Diplomatic Engagements

The thrust of Kenya's international politics and diplomacy has changed substantially, from the state's survival and its leadership to greater attention to trade and investments. The shift of Kenya's priorities of foreign engagement towards economic relationships is a principal pillar for the country's foreign policy, in the pursuit of its aim of becoming a middle-income economy by 2030 as provided in the Vision 2030 (Irungu, 2024). The Kenya Foreign Policy (2014) framework shows that there is a nexus between Kenya's foreign relations and diplomatic engagements within a contemporary globalized environment. East Africa's economic integration is driven by diplomacy through foreign policy as espoused by individual East African Community (EAC) member states who include, Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Rwanda, Burundi, South Sudan, the DRC, and Somalia (in accession process (EAC Trade Report, 2023)).

Africa Economic Report of the African Development Bank (AfDB) (2023), indicates that East Africa registered the highest regional economic performance in Africa in 2023 and 2024, with growth figures at over 5 percent, and outpacing all the other African regions. According to the report's East Africa Economic Outlook, East Africa's real GDP is propelled by two things, its trade and service sectors. Its growth is largely driven by growth of these two items in EAC member states – Rwanda, Uganda, Kenya, and Tanzania – as well as trade and integration with other eastern Africa countries of Ethiopia and Djibouti (AfDB, 2023). While the service sector contributes 2.0 percentage points to GDP trade had the highest points at over 10 percent (EAC Facts & Figures, 2022). The region's natural and cultural attractions draw tourists from around the world, creating a demand for services like accommodation, food, and entertainment, while their integration creates trade between and among them, allowing for easy flow of goods and service across the region.

Bilateral trade agreements among EAC countries have strengthened economic ties but have also been marred by disagreements, including disputes over trade imbalances, tariff applications, and competition in key industries. For instance, Uganda recently rejected an SGR construction agreement with Kenya (the Kenya-Uganda SGR) in favour of an agreement with Tanzania. As external actors like China and the EU become more influential, negotiations have also become more complex as member states balance regional concerns with the wider economic opportunities. Infrastructure projects, such as the Standard Gauge Railway (SGR), the LAPSET Project, and cross-border energy initiatives, enhance economic connectivity.

Key trade goods within the EAC include agricultural products, petroleum, textiles, and manufactured goods (AfDB, 2023). Kenya is leading economy in the region, it exports industrial and consumer goods to other countries, while Uganda and Tanzania are major exporters of agricultural commodities. In as much as Kenya has made progress it still experiences hardships occasioned by regional political tensions legal regime disparities competition for investment and force majeure The AfDB's (2023) Africa Trade Report 2023 examined medium-term projections and the risks to the East Africa region's growth outlook. There is an opportunity for the region to embark on a green transition for Africa and that the private sector financing can support increased growth. The East Africa region, faces domestic and external downside risks that affect the positive economic outlook. The domestic risks include gaps in infrastructure, domestic regional conflicts and political instability, and macroeconomic imbalances within countries and across the region. The external factors include

global economic slowdown, rising commodity prices, the continued European instability of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, international trade policies, tightening of global financial conditions, and exchange rate depreciation (AfDB East Africa Economic Outlook, 2023).

Kenya's strategic location in East Africa has made it possible for it to have economic relations with other neighbouring countries, like Uganda, Tanzania, Rwanda, and Burundi, through the East African Community (EAC), which now also includes South Sudan, Somalia and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). With the changing trends of modernization, globalization, and technology, Kenya has embraced regional integration in their pursuit to achieve her national interests, as clearly depicted in her membership of the African Union's (AU) Regional Economic Communities (RECs: The East Africa Community (EAC), the Common Market for East and Southern Africa (COMESA), and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD).

Kenya, dubbed the "*Gateway to Africa*," has the largest and strongest economy in the EAC, projected to grow even faster (Githaiga, 2021; Lofchie, 1990). The title "*Gateway*" is mainly because Kenya's strategic location, economic stability, and stable governance. Kenya is East Africa's base in international trade and investment links as its transport, logistics, tourism, banking and services hub, all underpinned by major infrastructure development. Kenya has key growth measures, including Vision 2030, whose aim is to make Kenya a middle-income country by 2030, the Foreign Policy 2014, showing Kenya's its integration and foreign measure. As Kenya has edged in multiple overlapping AU's record being strategic in achieving several objectives simultaneously (Amuhaya, 2018).

The quest for regional integration in Africa's a long history coined in continental struggle. Anchored in its diversities, regional integration in Africa emerges from the politics of ant colonialism based on pre-existing colonial arrangements (Lawson, 2015; Mengistu, 2016). Most countries in the East Africa (EA) region got independence almost at the same time, and the development progress is slow for all, leading to integrate owing to common interests (Amuhaya, 2018). Kenya's young, educated, and entrepreneurial population possesses high fluency in technology, abundant supply of renewable energy with the most developed power sectors in sub-Sahara Africa, and high export competitiveness also places the country as a key economy in the EAC (Awe et al., 2021; Olyanga et al., 2022). Also, according to The International Trade Administration (ITO) (2024), Kenya enjoys a strong bilateral relationship

with the world's top economies, such as the United States, China, the European Union, the United Kingdom, the Gulf and Middle East and Asia Pacific economies, including Strategic Trade and Investment Partnerships (Amuhaya, 2018).

The fulcrum of Kenya's foreign policy is driven by regional integration and diplomatic machinery in the EAC. According to its official website, Vision 2030 led to the shift in foreign policy that was the country's economic development blueprint. Thus, economic diplomacy, one of the key pillars of Kenyan foreign policy, has been pursued by integrating politics, trade, investment, and other economic considerations (Vision 2030) and Kenya's foreign policy has continued to align with the region's economic interest and strengthening the bilateral relationships in the region (Amuhaya, 2018). Thus, the Kenya's EAC's diplomatic mission focuses on integration, economic empowerment, and establishing a stable economic zone that fosters regional stability (Wanyama, 2013).

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The government of Kenya utilizes economic diplomacy to improve bilateral relations with the countries in East Africa. Uganda and Kenya have a long-time trade relationship, with the Port of Mombasa being at the peak of this relationship and the Kenya-Uganda railway built in colonial times, connecting these two countries. Although Kenya is the economic giant of the East Africa region, the country is seeing a growing competition from its neighbours, including Tanzania, Ethiopia and Rwanda, who are gradually diversifying their economies and diplomatic agendas. Industrial parks in Ethiopia and the conference tourism in Rwanda are examples of targeted investments that can challenge Kenya's historical dominance (Chingarande et al., 2013). Domestically, corruption, bureaucratic inefficiencies and overreliance on undiversified exports further constrain Kenya's diplomatic engagement.

In Tanzania, Kenya has used economic diplomacy to convince the country to let go of protectionist policies to enable the free movement of goods and harmonization of policies between the two countries. Trade and economic diplomacies have also occurred between Kenya and other EAC member states. Bilateral agreements have been signed among EAC member states to improve their development and economic growth across the region with Kenya always leading the integration efforts. Experience gained from other African regional organizations, such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC), shows that regional trade can be used as a tool for economic diplomacy and regional influence. ECOWAS has enhanced the bargaining power

of the region via coordinated trade policy, peace and security intervention, and collective economic negotiations, whereas SADC has been pushing for infrastructure integration, industrialization, and investment cooperation among member states (Botha & van Wyk, 2024; Huda & Muchatuta, 2022). These regional experiences highlight the positive effects of trade blocs on the region in terms of their diplomatic leverage, stability and competitiveness. The effectiveness of Kenya's regional trade diplomacy is, however, hindered by a number of challenges including non-tariff barriers, political competition, and weak policy implementation, to mention a few.

The analysis of Kenya's economic growth (World Bank, 2022) has been examined while little has been done to explore the efficiency of the regional trade as a means to engage in diplomatic engagement in the EAC paradigm. For instance, despite its economic stability and strategic trade position, Kenya has yet to gladiate and usurp a position as a regional plummet climate diplomacy actor akin to Norway's peace mediation niche (Chingarande et al., 2013). Yet, Kenya's vision of becoming a "middle-income economy" outlined in Vision 2030 will be determined by Kenya's proactive diplomatic engagement development framework. This dual gap in scholarly and policy-oriented research leaves Kenya ill-equipped to navigate a geopolitical landscape where trade and economic statecraft increasingly dictate influence, necessitating urgent inquiry into strategies for synchronizing her economic strengths with diplomatic imperatives. The pertinent questions that arise are; how exactly does Kenya use its strategic trade position to advance its regional influence and national interests? What factors hinder Kenya's economic diplomacy in East Africa? What mechanisms can be explored to enhance trade to leverage Kenya's economic diplomacy? This study attempted to find out how Kenya, as a regional key player can harness through regional trade stratagem and yield on diplomatic engagements within the East African Community paradigm.

1.3 Study Objectives

The study was guided by the following objectives;

1.3.1 General Objective

The general objective of the study was to examine the influence of regional trade stratagem on diplomatic engagements within the East African Community paradigm.

1.3.2 Specific Objectives

- i. To analyze the effect of trade policies on Kenya's strategic diplomatic engagements in the East African Community paradigm

- ii. To explore the influence of economic partnerships on Kenya's strategic diplomatic engagements within the East African Community paradigm.
- iii. To identify challenges facing Kenya's diplomatic engagements within the East African Community paradigm
- iv. To determine strategies to enhance Kenya's diplomatic engagements within the East African Community paradigm.

1.3.3 Research Questions

- i. How do trade policies influence Kenya's strategic diplomatic engagements in the East African Community paradigm?
- ii. How do economic partnerships impact Kenya's strategic diplomatic engagements within the East African Community paradigm?
- iii. What are the challenges facing Kenya's diplomatic engagements within the East African Community paradigm?
- iv. What strategies can Kenya adopt to strengthen Kenya's diplomatic engagements within the East African Community paradigm?

1.4 Justification of the Study

Little study has been done analyzing economic diplomacy in Africa, especially in East Africa. This study focuses on this emerging diplomacy that is being explored by countries and is the focus of Kenya's foreign policy. A few scholars have given little economic diplomacy outcomes, with many focusing on politics. As the EAC's largest economy, Kenya possesses numerous economic strengths that should be exhausted and enhanced through economic diplomacy to pursue its economic interests and diplomatic influence in the region (Anderson, 2014). One such instrument is trade. Since Kenya's economic positioning in the EAC offers significant diplomatic potential, this study explored how Kenya positions herself to exploit trade as a key potential tool for diplomacy in the EAC.

1.5 Significance of the Study

This study is very useful in contributing valuable knowledge to Kenya's foreign policy, specifically economic diplomacy. The study adds to the existing knowledge of the researchers in this field, and serves as a guide for future policymakers. The study established the regional dynamics of economic diplomacy in East Africa and how they shape Kenya's diplomatic engagement and opportunities within the region. Since existing literature does not sufficiently

explore the intersection of trade and economic diplomacy in the Kenyan context, this study is important in filling that gap, offering a nuanced perspective on how Kenya can leverage trade as a tool for economic diplomacy and geopolitical advantage in the region.

1.6 Scope of the study

This study aims at addressing the influence of regional trade stratagem on Kenya's diplomatic engagements within the East African community paradigm. The study's geographic scope focused on the East African region, with Kenya being one of the member states. The three levels of economic diplomacy (global, continental and regional) will be analyzed to offer a holistic view of how the concept operates and its importance. The research evaluated the existence and development of economic diplomacy in the EAC, its nature, main dynamics, and how it has or may be affecting trade among states that are partners. Although there are historical backgrounds of economic diplomacy, the scope covered the time period for developments made since the re-establishment of the EAC, especially in relation to trade relations between member states. The research further assessed the comparative advantage Kenya has over other member states and also how she can use trade as a strategic tool to pursue its objectives of economic diplomacy.

1.7 Limitations of the Study

Access to sensitive information concerning regional trade stratagem is potentially restricted. To mitigate thus, the researcher sent an introduction letter to the institution authorities outlining the study objectives and requesting cooperation, also a NACOSTI (National Commission for Science, Technology, and Innovation) letter was obtained to validate the study credibility and adherence to ethical standards. This official documentation helped in gaining necessary permissions and access to relevant information while respecting the institutions protocols.

Stakeholders were hesitant to participate in the study due to concerns about sharing information or potential repercussions. In response to this, the researcher ensured confidentiality and anonymity was maintained throughout the process. All participants received informed consent forms that explained the nature of the study, voluntary participation, and the confidentiality of the study. This openness was a factor in fostering openness and participation. The reliability and validity of the data collected were also discussed due to the sensitive nature of the data collected. The researcher used triangulation, which involves several methods of data collection, and cross-checked information to reduce this. This also involved the amalgamation of survey, interview and document analysis. The researcher also made clear to the Nation that this was an academic study

and that it would benefit the Nation, so that they could be forthcoming in their answers. Participants were given the opportunity to review and validate their contributions before final inclusion in the study.

Time constraints prevented the study from capturing long term regional trade stratagem as diplomatic engagements changes often take time to take effect. Change among Nation state governments and leadership hindered open discussions affecting the implementation of findings due to shift of policy and power play. Restricted access to data limited the depth of analysis as some governance and operational records could be confidential and unavailable for review. Despite these challenges the study provided meaningful insights into enhancing diplomatic engagements through regional trade stratagem.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the theoretical review on the influence of regional trade stratagem on Kenya's diplomatic engagements within the East African. It begins by examining relevant theories that provide the conceptual foundation for understanding the relationships between regional trade stratagem and diplomatic engagements. The chapter then explores the conceptual literature on each of the key variables: Trade policies, economic partnerships, challenges and strategies. This is followed by a review of empirical studies investigating the relationships between these variables and Kenya's diplomatic engagements within the East African Community. The gaps in the literature identified during the review are discussed. The Chapter also provides the conceptual model depicting the relationship between the dependent variable and independent variable. A critique and summary of the literature and research gaps presented.

2.1 Theoretical Framework

This section discussed key theories in international relations that form the theoretical foundation for this study: Interdependence theory and Neoliberalism theory. These theories provide different lenses through which to examine the relationship between regional trade stratagem and Kenya's diplomatic relations in the East African Community framework. Interdependence theory is important because it explains the interdependence among EAC countries in terms of economic and political cooperation and the attainment of mutual prosperity and stability. On the other hand, the neoliberalism theory is appropriate because it encourages the role of institutions, liberalization of trade and common policies in promoting regional integration and international cooperation.

2.1.1 Interdependence Theory

This theory argues that states are interdependent and that cooperation with other states is more beneficial than competition. It is a concept in International Relations and International Political Economy that was developed by Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye in the 1970s to account for the new nature of the global political economy (Keohane & Nye Jr, 1987). Today, no state can exist in isolation in an age of globalization, technology, and trans-border problems such as trade, terrorism, health, environmental protection, etc. The nature of power in international relations is changing from military to economic and institutional interdependence, while the international organizations

are instrumental in supporting cooperation (Mwende 2022). States are increasingly turning to other states and non-state actors for stability and economic development.

Copeland (2014) argues that economic interdependence reduces the occurrence of war, because trade is more beneficial than war. He argues that states trade in order to become economically developed rather than through military conflict. Within political conflicts, barbeiri and Levy (1999) argue that trade relationships continue despite the conflict, reinforcing the idea that economic relationships endure political tensions. Keohane and Nye Jr (1987) further develop this idea in their Complex Interdependence Theory which outlines three characteristics: multiple channels of interaction beyond government, absence of a strict hierarchy of issues, and shrinking of the use of military force in state relations. They emphasize that international regime, particularly WTO and IMF, make cooperation possible by providing transparency and checking adherence, thus reducing conflict. This theory resonates with Kenya's foreign policy and diplomatic initiatives within the East African Community (EAC), where the emphasis lies on promoting trade rather than conflict. For instance, despite the Migingo Island dispute with Uganda, Kenya steps back from aggressive action to preserve trade relations. Kenya and Tanzania have enhanced economic ties by eliminating import duties on certain goods. Kenya's ability to trade with both the East and the West, while maintaining regional peace, exemplifies the practical application of interdependence liberalism in its foreign policy.

2.1.2 Neoliberal theory

Neoliberal institutionalism, argues that international cooperation and institutions can foster peace and prosperity by mitigating the effects of power politics and promoting interdependence. It builds upon the foundation of liberalism, implicating those states can attain mutual benefits through cooperation, without a central authority. Neoliberalism is similar to neorealism except that it derives different implications out of these assumptions. Unlike the neorealist scholarship that is cynical about the chances of a sustainable cooperation, neoliberalism holds that cooperation is achievable and sustainable. Neoliberals emphasize that international institutions and regimes play a significant role in enhancing collaboration among states. This is the primary reason why international organizations enable cooperation; they offer information, which minimizes collective action issues between states in offering public goods and ensuring adherence. In the 1984 book *After Hegemony*, Robert Keohane applied the knowledge of the new institutional economics by arguing that the international system could be held stable outside of the presence of a hegemony, thereby refuting the hegemonic stability

theory. Keohane demonstrated that it was possible to maintain international cooperation based on repetitions of interactions, transparency, and monitoring.

2.1.3 Neo-Marxist Theory

Neo-Marxist theory explains the unequal distribution of economic and political power within the international system and how powerful states dominate weaker economies through global capitalism and trade structures. The theory argues that international trade and economic relations are structured in a way that benefits developed countries while developing nations remain dependent on them for markets, capital, technology, and investments (Wallerstein, 2004). Neo-Marxists contend that globalization and international institutions often reinforce dependency and unequal exchange between the Global North and the Global South. According to Frank (1967), developing countries are integrated into the global economy in subordinate positions that limit their economic autonomy and sustainable development.

On economic diplomacy, Neo-Marxist theory helps explain power asymmetries in regional and global trade relations. Strong economies such as China and the United States often use trade agreements, financial aid, and investment to extend geopolitical influence over weaker states. Kenya's economic strength could also influence regional trade ties and diplomatic relations in the East African Community (EAC) region, potentially affecting its neighbours' economies. The theory therefore provides a critical framework for understanding how economic power can influence diplomatic engagements and regional integration

2.2 Conceptual Framework

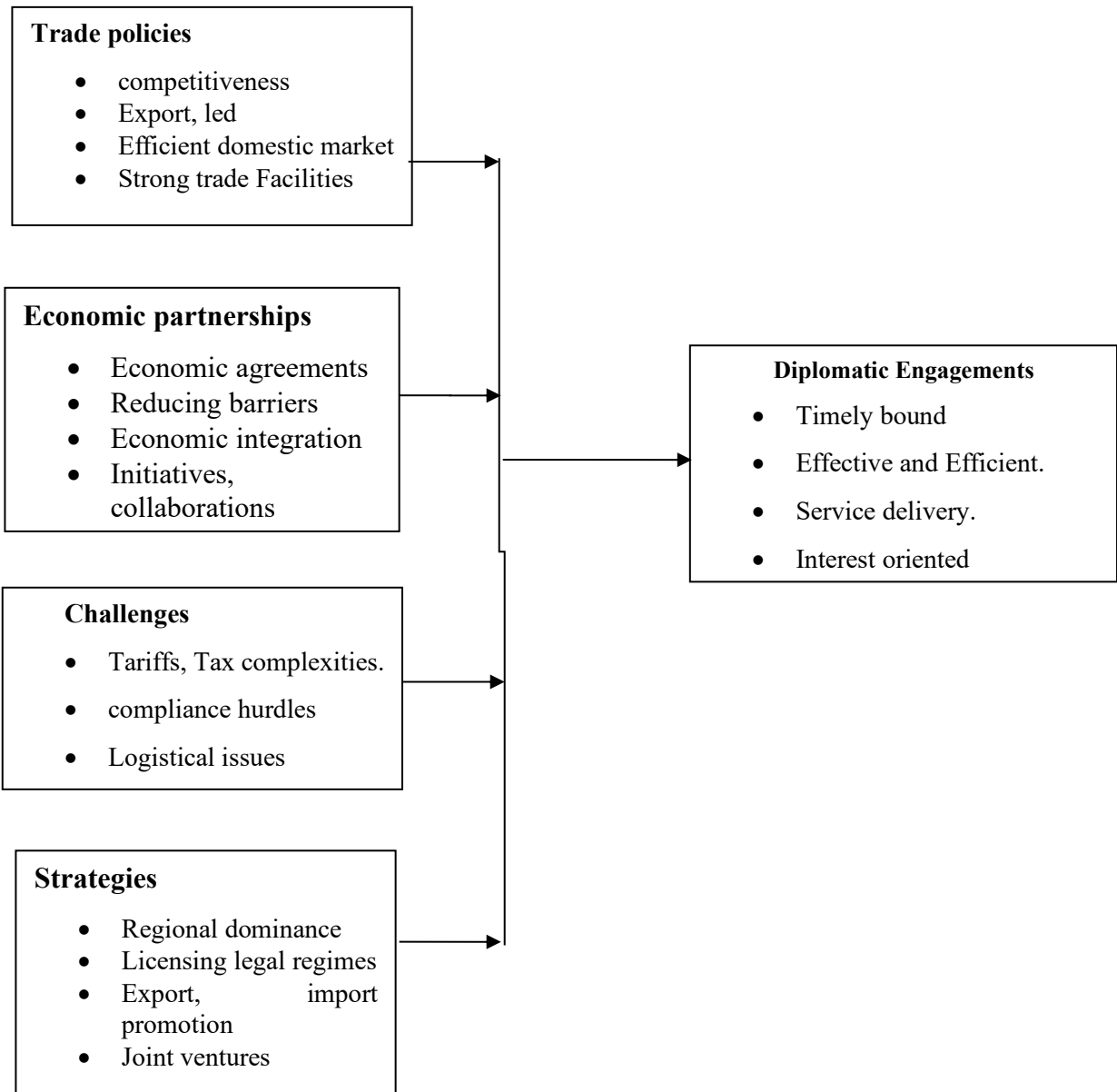
A conceptual framework connects concepts and contributes to the development of theory using the approach to examine the connection between different variables (Cait, 2020). Independent variables refer to the factors that bring about or influence outcomes. They are known as predictors and the dependent variable is a variable that depends on the independent variables or the outcome of the impact of the independent variables (Cresswell, 2009).

Figure 2.1

Relationship between Regional trade stratagem and Diplomatic Engagements

Independent variable

Dependent variable



Source: Researcher, (2025)

2.2.1 Operationalization of Variables

This section examines the conceptual relationships between key regional trade stratagem and Kenya's diplomatic engagements within the East African Community Paradigm Specifically, it explores how Trade policies, Economic partnerships, emerging challenges and strategies influence Kenya's diplomatic engagements within the East African community paradigm.

2.2.2 Trade policies and Diplomatic engagements

Trade policies and diplomatic affairs are interdependent in international relations because states utilize trade as a diplomatic instrument to fortify political relations, drive economic agendas, and improve regional and global sway. Trade policies involve government regulations that govern international trade with tariffs, quotas, trade agreements, export incentives and customs regulations, while diplomatic engagements encompass negotiations, partnerships and interactions between states that seek to attain mutual interests (Bayne & Woolcock, 2007). Countries use economic diplomacy for creating alliances, luring investments and obtaining strategic partnerships through the use of trade policies.

World Bank (2022) notes that regional integration and cooperation is one of the key areas where trade policies affect diplomatic relations. The EAC Customs Union and Common Market policies, for instance, were established to lower tariffs and ease the mobility of goods, labour and services between EAC member countries. Kenya has applied these trade policies to deepen ties with neighbouring countries like Uganda and Tanzania. Uganda and other landlocked countries use the port of Mombasa, which has left Kenya more influential in the region in terms of its diplomatic relations as it has to rely on Kenya's transport and trade. Trade policies have also enabled peaceful conflict management in the form of negotiations and economic interdependence. The Kenya-Tanzania trade dispute over import restrictions and non-tariff barriers has been ongoing but in some instances Kenya and Tanzania have settled their differences under EAC mechanisms, with no sign of open conflict. Keohane and Nye (1987) argue that economic interdependence leads to the development of cooperation because states are better off trading with each other than fighting. Likewise, the EU has effectively employed trade integration policies to foster political cooperation and peace among EU nations, a series of years of conflict.

Kafle (2022) views trade policies as tools for diplomatic leverage from the grand powers' point of view. For instance, China has launched the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) to bolster diplomatic relations through infrastructure investments, concessional loans and trade partnerships in Africa and Asia. China has strengthened its economic ties with Southeast Asian nations under the Association of the Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) by promoting trade and investment cooperation. Similarly, the USA also leverages trade agreements and sanctions to shape the world's relations and foreign policies. Trade policies can, however, also lead to diplomatic conflicts if countries implement protectionist measures. For instance, tariff measures imposed on agricultural products between Kenya and Tanzania have sometimes caused tension in bilateral relations (Botha & van Wyk, 2024). In the same way, tensions have surfaced between the United States and China

regarding trade tensions and technology restrictions, impacting relations between the two nations (Bown, 2020). Thus, in addition to reinforcing cooperation and diplomacy, trade policies can also trigger competition and conflict when national interests conflict.

2.2.3 Economic partnerships and Diplomatic Engagements

Economic cooperation is a vital aspect of today's international system of states in terms of influencing the nature of their diplomatic relationships. Economic partnerships are cooperative initiatives between countries designed to stimulate trade, investment, infrastructure and technology transfer, and financial cooperation, all of which benefit both parties. The partnerships are formed by a variety of bilateral and interregional cooperation, development cooperation and strategic investment programs. Diplomatic relations, on the contrary, consist of diplomatic contacts and negotiations between states aimed at promoting political, economic and strategic interests. Economic partnerships are increasingly recognised as key tools in economic diplomacy, offering states the means for promoting cooperation, increasing influence and pursuing foreign policy goals (Bayne & Woolcock, 2007).

The Complex Interdependence Theory developed by Keohane and Nye (1987) can explain the relationship between economic partnerships and diplomatic engagements. According to the theory, states are increasingly 'connected' due to trade, finance and institutional linkages, and that economic relations have become a significant dimension of diplomacy. Economic cooperation makes the states dependent on one another, fostering cooperation and making war less likely. In the East African Community (EAC) for instance, countries like Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania have entered into economic partnerships with trade agreements, infrastructure projects, and customs cooperation. Such collaborations have enhanced the diplomatic engagement through the exchange of trade and security interests within the region.

Economic cooperation and cooperation have a profound impact on diplomatic relations, increasing regional integration and cooperation. Member States have facilitated trade flows, movement of labour and investments among the East African Countries through various initiatives such as EAC Customs Union and Common Market Protocol (East African Community, 2023). The Northern Corridor transport agreement and utilization of the Port of Mombasa has brought about a stronger relationship between the two countries with Uganda relying heavily on Kenya's transport infrastructure for access to international markets. This economic cooperation makes the countries more interdependent and promotes peaceful diplomatic activity between countries. Kafle (2022) also noted that economic partnerships

contribute to improving diplomatic influence and geopolitical positioning. One such example is the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) by China, a program of infrastructure loans, trade deals, and joint investment projects in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. This collaboration has enabled China to increase its influence in the diplomatic arena and to heighten strategic relations with underdeveloped nations (Kafle, 2022). The Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC), for instance, has improved trade, infrastructure building and financial cooperation between China and African countries in Africa. These relationships allow China to extend soft power influence and ensure access to markets and resources.

African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) offers a great illustration of how big African economies influence the trade governance of the continent. South Africa and Nigeria emerged as two major pillars in advancing the AfCFTA agenda, with their economic strength, political clout, and regional leadership. South Africa had supported the agreement as a way to grow its industrial exports, bolster the value of its supply chain and improve market access throughout the continent (Albert, 2019). While there was initial opposition from the domestic market in Nigeria because of their fears on the competition of the local industries with the external market, the country finally ratified the agreement to retain its position as the key player in the economic integration in Africa, so as not to be diplomatically isolated in the region (Luke, 2021). AfCFTA facilitates both countries to be leading players in continental trade negotiations, influencing the rules on tariff, rules of origin and market liberalization. This reflects the economic leverage that states can wield through trade regimes as tools of diplomacy to shape regional policy outcomes. The AfCFTA case, therefore, illustrates economic diplomacy in action, with trade pacts being used to further national interests, and at the same time, to foster continental integration.

Likewise, the EU exemplifies the role of economic cooperation in supporting diplomacy and regional peace. The EU was founded to foster economic integration among the European countries, and to guarantee free trade within the bloc, by creating a common market and trade cooperation. Such economic partnerships over time led to political cooperation and less likelihood of conflict between the member states. Keohane (1984) states that international institutions help to ease cooperation by offering rules, transparency and mechanisms to settle disputes. Economic cooperation within the institutional framework thus helps ensure stable foreign relations.

According to Neo-Marxist Theory, however, economic relations can also be used to strengthen the relationship of unequal power between the developed and the developing countries. Wealthier economies often wield influence over less powerful ones through investment, loan, and trade negotiations (Wallerstein, 2004). For instance, a number of African nations have taken on substantial amounts of loans and investment projects from China, sparking concerns of economic dependency and political manipulation. Likewise, unequal trade relationships between the developed and developing nations can restrict the economic independence of the weaker states. This illustrates the process by which economic cooperation can generate unequal diplomatic relations, in which stronger economies have more leverage. Economic cooperation can also be used to resolve conflict and build diplomatic communication. Kenya and Tanzania have had trade disputes from time to time in the EAC over tariffs and non tariff barriers. However, ongoing economic cooperation and regional institutional structures have helped to promote dialogue and peaceful conflict resolution rather than confrontation. This is consistent with the neoliberal theory that institutions and repeated interactions facilitate sustainable cooperation between states (Keohane, 1984).

In the Middle East, a comparison of economic partnership and diplomatic activity is seen in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) where Saudi Arabia enjoys a leadership position (Hertog 2017). The GCC, which consists of the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Kuwait, Bahrain, and Oman, acts as a regional economic community, encouraging increased trade integration, investment cooperation, and coordinated economic policies among its members. Saudi Arabia, the biggest economy in the bloc, controls its financial resources, oil exports, and sovereign wealth investments to influence policy direction in the GCC framework and the development of economic diplomacy in the region (Hertog, 2017). Saudi Arabia is further cementing diplomatic ties and promoting regional stability and economic supremacy through initiatives like joint infrastructure projects, energy cooperation and intra-GCC trade facilitation. This mirrors Kenya's influence in the EAC as a leader of the economic bloc which drives regional integration. The EAC, however, does not have as much of a head start in policy harmonization and implementation as the more politically organised GCC. The GCC case demonstrates the ability of the region's dominant economies to use the economic partnerships as a means of asserting their leadership, controlling their regional influence, and improving their geopolitical position in the Middle East.

The reviewed literature has shown the significance of economic partnerships as tools for diplomatic relations, highlighting their role in fostering trade, investment, regional cooperation, and geopolitical influence. The theories of Complex Interdependence, Neoliberal Institutionalism, and Neo-Marxism show that economic relationships promote cooperation and highlight power inequalities in international relations. Economic partnerships are increasingly becoming a key component of states' foreign policy strategies to advance their national agendas, deepen economic ties and improve their leverage in the regional and international arena.

2.3 Challenges facing Diplomatic Engagements

Although there are a number of challenges in diplomatic engagements such as violence, complexity, bureaucracy, threats on the digital front, changing international relations, and the rise of non-state actors. These challenges affect diplomacy in many aspects and call for creative solutions and flexible approaches. Regional trade within the East African Community (EAC) intermittently faces challenges including disparities in economic development among member states, infrastructure limitations, and non-tariff barriers. These issues hinder the free flow of goods and services and affect Kenya's trade within the region (Kandia, 2025).

Kenyan exporters to the EAC face specific challenges to trading within the region, including informality of cross-border trade, poor infrastructure and non-tariff barriers such as cumbersome administrative procedures (Kandia, 2025). General barriers to Kenyan exports include: (i) lack of capabilities (skills, technology, design), competitiveness and regulatory frameworks; (ii) lack of access to finance; (iii) lack of trade-related infrastructure; and (iv) market access barriers (standards, labelling, tariffs) (Raga, 2021). It is worth noting that Kenya has taken several steps at the national, regional and continental levels that would help to address bottlenecks to trading with the EAC and internationally in general. At the national level, the Kenyan Government's Second Mid-Term Plan (MTP 2013–2017) states that it's Vision 2030 aims to strengthen economic partnerships in East Africa, the rest of Africa, through international economic partnerships, as well as to increase and diversify Kenya's exports. In addition, the Third MTP 2018–2022, gives the highest priority to achieving the President Uhuru Kenyatta's 'Big 4 Agenda', one pillar of which is enhancing the country's manufacturing sector. Specific projects aiming to enhance regional trading include the expansion or rehabilitation of the East Africa Road Network Project covering 190 kilometers, and the East Africa Regional Transport, Trade and Development Facilitation Project covering 350 kilometers. These initiatives are aligned with one of the main aims of the country's national

trade policy framework in Kenya's Vision 2030 for export growth through value addition in export-oriented manufacturing and services.

At the Africa level, Kenya participates in regional communities (such as the EAC, COMESA), and has signed the African Continental FTA (AfCFTA). Kenya is part of the EAC customs union, and pledged in December 2018 to make trade between EAC members Kenya, Burundi, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda cheaper, faster and more straightforward to boost regional and continental trade. Kenya is also part of the COMESA FTA. Negotiations are ongoing to form a tripartite FTA among COMESA, EAC and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) (Osemo, 2024). These regional communities are working towards aligning initiatives with the AfCFTA, ratified by Kenya and 40 other countries as of October 2021. The EAC is expected to finalize its AfCFTA tariff offers by December 2021 (EAC, 2021). Meanwhile, the COMESA established a partnership framework with the AfCFTA Secretariat in April 2021 to support the AfCFTA implementation (Raga et al., 2021). Kenya's unpublished draft national AfCFTA strategy also incorporates regional commitments, including addressing the absence of a legal and consistent framework on trade-related mandates among Trade, EAC and Foreign Affairs ministries.

A number of government objectives on addressing challenges related to AfCFTA implementation (such as constraints in transport-related infrastructure, production linkages, competitiveness issues, high costs of business, and weak integration of MSMEs into value chains, among others) are expected to benefit from intra-EAC trading. Financial institutions or institutions that support financial sector development may provide complementary initiatives to national efforts in supporting Kenya's exports to the EAC and to Africa more widely. These initiatives include tailoring financial products for small-scale farmers, producers of export products with growing demand from the EAC; supporting value chain finance that could increase formality of cross-border trade within the EAC; tailoring digital financial services; providing financial support to meet product-specific standards by the EAC; supporting international approaches to facilitate investment.

2.4 Strategies in Kenya's regional trade

Kenya's regional trade strategies focus on maximizing the opportunities presented by agreements like the East African Community (EAC) and the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). There is need to focus on improved trade infrastructure, diversification export

markets, and enhancement of regional cooperation with a view of reducing trade barriers and promoting intra-regional trade. To capture regional trade agreements in the context of Diplomatic engagements it requires Kenya's active participation in the EAC and AfCFTA, to harness the gains in these platforms Kenya's strives to access new markets and benefit from preferential trade terms. Improving trade infrastructure, such as the expansion of Mombasa port, are crucial for facilitating trade and establishing Kenya as a regional hub. Diversifying export markets and products where Kenya is targeting new export markets and products that align with its comparative advantages, enabling it to negotiate favorable market access terms.

In enhancing regional cooperation, Kenya aims to strengthen collaboration with regional communities like EAC and COMESA through harmonized policies, reduced barriers, and promotion of intra-regional trade. Supporting industries and provision of essential services in which Kenya is focusing on industries with high growth potential, such as financial services, information technology, and tourism, by encouraging value addition to export-oriented manufacturing and services. Addressing non-tariff barriers where efforts are underway to eliminate non-tariff barriers to trade and streamline processes, such as customs clearance, to facilitate the smooth flow of goods across borders. Monitoring and evaluation overtly developing robust monitoring and evaluation frameworks to track the effectiveness of trade policies and make necessary adjustments. Implementing the AfCFTA Strategic Plan focusing on Kenya implementing its AfCFTA Strategic Plan 2022-2027, which aims to increase the manufacturing sector's value added through tariff liberalization and government interventions. Reviewing national policies to restate Kenya in reviewing its National Industrial Policy and national automotive policy to promote industrialization, aligning with the AfCFTA's priority sectors. Special Economic Zones (SEZs) with a view where SEZs are being developed as innovation and production centers to attract foreign direct investment and foster growth at the county level.

Kenya's foreign policy in East Africa is shaped by its strategic economic interests, regional stability efforts, and pursuit of economic integration within the EAC (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2014). As a regional economic powerhouse, Kenya has pursued a proactive trade agenda, leveraging its port infrastructure, financial sector, and industrial base to enhance trade relations with its neighbors (Kimutai, 2024). Bilateral agreements with Uganda, Tanzania, Rwanda, and South Sudan focus on infrastructure connectivity, energy trade, and industrial cooperation. Besides, Kenya's strategic position and stable economy has positioned her on a

high diplomatic pedestal more so as a host of some of the largest and well recognized diplomatic missions and international agencies south of Sahara, such as UNEP headquarters, UN-FAO regional headquarter, and USAID regional headquarters among others.

The main instrument of Kenya's economic diplomacy in the EAC is trade because it involves formulation of policies that handle regional integration and bilateral trade agreements. Kenya's trade policy making process has changed over time since independence. After Kenya gained independence, emphasis was made on import substitution policies, in an effort to develop industries; the main objectives centered on rapid growth of trade, ease of balance of payment pressure, domestic control of employment and generation of employment (Manyara, 2010).

The introduction of Structural Adjustment Policies (SAPs) in the 80s and 90s created a shift from a highly protected domestic market to a more competitive environment (Amuhaya, 2018). This was aimed to increase trade in the country through promotion of non-traditional exports market liberalization and reform of international trade regulation (Manyara, 2010). This developed a shift towards export-oriented policies whose formulation provided a strategy for export growth. It is through this that the National Export Credit Guarantee Corporation was formed. In the 2004, Kenya established the Vision 2030 Agenda, whose emphasis was economic transformation through trade and investment, positioning the country as a regional trade and logistics hub. Vision 2030 agenda commencement was in 2008, with five-year term plans (2008-2012, 2013-2017, 2018-2022, 2023-2027, 2028-2030). It replaced the sustainable development goals (SDGs) that had replaced medium term development goals (MDGs) after 2015. Some of the vision 2030 projects include the ports of Mombasa and Lamu's proximity to Dar es Salaam Port, LAPSET Corridor, linking Kenya with Ethiopia and South Sudan and the Kenya Uganda Railway, exemplifies Kenya's positioning and economic diplomacy in action. Additionally, Kenya benefits from a comparative advantage in finance, manufacturing, and agriculture, making it a key trade partner within the region (Amuhaya, 2018).

In 2014, Kenya's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Trade developed a Foreign Policy (2014) whose main focus was economic diplomacy. The Foreign Policy has five pillars: to enhance international peace and security, promote economic prosperity and development, enhance regional integration and relation. Through this policy, Kenya seeks to play a key role in bilateral integration in the EAC. It recognizes the EAC as its primary base for economic development and will therefore see to ensure it strengthens the community's relationship.

Furthermore, Kenya's EAC regional cooperation is not just a means to achieving its economic growth within the bloc, but also a way to catalyze the elusive continental political integration through economic diplomacy. According to Nairobi, the net effect of these efforts is an intra-African trade to reduce the continent's economic marginalization at the world stage.

With Kenya at this forefront, advocating for regional integration, many EAC countries keep asking the question of what's in it for Kenya. Notably, for Kenya, creating a larger export market, improving her attractiveness as a strategic logistics destination, leading Africa's tourism destination and increasing her competitiveness for FDI has always been the underlying objective (Amuhaya, 2018). Just in 2025, as reported by Anami (2025) Kenya and Somali, which joined the EAC in 2023, are discussing a trade facilitation agreement to eliminate irregular non-tariff barriers between the neighboring countries. This is in support of Somali, which is still developing trade protocols intended to be at par with EAC members on regional free trade. Kenya has signed such many deals across the EAC.

As a result, Kenya has spearheaded efforts aimed at creating a large regional market, which resulted in formulating cooperation legal instruments that established such other markets as IGAD, COMESA, and the International Conference of the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) in addition to the EAC (Alden & Soko, 2005; Githaiga, 2021). Kenya is an active participating member of these trading blocks, strategically positioning itself as a regional hub with economic stability to attract trade and FDIs serving as gateway for East Africa's inland countries like Uganda, Rwanda, DRC, South Sudan, and Burundi thereby giving the country an edge in terms of geo-political and economic influence (Githaiga, 2021).

Beyond the EAC, IGAD and COMESA, Kenya is also involved in aggressive regional integration initiatives with such outfits as IOR-ARC and ACP-EU. This is seen as a drive to cast the net of its foreign policy wider and insert her regional influence. Kenya has also signed an economic partnership agreement that opens cooperation between EU and EAC and spearheaded a tripartite FTA bringing together SADC, COMESA and EAC, and act that has greatly boosted her economic potential in both exports and essential imports. These forums also provide legalized non-tariff cross-border sharing of goods, services, skilled labor between Kenya and her neighbors.

Kenya perceives the AU—RECs as critical and desirable development path to her economic diplomacy. The RECs are instrumental in the process of liberalized trade such as essential

skilled labor, products and service across borders in the region. Despite strong economic ties, Kenya's trade relations within East Africa face challenges, including trade disputes, tariff disagreements, and competition for investment. Non-tariff barriers, such as regulatory inconsistencies and political tensions, occasionally strain diplomatic efforts. However, Kenya continues to champion regional integration through harmonized trade policies, labor mobility agreements, and infrastructure development.

2.5 Study Gap

As Africa's Gateway and hub, Kenya reaps much from the other EAC economies (Amuhaya, 2018). Increased trading has been seen between Kenya and individual East African states, especially Uganda and Tanzania, and thus the 'bigger market' in East Africa, with Kenya, in this case, attracting more investors both locally and internationally. Therefore, Kenya's economic diplomacy is conducted through integration and cooperation within East Africa (Wanyama, 2013). It is the pillar of foreign engagement through FDI. Kenya is ranked Africa's fifth biggest Foreign Direct Investor, with a compound annual growth of 87.8 percent from 2007 to 2012 (Amuhaya, 2018). Various literature covering EAC regional integration and bilateral engagements have looked into the mutual benefits to the partners. Similarly, they have studied how these bilateral relationships between the member states is designed to achieve integration. However, there is limited literature on Kenya's economic diplomacy in the EAC and how Kenya is using regional trade stratagem for her economic diplomacy in the EAC paradigm. In light of this background, this study will examine the nature of Kenya's economic diplomacy in the EAC. Specifically, it will analyze the role of economic policy in advancing Kenya's commercial interests while offering perspectives on the strategies the country can adopt use to utilize its comparative advantage in the region and advance its interests.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

In this section of the study, the work delved on the research methodology where the method of the study is outlined, it basically had the research design, the research target population, the area of the study, the type of the sample method, the data collection method, the analysis, reliability, validity and the ethical consideration of the research.

3.1 Research Design

This study used an exploratory research design to consider the effect of regional trade strategy on Kenya's diplomacy in the East African Community (EAC) paradigm. The choice of this design was deemed suitable as the trade policy instrument/economic diplomacy link is not fully developed yet in the literature. Exploratory research can be helpful in gaining preliminary information, recognizing trends and understanding concepts in areas with low levels of research (Saunders et al., 2019). This design enabled the researcher to look at trade policies, regional agreements and diplomatic engagements in detail and also explore new perspectives on Kenya's approach to economic diplomacy for regional integration. It also allowed for flexibility in data collection and interpretation and allowed for a variety of perspectives from key players in regional trade and diplomacy to be gathered.

3.2 Target Population

The study targeted population were key people who work in the Ministry of Trade, Investment and Industry, together with those who are employees of the Ministry of Foreign and Diaspora Affairs in senior level and who are charged with the duty of policy formulation, trade negotiations, and regional economic integration and collaborations. The officers from the two ministries who handle trade and are involved in the economic diplomacy, within the EAC region were targeted. Others were the experts who are serving in the senior position in the government and more so those charged with the duty of trade, diplomacy from the Ministry of Foreign and Diaspora Affairs, the trade policy experts, business leaders, the organisation which are involved in regional trade, and academia who are involved in regional trade researchers.

Table 3.1 :Target Population

Population Members	Number	Percentage
Ministry of Trade, Investments and Industry	28	19
Ministry of Foreign and Diaspora Affairs	26	17
Parliamentary Commission on Trade and Foreign Affairs	15	10
EAC Secretariat	11	7
Kenya National Chamber of Commerce and Industry	18	12
Representatives from Diplomatic missions (EAC country representatives)	16	11
Private sector representatives (importers, exporters, trade investors).	13	9
Academics and researchers (universities and think tanks).	22	15
Total	149	100

Source: Researcher, (2025)

The above target population was found to be best for this study in that it covered all the groups of respondents from different levels in the area of trade, diplomacy and different areas of which are of great interest to this study. An interview of the above was definitely going to give the results that the study expected to investigate.

3.3 Sampling Frame

The study ensured representation across various categories of the target population and selected key informants from:

Table 3.2 : Sampling Frame

Population Members	Number
Ministry of Trade, Investments and Industry	28
Ministry of Foreign and Diaspora Affairs	24
Parliamentary Commission on Trade and Foreign Affairs	13
EAC Secretariat	12
Kenya National Chamber of Commerce and Industry	16
Representatives from Diplomatic missions (EAC country representatives)	14
Private sector representatives (importers, exporters, trade investors).	10
Academics and researchers (universities and think tanks).	22
Total	149

The target population of 149 provided the basis from which a sample size was derived so as to provide the needed information to understand Kenya's trade in East Africa, its comparative advantage, and how Kenya uses regional trade stratagem for diplomacy.

3.4 Sampling Techniques

Sampling is considered the most critical process in any research, how to get those to interview from a population is very key. If the sampling is not well done then the researcher misses what s/he had set to investigate, the sampling technique must be representative of the whole (Bryman, 2016). It is from the sampled population that the researcher gets the much-needed data, and thus ought to be manageable to the researcher and as well be representative, if done well then it gives the research the needed validity and the inference of the whole.

Krejcie and Morgan formula was used to come up with the most appropriate the sample size. The above formula is mostly used in social science research, (Krejcie & Morgan, 1970). The formula is as follows:

$$s = \frac{X^2 * N * P * (1-P)}{(d^2 * (N-1) + X^2 * P * (1-P))}$$

Where:

s = required sample size

X^2 = the table value of chi-square for 1 degree of freedom at the desired confidence level (3.841)

N = the population size

P = 0.50 as a provision of the sample size.

d = 0.05 as the degree of accuracy.

Using the population of 149 from Table 3.1, the calculation is as follows:

$$s = \frac{3.841 * 149 * 0.5 * (1-0.5)}{((0.05^2 * 148) + (3.841 * 0.5 * (1-0.5)))}$$

$$s = 143.1623 / 1.3304$$

$$s = 107.6 \text{ (rounded up to 108)}$$

Stratified random sampling was used to select the respondents from each subgroup of the target population. This allowed a representative sample from each stratum, (Taherdoost, 2016). Stratified random sampling was seen to be more appropriate for the study because the study had to get respondents from each group, thus the policy makers, diplomats, drafters of trade agreements, those from the trade industry and the academia, it allowed for the representative from all sub groups to be sampled as respondents, and this increased the research precision, and lessened the research errors.

Table 3.1 : Sample Size Distribution

Sample Members	Target population	Sample size
Ministry of Trade, Investments and Industry	28	20
Ministry of Foreign and Diaspora Affairs	24	18
Parliamentary Commission on Trade and Foreign Affairs	13	11
EAC Secretariat	12	8
Kenya National Chamber of Commerce and Industry	16	13
Representatives from Diplomatic missions (EAC country representatives).	14	12
Private sector representatives (importers, exporters, trade investors).	10	10
Academics and researchers (universities and think tanks).	22	16
Total	149	108

Researcher, (2025)

3.5 Data collection instruments

3.5.1 Primary Data Sources

Given that the research was a mixed method, the study used a structured questionnaire as a data collection tool, this was utilized to collect primary data. It consisted of questions meant to gather the needed information from the sampled respondents. It gave room to collect standardized data from such a large sample, this ensured consistency in the gathering of information (Kuphanga, 2024). The questionnaire was divided into two sections: Section I containing demographic questions using categorical questions, while Sections II through VI used Likert-scale questions to measure attitudes, opinions, and perceptions related to trade

policies (X1), Economic partnerships(X2), challenges(X3), strategies(X4), and diplomatic engagements(Y) respectively.

The Likert-scale questionnaire presented respondents with a statement and asked them to indicate their level of agreement on a scale typically ranging from "Strongly Disagree" (SD) to "Strongly Agree" (SA) (Joshi et al., 2015). This format allowed for nuanced responses and this facilitated a better quantitative analysis of the data from the field. This type of questionnaire was advantageous in that it has the ability to measure complex, feelings, attitudes and opinions, and over and above, it gave the ease of understanding the respondents, this in return allowed ease of doing the statistical analysis.

3.5.2 Secondary Data Sources

In this section the study was able to get the qualitative data, which were obtained from documents such as letters, policy papers, government reports, diplomatic statements and the treaties that are made regionally. Document analysis-the study reviewed relevant policy documents, government reports, diplomatic statements, and regional treaties. The others included the pdfs articles, books, journals, and academic researches on the same field, which were handled as in literature review.

3.6 Reliability of Instruments

On the reliability of the instruments for any study, the consistency of the emerging findings over time is key. In assessing the research reliability, the study used Cronbach's alpha coefficient in measuring consistency. Cronbach's alpha, is widely used in social science researches and it provides a measure of the closeness of a set of items which are found in a group that is being studied. Something close to 0.70 is generally considered to be acceptable for research of such nature (Taber, 2018).

3.7 Validity of Instruments

To ensure the validity of the research instrument, a systematic validation process was undertaken to confirm that the questionnaire accurately measured the intended constructs. Research validity refers to the degree to which an instrument measures what it is designed to measure (Heale & Twycross, 2015). Content validity was emphasized in this study so as to ensure that all items in the questionnaire reflected the study objectives adequately. The validation process consisted of the examination of the questionnaire by experts in the field of international relations and economic diplomacy, who evaluated the relevance, clarity and comprehensiveness of each

question. Their input helped clarify unclear questions, eliminate extraneous content, and make better sure that items were related to the study goals.

The Content Validity Index (CVI) was calculated to quantitatively evaluate the content validity. Expert ratings were given to each item, and the percentage of items found to be relevant were determined. The CVI of 0.78 or above was used, as recommended by Lynn (1986) and Polit and Beck (2006), to ensure acceptable content validity. Those with scores lower than this were either revised or deleted to improve the overall quality of the instrument.

3.8 Data Analysis Methods

The qualitative data was coded using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics through frequencies, percentages and presented in tables. Correlation analysis was performed using Pearson's correlation coefficient to examine the relationships between variables. The strength and direction of the correlations were interpreted, and statistical significance was assessed at the 0.05 level (Schober et al., 2018). The results of the correlation analysis were presented in tables and a correlation matrix.

On the other hand, the qualitative data was analyzed using thematic and the content analysis methods. The emerging data were grouped and coded according to the emerging themes. These qualitative data were presented using the descriptive narration and verbatim. Also, multiple linear regression was used to examine the effects of the independent variables on the dependent variable (Tranmer et al., 2020). The regression model is:

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \beta_4 X_4 + \varepsilon$$

Where Y represents Diplomatic engagements, X_1 is Trade Policies, X_2 is Economic partnerships, X_3 is challenges, X_4 is strategies, β_0 is the Constant, β_1 through β_4 are the unstandardized regression coefficients, and ε is the Error term.

3.10 Logistical Considerations

The research process for this study at Ministries of Trade, Investment and Industry, and Foreign and Diaspora Affairs Nairobi Kenya adhered to rigorous logistical, and this being academic research all attempt were made to make it as modest as possible.

3.11 Ethical Considerations

Ethical consideration is always key in any research which should be worth its salt, for that matter all ethical considerations were keenly followed. Key among them was premised on the foundation of informed consent, by the respondents. The purpose of the research as one being purely for academic one, was a thing that the researcher had to assure the respondent of, and not only assuring the respondent, but to as well practice it to the letter. Two, they had to informed of their voluntary involvement in the study and that no respondent was to be forced to give their response. The policy of anonymity was applied, these meant that only what the respondents wanted to be attributed to them would be. The other ethical assurance was that the data obtained were going to be for research alone, and nothing else. Their withdrawal from the research was also guaranteed. All the data which were collected from the respondents were safely locked.

The university gave its clearance for the researcher in order to go out for the research process, the other body was NACOSTI which gave its consent to the student to go out and collect the data from members of the public. Initially, the researcher obtained an ethics clearance letter (ECL) to establish a unique academic identifier, facilitating proper attribution of the research work, a series of critical authorizations was then secured. The process started approval letter from the Directorate of research and post graduate studies Riara University, scan application to the National Commission for Science, Technology, and Innovation (NACOSTI) for approval, ensuring compliance with Kenya's national research regulations.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS, DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

4.0 Introduction

The chapter is a synthesized analysis and discussion of the collected data. It starts with a systematic survey of the questionnaire return rate, giving information about the representativeness of the data gathered. It is then succeeded by a presentation of the demographic attributes. The chapter then moves on to various analytical steps and investigation of descriptive statistics of each variable of the study. The results are then interpreted in the particular context of Kenya diplomatic engagements and are discussed in relation to the literature that has been written before on the effect of regional trade stratagem on Kenya diplomatic engagements in the East African Community.

4.1 Questionnaire Return Rate

The study targeted a total of **108 respondents**, out of which **92 participated**, representing an overall response rate of approximately **85.2%**. The response rate is high and satisfactory for social science research, surpassing the 70% minimum threshold for survey-based studies, which reflects high engagement and participation from the respondents. Of the 92 respondents who responded to questionnaires, 84 completed and returned them and 8 were interviewed. The return rate of the questionnaires was thus about 77.8% of the total targeted sample, which is also regarded as adequate/acceptable for meaningful statistical analysis and interpretation. Triangulation of data sources was achieved by incorporating interviews data, lending a qualitative depth to the study and enriching the findings. The rate of return of the study is presented in Table 4.1 below.

Table 4.1 :*Questionnaire Return Rate*

Sample Size	Responses Received	Response Rate
108	92	85.1%

Source: Field Data (2025)

4.2 Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

The demographic features of the respondents are significant in that they provide a background of the study results interpretation and ensure that the sample has a reasonable representation of the target population. The analysis addressed crucial demographic factors such as age and education level and such issues are especially important given that the research is devoted to the diplomatic activity of Kenya in the East African Community paradigm.

4.2.1 Age Distribution of Respondents

The age distribution analysis provides insights into the experience levels of staff members at the various institutions and Missions. Table 4.2 below presents the age distribution of respondents.

Table 4.2 :*Respondents Distribution by Age*

Age Category	Frequency	Percent
18- 25 years	5	5.4
26 - 35 years	18	19.7
36 - 50 years	45	48.9
Above 50 years	24	27.0
Total	92	100.0

Source: Field Data (2025)

As shown in table 5, most of the respondents' age bracket was constituted with respondents aged 36-50 years (48.9%), then with respective proportions respondents Above 50 years (27.0%), respondents 26 to 35 years (19.7%), and respondents 18-25 years with minimal proportions (5.4%).

The age distribution of the respondents is essential in establishing the level of professional experience and generational variety that may influence Kenya in its foreign relations in the East African Community (EAC). The 36-50 years and 50 years and above make up a significant proportion of the high-ranking officers and policymakers with much experience in the regional trade negotiations and diplomacy. Their opinions provide a wise insight into the manner in which the regional trade policies in Kenya have evolved, and how the institutional knowledge and historical participation in the EAC have dictated the institutions of diplomacy.

The younger respondents on the other hand, particularly those who are less than 35 years of age are a new breed of professionals who are exposed to the new trade mechanisms, digital diplomacy and the current regional integration works. Their availability provides the research with the body of knowledge of long-term officers and the new outlook of young practitioners. The combination of generational perspectives contributes to the richness of the study findings and it contributes to the general understanding of the Kenyan diplomatic stance in the Kenyan regional trade paradigm.

4.2.2 Education Level of Respondents

The educational profile analysis reveals the academic qualifications of the respondents, providing insights into their theoretical knowledge and professional understanding. Table 4.3 below presents the distribution of respondents by education level.

Table 4.3 : Respondents Distribution by Education Level

Education Level	Frequency	Percent
High School	8	9.0
Diploma	17	30.3
Bachelor's Degree	54	46.1
Master's Degree	13	14.6
Total	92	100.0

Source: Field Data (2025)

The educational profile as indicated in table 6 above shows a highly qualified workforce in the ministries of Investments, Trade and Industry, Ministry of Foreign and Diaspora Affairs, Diplomatic Missions, Parliamentary Departmental Committee on trade, Industry and Cooperatives and Kenya national Chamber of Commerce and Industry fraternity where higher education qualification is highly emphasized. Most of the respondents (46.1%) have bachelor's degrees which provides a strong base of theoretical knowledge and professional experience. This is then trailed by diploma graduates (30.3%), who inject specialized technical competencies into their jobs, and the master graduates (14.6%), who offer advanced knowledge and research skills. The highest qualification of 9.0% is high school education, either in the field of support or specialized technical background. This distribution shows that the respondents have a good academic background, and, according to Flomo-Kellen (2025), it is one of the essential factors of successful strategic engagements and development. Higher education qualifications are predominant, which is evidence of the dedication of diplomatic organizations to promote high standards in quality efficient and effective processes to trade engagements. Also, the varied learning experiences allow the ministries and the diplomatic organizations to handle both theoretical and practical facets of Diplomatic engagements in a manner that guarantees complete interface of regional trade stratagem and diplomacy. This

places Kenya in a good position to pursue future projects in the field of diplomatic relations in the East African community paradigm.

4.2.3 Respondents Distribution by Years of Service

The distribution of years of service gives an idea of the level of workforce experience among the respondents in the context of trade in Kenya in the areas of diplomatic engagements. Knowledge of the tenure of respondents is imperative because it determines his/her level of exposure to policies and diplomatic missions within the institution. Table 4.4 shows how the respondents were distributed regarding the years of service.

Table 4.4: *Respondents Distribution by Years of Service*

Service Period	Frequency	Percent
Less than 1 year	8	8.7
1 - 5 years	31	33.7
6 - 10 years	35	38.0
Over 10 years	18	19.6
Total	92	100.0

Source: Field Data (2025)

As presented in table 7, a significant portion of the respondents (38 %) have served at the Ministry of Foreign and Diaspora Affairs, Ministry of Investments, Trade and Industry, Diplomatic Missions for between 6 and 10 years. This shows the organizations are fairly experienced and know the Diplomacy and regional trade stratagem well. Also, 33.7% of respondents are 1-5 years into their service, which is a significant share of relatively new personnel who may have not yet experienced full institutional service. On the other hand, 19.6 % have been serving for more than ten years, indicating the existence of experienced staff who can help maintain continuity and stability in diplomacy. The distribution of years of service among respondents is of significance to Kenya's foreign policy in the East African community paradigm. Dumitriu et al., (2025) noted that the institution with a combination of experienced and new employees has a dynamic environment for innovation and best practice. There is a significant share of those who have served in the organization for more than six years, indicating high retention of knowledge from one service to another, which is essential for continuity and to ensure that new members are being taught by experts. Moreover, the younger staff (33.7% < 5 years) indicates a continuous process of workforce renewal necessary to inject new perspectives and methods of diplomatic engagement. This resonates with Zamfir (2020), who believes that a blend of experienced and new hires creates knowledge transfer and agility within an organization. Recruitment of new staff

members also helps to ensure the sustainability of the workforce, allowing knowledge and skills to be passed on without being lost from attrition or retirement.

4.3 Reliability and Validity of Instruments

The determination of reliability and validity was conducted before the research instruments are used for actual analysis. These psychometric characteristics ensured the quality and reliability of the data collected for analysis. According to Middleton (2019), the credible results of a social science research require valid and reliable instruments.

4.3.1 Reliability Analysis of Instruments

Reliability analysis was conducted using Cronbach's alpha coefficient to assess the internal consistency of the measurement scales. Table 4.5 presents the reliability analysis results.

Table 4.5 : Reliability Analysis

Construct	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach alpha greater or equal to 0.7?
Trade policies (X1)	4	0.812	Yes
Economic partnerships (X2)	4	0.778	Yes
Diplomatic engagement challenges (X3)	4	0.845	Yes
Strategies (X4)	4	0.793	Yes
Kenya's Diplomatic Engagements(Y)	4	0.826	Yes

Source: Field Data (2025)

The results of the reliability analysis showed that the internal consistency was good in all variables in the study. Trade policies(X1) and Economic partnerships (X2) had high and good reliability respectively with $\alpha=0.812$ and $\alpha=0.778$ respectively. The most reliable with $\alpha=0.845$ was Diplomatic engagement challenges (X3) and Strategies (X4) with $\alpha=0.793$. The Diplomatic Engagement of Kenya (Y) being the dependent variable was also very reliable with $\alpha=0.826$. Cheung et al., (2024) states that the values of Cronbach alpha above 0.7 denote acceptable reliable research in the social science, and those above 0.8 denote very reliable research. The internal consistency of the measurement scales was confirmed because all the variables in this study were greater than this threshold. The high coefficients of reliability

indicate that the questionnaire items were sensitive to what they were meant to measure, and which forms a good basis upon which the analysis may be done later. Moreover, the high reliability scores show that the respondents had a common meaning and interpretations of the questionnaire items, which increases the plausibility of the data obtained. The reliability estimates also reflect the suitability of the measurement scales in the context of the Kenya diploma engagement within the East African community paradigm indicating that the instruments were able to measure the aspects of relevance in the context of the Regional Trade stratagem and the Kenya Diplomatic Engagement with The East African community paradigm.

4.3.2 Validity of Instruments

Content validity was assessed using the Scale Content Validity Index (S-CVI) to ensure that the measurement items adequately represented their intended constructs. Table 4.6 presents the content validity results.

Table 4.6 : Content Validity Index (CVI) Results

Construct	Number of Items	S-CVI	S-CVI greater or equal to 0.8?
Trade Policies (X1)	4	0.92	Yes
Economic partnerships (X2)	4	0.96	Yes
Diplomatic engagement challenges (X3)	4	1.00	Yes
strategies (X4)	4	0.96	Yes
Kenya's Diplomatic engagement (Y)	4	0.92	Yes

Source: Field Data (2025)

The content validity analysis revealed high validity of all study variables. As Amponsah et al., (2020) note, a value of S-CVI above 0.80 shows good content validity, whereas a value above 0.90 is excellent content validity. The trade policies (X1) scored S-CVI of 0.92, which demonstrated excellent content validity of the measure in the measurement of financial aspects of diplomatic involvement in the East African community paradigm in Kenya. Both economic partnerships (X2) and diplomatic engagement strategies (X4) had high content validity (S-CVI=0.96) and appeared to cover the constructs of both in a comprehensive manner. The challenge of diplomatic engagement (X3) showed a perfect content validity (S-CVI=1.00) which implied maximum reflection of cultural aspects in the measurement items. The S-CVI of the dependent variable, such as Kenya Diplomatic engagement (Y) was also excellent at

0.92. These large indices of validity imply that the measurement items fully reflected the desired constructs in the context of diplomatic engagement in the East African community paradigm in Kenya. The high validity scores also indicate the efficiency of the expert review process and inclusion of comments in the development of instruments. Also, the high S-CVI values of all the variables show that the instruments were suitable to the theoretical framework and the objectives of the research.

The results of reliability and validity are well presented and give good evidences to the psychometric quality of the research instruments. According to Ho (2023), the reliability and validity are essential in making sure that the findings of the research have the accuracy and significance they warrant. The Cronbach alpha coefficients of 0.778 to 0.845 are high and signify high internal consistency and measurement points of the research on all the variables. On the same note, the fine S-CVI scores that are between 0.92 and 1.00 indicate that the instruments were a good measure of the theoretical constructs under measurement. These analyses form similar strong psychometric properties that give the consequent statistical analysis and results confidence. The reliability and validity findings are of specific importance due to the context specificity of the diploma affairs of Kenya in the East African community paradigm context in which correct measurement of regional trade stratagem and the diplomatic interaction of Kenya with the East Africa community paradigm is essential in deriving meaningful conclusions. Moreover, the findings indicate that the tools were effective to reflect the peculiarities of the Kenyan diplomatic activities in the East African community paradigm context. The high psychometric quality also helps suggest the possibility to generalize the results to the other Diplomatic relationships, however with proper contextual issues.

4.4 Descriptive Statistics

The following section provides the descriptive statistics of each of the study variables, including analysis of the means, standard deviations, and patterns of responses distribution. The interpretation of mean scores was conducted according to Koo and Yang (2025) where the scale of 1.00-1.50 was strongly disagree/very poor, 1.51-2.50 was disagree/poor, 2.51-3.50 was neutral/average, 3.51-4.50 was agree/good and 4.51-5.00 was strongly agree/very good. The standards deviations were interpreted in relation to the criteria in which $SD \leq 0.75$ shows high agreement, $SD 0.76-1.25$ moderately show agreement, and SD above 1.25 represents low agreement among the respondents.

4.4.1 Trade Policies and Kenya's Diplomatic Engagement within EACs paradigm

This theme shows a generally positive perception that Kenya's trade policies facilitate Kenya's diplomatic efforts in the East African Community (EAC), but with challenges of implementation and structures. The overall mean score ($M=3.41$, $SD=1.107$) indicates moderate level of agreement that trade policies improve Kenya's diplomatic position in the region. The majority of the respondents affirmed that Kenya's trade policies make it a leader in the EAC, and there was significant backing for the integration processes like the Customs Union and the Common Market Protocol. However, there were issues with currency fluctuations, non-tariff barriers and trade imbalance that impact diplomatic effectiveness. It was also observed that Kenya's export potential in the EAC is moderate, but there is possibility for enhancing export competitiveness and market access. Overall, the state of trade policies has a positive impact on Kenya's diplomacy but limited by structural and economic challenges in the regional trade environment. The analysis focused on the perceptions of respondents about how Trade policies affect the Kenya's Diplomatic engagements in the EAC paradigm. Table 4.7 presents the descriptive statistics for Trade policies indicators.

Table 4.7: *Descriptive Statistics for Trade policies*

Statements	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean	Std.Dev
Kenya's Trade policies are favorable to a leading position in EAC.	9 9.78%	16 17.39%	18 19.56%	34 36.95%	15 16.30%	3.31	1.124
Currency fluctuations affect Kenya's regional trade.	8 8.69%	12 13.04%	17 18.47%	38 41.30%	17 18.47%	3.46	1.088

Kenya's

export

earning

supersedes	9	14	20	35	14		
imports	9.78%	15.21%	21.73%	38.04%	15.21%	3.33	1.148
earning							
within the							
EAC.							

Kenya has

a strong

domestic

market for	7	11	15	40	19		
the region's	7.60%	11.95%	16.30%	43.47%	20.65%	3.55	1.067
goods and							
services							

Average						3.41	1.107
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Source: Field Data (2025)

The discussion on the indicators of Trade policies showed different perceptions in an idea that enhancing business environment, facilitating trade and investment and enhancing trade support institutions was central to Kenya in its diplomatic involvement under EAC paradigm. The mean score was found to be highest on "Trade policies improve the quality of Kenya diplomatic engagements" (M=3.31, SD=1.124), as there was a general agreement among the respondents. This observation is in agreement with The EAC Customs Union and Common Market Protocol which make it easy to carry out trade since it lowers the barriers, unifies the customs procedures, and increases market accessibility. Moreover, Kenya enjoys positive trade balance in the EAC, with rising export and imports. The score indicates that the respondents have been aware that financial support is instrumental in ensuring the sustenance as well as the enhancement of solid diplomatic engagements.

As one respondent observed,

“Yes, I believe Kenya’s trade policies are largely aligned with the broader goals of economic diplomacy within the EAC. Kenya has consistently supported and implemented the provisions of the EAC Customs Union and the Common Market

Protocol, which are central pillars of regional integration. Trade has always been viewed as the bedrock of our regional cooperation, and Kenya, being the biggest economy in the bloc, has played a leading role in driving this agenda forward. However, while the policy frameworks are well aligned on paper, the challenge lies in implementation. We need to strengthen our commercial diplomacy by fully enforcing bilateral agreements and enhancing partnership programs that promote fair competition, reduce trade barriers, and open up more markets for regional goods and services.” (KII 009)

This downplays the argument that the EAC trade policies like Common Market Protocol and bilateral trade agreement are meant to ease trade by mitigating barriers, harmonizing custom procedures, and encouraging free trade, hence the standard deviation reflects what is deemed to be acceptable agreement in this perception. This realization is more applicable in foreign policy where the engagements of trade policies directly relate to operational readiness and the positive results of the diplomatic engagements. The outcome is also an indication of the Kenyan focus on the national trade policy of Kenya to become a competitive export-based economy, which would boost regional integration and increase its involvement in both local and foreign trade.

The indicator "Currency fluctuations influence the regional trade in Kenya earned significant attention among respondents ($M=3.46$, $SD=1.088$). This result confirms a similar observation of Guillaume (2024) who find that financial limitations can have a strong effect on the outcomes of operations. The average score of 3.46 which is in the range of neutral implies that the respondents formed an ambivalent opinion on whether currency changes are a significant challenge in diplomatic interactions within the EAC.

A respondent from Uganda emphasized this cross-border challenge, noting,

“As a trade officer from Uganda, we face a lot of tariff and non-tariff barriers from Kenya. These impede trade between our two countries. I’m yet to ascertain whether they’re policy related, but such challenges often arise alongside exchange rate fluctuations that affect trade flow and pricing stability.” (KII 012)

This understanding is especially important since regional complexities are usually resource-consuming and may need magnanimity and lobbying and the knowledge. Extremely high oil prices, poor balance of payments with huge current account deficit and investors withdrawing out of the country.

Factors of inflation rates were also found to affect the fluctuation rates by 42.7 percent. Kenya has lower goods in the world market because she had a nascent marketing strategy of her goods. Imports exceed exports and speculators owned currencies waiting to get high profits in exchange market. The middle standard deviation means a uniformity in the responses of the respondents when it comes to the issue of whether Currency fluctuations have an effect on the

diplomatic activities undertaken by Kenya in the East African community paradigm. The finding highlights the value of strategic financial planning and resource optimization as the tool in sustaining diplomatic interactions in EAC, given the sophisticated security conditions and instability of states in the area. This observation also conforms to the theoretical basis of interdependence liberalism theory that highlights that economic interdependence minimizes chances of war since trade is more profitable than conflicts. Trade helps states develop economically in a better manner than military confrontations do.

The indicators "Kenya's export earning supersedes imports earning within the EAC paradigm" ($M=3.33$, $SD=1.148$) showing that Kenya has a trade surplus with the EAC, earning more from exporting goods to EAC member countries than it spends on importing goods from them. This complements the report in Kenya's Business Daily Nation dated 15th March 2024 that Kenya's earnings from goods exported to African countries exceeded expenditure on imports by a record Ksh164. 04 billion (\$1.22 billion) in 2023, The neutral scores indicate that while basic marketing requirements are met, there might be opportunities to enhance the diplomatic engagements. Kenyan exporters to the EAC face specific challenges to trading within the region, including informality of cross-border trade, poor infrastructure and non-tariff barriers. Kenya has made efforts to boost its exports to the EAC and to Africa more widely, as reflected in the government's medium-term plans, engagement in the EAC customs union and the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) free trade area, and the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). These efforts can be complemented by supporting informal micro, small and medium-sized enterprises or firms producing products for which there is growing demand from the EAC. The moderate standard deviations suggest some variation in perspectives, possibly reflecting different experiences across departments or programs.

The overall mean score for Trade policies ($M=3.41$, $SD=1.107$) indicates a positive assessment of Trade policies adoption at the ministries. This composite result suggests that while the respondents agree that trade policies support exists, there are opportunities for improvement. Raga et al., (2021). General barriers to Kenyan exports include: lack of capabilities, competitiveness and regulatory frameworks, lack of access to finance, lack of trade-related infrastructure and market access barriers. It is worth noting that Kenya has taken several steps at the national, regional and continental levels that would help to address bottlenecks in trading with the EAC and internationally in general.

4.4.2 Effectiveness of Kenya's Economic partnerships and Diplomatic engagement in the EAC

From the analysis of this theme, the findings indicate a moderately positive but mixed perception of the effectiveness of Kenya's economic partnerships in enhancing diplomatic engagement within the East African Community (EAC). The composite mean score ($M=3.40$, $SD=1.126$) reflects a neutral-to-agree stance, suggesting that respondents acknowledge the importance of economic partnerships but also see room for improvement.

The respondents broadly agree on the use of trade as one of the pillars of economic diplomacy and have an integrated policy-driven approach to trade in Kenya. However, the gaps in implementation are suggested by neutrality in some areas like bilateral/multilateral effectiveness and trade which strengthens the position of Kenya in the region. The economic partnerships are viewed as useful tools in advancing Kenya's diplomatic presence, though their maximum impact in the context of EAC is yet to be realised. This analysis was based on the perception of the respondents on Kenya's economic partnership effectiveness in EAC. Table 4.8 below presents the statistics for economic partnerships and diplomatic engagement in the EAC.

Table 4.8 : *Descriptive Statistics for Economic partnerships and Diplomatic engagement in the EAC*

Statements	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean	Std.Dev
Trade as a tool for Kenya's economic diplomacy in the EAC	10 10.86%	12 13.04%	16 17.39%	37 40.21%	17 18.47%	3.41	1.133
Kenya's economic diplomacy within the EAC is integrated	9 9.78%	10 10.86%	14 15.21%	40 43.47%	19 20.65%	3.52	1.107

and policy
driven

Kenya's
economic
diplomacy is
driven by
bilateral and
multilateral
agreements.

10	15	20	31	16	3.29	1.140
10.86%	16.30%	21.73%	33.69%	17.39%		

Trade has
strengthened
Kenya's
position in
the EAC?

9	14	18	34	17	3.37	1.125
9.78%	15.21%	19.56%	36.95%	18.47%		

Average **3.40** **1.126**

Source: Field Data (2025)

Analysis of Kenya's economic diplomacy within the EAC is integrated and policy driven revealed strongest agreement with "Kenya striving and thriving as the dominant economic hub in the region " (M=3.52, SD=1.107), indicating positive recognition of expansive trade falling in the 'agree' range suggests that respondents acknowledge the significant contribution economic partnerships to diplomatic engagements, while the moderate standard deviation indicates consistent views among respondents. Such an impression is most applicable in the light of the growing significance of the technological-based trading process between nations in the EAC paradigm. The outcome is also indicative of how Kenya has acknowledged Economic relationships in its international activities and enhancing trade in the EAC framework.

A respondent explained,

“Kenya’s economic diplomacy within the EAC is both strategic and integration-driven. As a founding member and first signatory to the EAC Treaty, Kenya has maintained strict adherence to all the EAC Protocols, including the Customs Union and the Common Market. The country’s approach is guided by regional trade agreements, promotion of investment, and the pursuit of deeper regional integration. Kenya has

positioned itself as a logistics and diplomatic hub in the region, supporting MSMEs, addressing non-tariff barriers, and facilitating market access for local producers. With devolution, coordination between national and county levels is essential to ensure effective implementation of these policies. Kenya's diplomacy is focused on building regional economic strength and expanding opportunities through cooperation rather than protectionism.” (KII 005)

The result also reinforces the theoretical framework of the strategic significance of the economic alliances in arching a competitive edge.

The indicator “Trade as a tool to Kenya economic diplomacy in the EAC” got a neutral response ($M=3.41$, $SD=1.133$), which indicates the acknowledgment that there is a need to improve Kenya trade value in its relation to the EAC diplomatic engagements. This positive mean score is an indicator that the respondents like the way Trade as a tool can capitalize on diplomatic engagements in terms of increased cooperation, collaboration, alliances, interaction, and engagement opportunities. The average standard deviation shows a fair amount of agreement between the respondents in terms of the positive contribution of Trade to the diplomatic engagements. It is more important to note that this perception is possible in the context of the complicated character of EAC paradigm that tends to demand intricate demonstration and simulation and competitiveness. The outcome is also in line with current trend within the EAC states where integration is becoming a prerequisite to trade growth, collective prosperity and economic growth of individual states.

The indicators such as “Trade has strengthened the position of Kenya in the EAC” ($M=3.37$, $SD=1.125$) and “Economic diplomacy of Kenya is driven by bilateral and multilateral agreements” ($M=3.29$, $SD=1.140$) scored with neutrality, which is indicative of an area in which there can be improvements. The scores on the neutral indicate that there is basic economic cooperation infrastructure but there is more that can be done to improve the economic infrastructure as well as its application in diplomatic activities. The average standard deviations indicate that there is a fluctuation in the views, which could be attributed to diverse experiences in different ministries and other business and diplomatic organizations.

A respondent emphasized this dynamic by noting,

“I would describe Kenya's economic diplomacy in the EAC as pragmatic and adaptive. Kenya often adopts favourable approaches depending on the changing trade dynamics and the unpredictable nature of partner states. As the region's economic hegemon, Kenya strives to promote integration while safeguarding its own national interests. The country's focus on regional trade missions, study visits, and the deployment of trade attachés within EAC missions demonstrates its commitment to advancing trade and investment. However, Kenya's competitive edge has been eroding due to high production costs and inconsistent policies, forcing it to rely on opportunistic strategies such as export diversification and responding to regional market demands. Despite

these challenges, Kenya continues to play the role of a 'big brother' in the bloc, supporting stability and growth through active engagement in EAC organs and leadership structures.” (KII 017)

The results especially hold relevance towards the variety of economic partnerships of various aspects of diplomatic engagements between individual states as well as bilateral and multilateral collaboration. The findings also highlight the importance of planning towards economic alliances that are more efficient to match business competencies with diplomatic activities.

The general average score of the item, Economic partnerships in the context of Trade having strengthened the position of Kenya in the EAC, ($M=3.40$, $SD=1.126$) reflects a neutral or mildly positive evaluation of economic partnerships in Kenyan diplomatic interactions in the EAC paradigm. This aggregate outcome indicates that though the basic economic alliances are desirable in facilitating and aiding diplomatic relationships, there can be some improvement in particular contexts like peace and security in the EAC paradigm. The average standard deviation of all indicators implies that there is an acceptable consistency in the perceptions of the respondents, especially in responding to areas where economic alliances can be cemented to facilitate seamlessly diplomacy. The findings demonstrate that there is a multifaceted equilibrium between economic alliances and diplomacy in the bilateral and multilateral context where the best economic alliances are needed to realize Trade goals without sacrificing the state centrism.

4.2.3 Challenges facing Diplomatic Engagements

Structural and operational challenges are seen to have a significant impact on diplomatic relations in the East African Community (EAC) as revealed by the findings of this theme; however, the general opinion from the respondents is that efforts to overcome these challenges are still underway. The composite mean score ($M=3.58$, $SD=1.076$) indicates that there is a strong consensus that challenges such as tariff, compliance, logistics and currency issues pose difficulties to effective diplomatic and trade relations. Of these, logistics problems were found to be the biggest challenge, reflecting poor coordination and lack of infrastructure in regional trade systems. Respondents also emphasized that tariffs and tax complexities continue to affect smooth cross-border trade, while currency fluctuations and compliance challenges create uncertainty in economic diplomacy.

The analysis of logistics issues in Kenya's diplomatic engagements as an indicator revealed strongest agreement with "logistics issues" at 45.6%, " ($M=3.66$, $SD=1.046$), indicating that

Kenya's Ministry of Foreign and Diaspora Affairs developed a Foreign Policy whose main focus is economic diplomacy. Kenya seeks to play a key role in bilateral integration in the EAC and recognizes the EAC as its primary base for economic development and will therefore see to ensure it strengthens the community's relationship. Furthermore, Kenya's EAC regional cooperation is a means of achieving its economic growth within the bloc and logical parameter to catalyze the elusive continental political integration through diplomatic engagement. These findings align well with the assertions that, with Kenya at this forefront, advocating for regional integration, many EAC countries keep asking the question of what's in it for Kenya.

Table 4.9 presents the descriptive statistics for challenges facing diplomatic engagements indicators.

Table 4.9: *Descriptive Statistics for Challenges facing Diplomatic Engagements*

Statements	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean	Std.Dev
Tariffs, Tax complexities	8 8.69%	9 9.78%	14 15.21%	41 44.56%	20 21.73%	3.58	1.076
Compliance hurdles	9 9.78%	10 10.86%	15 16.30%	39 42.39%	19 20.65%	3.51	1.107
Logistical issues	7 7.60%	8 8.69%	13 14.13%	42 45.65%	22 23.91%	3.66	1.046
Currency fluctuations	8 8.69%	9 9.78%	15 16.30%	40 43.47%	20 21.73%	3.57	1.077
Average						3.58	1.076

Source: Field Data (2025)

Notably, for Kenya, creating a larger export market, improving her attractiveness as a strategic logistics destination, leading Africa's tourism destination and increasing her competitiveness for FDI has always been the underlying objective (Amuhaya, 2018).

One Key informant observed,

“Political instability affects cordial diplomatic engagements; however, these present an opportunity for Kenya to advance its position as an anchor state as well as a provider of solutions for the challenges in the region.” (KII 006)

Another expert further noted that;

“The greatest challenge is Kenya's position economically in the region. So, Kenya comes on the engagement table viewed by other States in ‘big brother syndrome’ light... I would advocate for Kenya working hard enough to increase its trade footmarks and be an authority in economic diplomatic engagements.” (KII 004)

The indicator "Tariffs, Tax complexities" as a Challenge in Kenya's diplomatic engagements received strong positive assessment ($M=3.58$, $SD=1.076$), Kenya experiences General barriers exports include which include lack of capabilities (skills, technology, design), competitiveness and regulatory frameworks, lack of access to finance; lack of trade-related infrastructure; and market access barriers (standards, labeling, tariffs) (Kandia, 2025). However, Kenya taken tremendous steps at the national, regional and continental levels that would help to address bottlenecks to trading with the EAC and internationally to equivocate her economic role strongly within the EAC paradigm.

As noted by one participant, *“Non-compliance by Member States”* and *“lack of effective follow-up on the key outcomes from various EAC sector council meetings”* remain key issues, though *“this is being addressed by convening various bilateral technical level engagements with partner states.”*

The high mean score suggests that Kenya has successfully fostered economic diplomatic engagement that places it at a competitive advantage which is particularly crucial in diplomatic engagement within the EAC paradigm. The relatively low standard deviation indicates high agreement among respondents regarding this aspect of challenges, suggesting consistent engagements of collaborative practices across different players and organizations. The mean score falling in the 'agree' range suggests Kenya acknowledges the challenges and moves in drastic measures to address the same with a view to actively promote economic diplomacy within the EAC paradigm. The relatively low standard deviation indicates high consensus among respondents regarding the tariffs and tax barriers as a challenge in economic diplomacy. The indicator, “Currency fluctuations” as a challenge in Kenya's diplomatic engagements ($M=3.57$, $SD=1.077$) and “Compliance hurdles” as a challenge in diplomatic engagements ($M=3.51$, $SD=1.107$) both received positive ratings, indicating the need for strong and imperative economic measures to be taken for addressing this challenges with a view to moderate currency fluctuations and reduce compliance hurdles to enhance diplomatic engagements within the EAC paradigm opined the need on the instruments for harmonization of laws that might be suitable for operationalization of the EAC in the context of addressing compliance hurdles. To date, various legal instruments such as Protocols, Acts, Directives and

Regulations have been employed with varying degrees of success. The legal basis of such instruments and the effectiveness of each of them should be a central focus in future research.

One expert highlighted that “*balancing national, regional and global priorities, financing, and regional instability*” remain persistent obstacles, though these “*can be addressed through continuous monitoring and evaluation, policy innovation, diplomatic efforts to ensure stability, fostering partnerships and investments.*” (KII 023) Another expert added that “*sovereignty challenges as countries focus nationally*” could best be overcome through “*bilateral engagements with a focus on regionalism.*” (KII 010)

These findings are consistent with the Report of the 30th Meeting of the Council of Ministers of Nairobi, Kenya (20-28 November 2014) that addressed six Securities Market Directives and a Directive on licensing market Intermediaries. These proposals were delivered to the Council, and subsequently discussed by the Sectorial Council on Legal and Judicial Affairs to make sure that they met the required legal requirements.

The overall mean score for challenges facing Kenya's diplomatic engagements within the EAC paradigm (M=3.58, SD=1.076) indicates a strong positive assessment of major issues underlying and affecting the diplomatic relations Kenya has within the EAC. These results showed that the treaty introduced important milestones including the establishment of a customs union, common market, and immigration and labour policies to enhance the integration of the region. Nevertheless, in spite of these accomplishments, the adoption of the pillars was difficult owing to a number of challenges encountered by member states. These findings confirm the anxieties of experts that the vision of a single regional economy as envisaged by the EAC could be weak unless the East African Court of Justice (EACJ) is empowered appropriately. The lack of a robust institutional framework and adequate funding means that the regional bloc is likely to compromise its own law-making basis which could jeopardize the sustainability of the integration project of East Africa.

4.2.4 Strategies and Kenya's Diplomatic Engagement Within the EAC Paradigm

The analysis examined the Strategies and Kenya's diplomatic engagement within the EAC paradigm. Table 4.10 presents the descriptive statistics for strategies indicators.

Table 4.10 : *Descriptive Statistics for strategies for Kenya's diplomatic engagements within the EAC paradigm*

Statements	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean	Std.Dev
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Regional dominance	6 6.52%	9 9.78 %	14 15.21%	43 46.73 %	20 21.73%	3.64	1.020
Licensing and legal regimes	8 8.69%	10 10.86%	14 15.21%	40 43.47%	20 21.73%	3.56	1.088
Export and import Promotions	6 6.52%	8 8.69%	12 13.04%	44 47.82%	22 23.91%	3.70	1.013
Joint ventures	7 7.60%	9 9.78%	14 15.21%	42 45.65%	20 21.73%	3.61	1.049
Average						3.63	1.042

Source: Field Data (2025)

Analysis of the research findings establishes that the integration process strategies were the best instruments the partner states had adapted and that if they were implemented to the best of the states' knowledge, success was inevitable. Indicators showed strongest agreement with "Export and import Promotions is critical for successful economic diplomacy" (M=3.70, SD=1.013), indicating widespread recognition trade impetus within the EAC paradigm. These results are in line with the observations of Raga et al., (2021) who observed that Kenya has been proactive in expanding its exports in the EAC and in the whole of Africa. This has been reflected in the medium-term development plans by the government, the EAC Customs Union and the COMESA Free Trade Area and the draft National Strategy of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). They also imply that these initiatives can be reinforced by promoting informal micro, small, and medium enterprises that manufacture products in increasing demand within the region. The mean is high, meaning that most of the respondents recognize the value of export and import promotion as one of the most significant economic diplomacy impetuses, and the standard deviation is small, which means that the respondents are very homogenous in their views. This is particularly true of the diplomatic effort of Kenya at the EAC whereby trade standards are affected by economic diplomacy and efficiency in operations is enhanced. Altogether, the findings suggest that Kenya realizes the strategic importance of trade promotion to the economic diplomacy development and is consistent with

the theoretical point of view that the regional trade projects are instrumental in the improvement of the organizational performance and strengthening of the diplomatic cooperation.

The indicator "Regional dominance affects Kenya in its diplomatic relations with the EAC paradigm" was highly rated positively ($M=3.64$, $SD=1.020$), indicating the perceived effect of regional dominance of Kenya, in relation to the EAC, as the top exporter, especially of manufactured goods and re-exports, and the better performance of the country compared with other member states. This dominance is also enhanced by the fact that it has well developed infrastructure and it also has power in shaping the trade policies in the region. This finding corresponds with Nzau (2023) who describe globalization as a complex process whereby cultural, political, and socio-economic interactions have increased and intensified across societies. This has resulted in an accelerated flow of technology, ideas, capital, human resources, goods and services across countries and regions in the course of time (Juma, 2016). However, other scholars and policymakers are more critical, and view globalization as a trend that is being strategically redefined by the Western powers to maintain and further the unequal benefits of a capitalist global economy. The mean score in the study, which is within the range of agree, shows that the respondents have recognized the powerful effect of different economic diplomacy strategies on the results of diplomatic interactions. Moreover, the standard deviation is low, which is a pointer to a common perception by the respondents regarding the strong relationship between the regional trade strategies and diplomatic interactions of Kenya in the EAC paradigm.

The indicators " Licensing and legal regimes impacts the Kenya's diplomatic engagements within the EAC paradigm " ($M=3.56$, $SD=1.088$) and "joint ventures enhances economic diplomacy" ($M=3.61$, $SD=1.049$) both received positive ratings, indicating strong recognition of economic diplomacy's strong and transformational aspects. The interaction between Kenya and the East African Community (EAC) is regulated by an elaborate legal and licensing system that is directed towards supporting the integration and trade in the region. This framework encompasses the different EAC protocols, regulations and country laws of Kenya especially laws of Kenya on customs, investment, competition, and dispute resolution. These findings are similar to those of Otiende (2022) research on the effectiveness of Kenya and EAC legal regimes on Kenya involvement and investment in global value chains.

The average scores indicate that the respondents value the economic diplomacy that can encourage states and promote the effectiveness of trade by using licensing and legal regimes

and joint ventures strategies. The average standard deviations reveal that there is uniformity in the views of respondents as to the regional trade stratagem.

The mean score (M=3.63, SD=1.042) indicates that there is a very positive rating of regional trade stratagem in EAC paradigm. This follows the EAC Treaty Article 75 which establishes the arrangement of the Customs Union. Among some of the provisions that are stipulated in the relevant Protocol is the regulation of tariffs, rules of origin, and the control of non-tariff barriers (NTBs). Specifically, Article 2(4) of the Protocol emphasises the elimination of custom duties and other importation levies on intra-union imports, removal of non-tariff barriers between Partner States and application of a common external tariff on imported goods. The standard deviation is also not high, which means that there is a high level of agreement among the respondents and it means that the practices related to diplomatic engagement are highly institutionalized and have been practiced in any organization in a similar way. This sound and efficient leadership basis is a reputable support which can be leveraged in boosting economic diplomacy especially in relation to Kenya in the EAC scenario.

4.5 Statistical Assumptions of Regression Analysis

Prior to regression analysis, it was necessary to determine whether the data were acting in accordance with the basic assumptions of linear regression. Osemeke et al., (2024) indicates that such assumptions are normality of residuals, no multicollinearity among independent variables, and homoscedasticity. Testing of these assumptions guarantees the validity and reliability of regression findings and helps to justify the suitability of applying linear regression in testing hypotheses.

4.5.1 Normality Test

Test of normality was conducted by skewness and kurtosis statistics of individual variables. Schmid (2025) recommends that skewness of -2 and +2, and kurtosis of -7 and +7 are an acceptable level of normality in the social science research. The results of the normality test were listed in Table 4.11.

Table 4.11: *Normality Test Results*

Variable	N	Maximum	Skewness	Std. Error	Kurtosis	Std. Error
Trade policies (X1)	92	5.00	-0.421	0.255	-0.892	0.506
Economic partnerships (X2)	92	5.00	-0.384	0.255	-0.765	0.506

Challenges (X3)	92	5.00	-0.512	0.255	-0.843	0.506
strategies (X4)	92	5.00	-0.476	0.255	-0.912	0.506
Kenya's diplomatic engagements (Y)	92	5.00	-0.398	0.255	-0.854	0.506

Source: Field Data (2025)

The results of the normality test indicated that all the variables under the study were normally distributed. Trade policies (X1) exhibited normal distribution with skewness of -0.421 (SE=0.255) and kurtosis of -0.765 (SE=0.506) which is a satisfactory range of values as defined by Ho (2023). Economic partnerships (X2) had similar normal distribution skewness of -0.384 (SE=0.255) and kurtosis of -0.765 (SE=0.506). These values show that the perceptions on the respondents on the Trade policies and economic partnerships were comparatively symmetrically distributed around the mean, only that there is a slight negative value in the skewness indicating that the respondents tend to give higher ratings. The values of kurtosis of the two variables show that they have slightly platykurtic distributions, that is, responses were distributed more widely than normal distribution. The standard errors of skewness and kurtosis are relatively low and this gives one certainty that the two normality measures are stable. This trend indicates that the sample of data used in the research gathered the fair spectrum of views on the elements of regional trade stratagem, which is why the following regression analyses should be considered valid. Challenges (X3) and Strategies (X4) also showed reasonable normality with skew values of -0.512 (SE=0.255) and -0.476 (SE=0.255) respectively, and Skewness values of -0.843 (SE=0.506) and -0.912 (SE=0.506) respectively. The minor negative skewness of both variables indicates the predisposition toward positive attitudes toward issues and approaches in the diplomatic activity of Kenya. Kurtosis values show that they have slightly flatter than normal distributions, indicating good distribution of the responses on the measurement scale. Similar normality properties were observed in the dependent variable, Kenya diplomatic engagements (Y) having a skewness of -0.398 (SE=0.255) and kurtosis of -0.854 (SE=0.506). The general trend of the negative skewness (albeit marginally) is in all variables could be taken to indicate the overall positive attitudes towards regional trade plan within the EAC paradigm, but this does not compromise suitable normality of regression analysis.

4.5.2 Multicollinearity Test

Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) and tolerance values were used to measure multicollinearity. Kumar (2023) suggests that values of VIF below 5 and tolerance values of more than 0.2 are

acceptable levels of multicollinearity. The result of the multicollinearity test is shown in table 4.12.

Table 4.12: Multicollinearity Test

Variable	Tolerance	VIF
Trade policies (X1)	0.682	1.466
Economic partnerships (X2)	0.715	1.399
Challenges (X3)	0.644	1.553
Strategies (X4)	0.698	1.433

Source: Field Data (2025)

The multicollinearity analysis showed that the predictor variables were acceptable with trade policies(X1) having VIF of 1.466 and toleration of 0.682 and economic partnerships (X2) VIF of 1.399 and toleration of 0.715. These values are quite within the acceptable ranges as outlined by Kumar (2023), which implies that these variables are not independent enough. The VIF and tolerance of challenges (X3) were 1.553 and 0.644 respectively, and strategies (X4) 1.433 and 0.698. The stable trend of low VIF values (all less than 2) and high values of tolerance (all greater than 0.6) indicate the low correlation between the predictor variables. These findings suggest that each of the independent variables has a distinct explanatory power to the regression model and make the regression coefficients more reliable and interpretable. The lack of high level of multicollinearity indicates the impacts of each regional trade strategy can be significantly separated and made sense of regarding its effect on the diplomatic activities of Kenya.

4.5.3 Homoscedasticity Test

The test of homoscedasticity was applied by way of Levene test which looked at the equality of variances at various levels of predictor variables. Field (2018) noted that a p-value of above 0.05 in the test by Levine implies homoscedastic data. The results of the homoscedasticity test are in table 4.13.

Table 4.13 : Homoscedasticity Test (Levene's Test)

Variable	Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
Trade policies (X1)	1.245	1	87	0.268
Economic partnerships (X2)	1.876	1	87	0.174
Challenges (X3)	2.134	1	87	0.148
Strategies (X4)	1.654	1	87	0.202

The homoscedasticity analysis revealed that there were uniform patterns in the variance of all the variables. The trade policies gave a Levene statistic of 1.245 ($p=0.268$), whereas Economical partnerships had a Levene statistic of 1.876 ($p=0.174$). However, non-significant p-values ($p>0.05$) imply that the hypothesis of homoscedasticity is satisfied in the two variables. Challenges exhibited a Levene statistic of 2.134 ($p=0.148$), and strategies exhibited a Levene statistic of 1.654 ($p=0.202$). The fact that the results were never significant in all the variables shows that the variance of the residuals is not very different across the levels of the predictor variables. This result gives credence to the validity of the regression analysis because it shows that the predictor-outcome variable relationship holds at various levels of measurement. The homoscedasticity assumption is satisfied and makes the further regression analysis more reliable.

In general, the tests of diagnostics indicate that the data satisfy all the major assumptions of regression analysis. The normality tests revealed that the distributions were acceptable with the skewness and kurtosis values within the accepted limits. Multicollinearity test demonstrated there to be enough independent prediction variables with none of the VIFs exceeding 2 or tolerance greater than 0.6. The homoscedasticity test gave results to ensure that all variables have similar patterns in their variance. The validity of these assumptions underlines the suitability of application of multiple regression analysis as far as the impact of regional trade stratagem practices upon diplomatic activities of Kenya in the context of the EAC paradigm is concerned. Moreover, the strength of these diagnostic finding's augers well with the validity of the consequent statistical tests and their consequences on the interpretation of the relationships that exist between the regional trade stratagem and Kenya diplomatic interests in the EAC paradigm outcomes.

4.6 Correlation Analysis

Gordon (2023) says correlation analysis is used to investigate the nature and direction of the relationship among variables. Correlation coefficient varies between -1 and +1 where coefficients of 0.10-0.29 give weak relationships, coefficients of 0.30-0.49 give moderate relationships and coefficients of 0.50-1.0 give strong relationships. The analysis studied the association among each of the indicators of regional trade stratagem and the Diplomatic engagements of Kenya in the EAC paradigm.

4.6.1 Trade policies and Kenya's diplomatic engagements within the EAC paradigm

Table 4.14 presents the correlation between trade policies and Kenya's diplomatic engagements within the EAC paradigm.

Table 4.14 : Correlation Between Trade Policies and Kenya's Diplomatic Engagements

Variables	Trade policies	Kenya's diplomatic engagements.
Trade policies	1	0.684**
Kenya's diplomatic engagements.	0.684**	1

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Source: Field Data (2025)

The correlation analysis established a strong positive correlation between trade policies and diplomatic involvements of Kenya in the EAC paradigm ($r=0.684$, $p<0.01$). Mukaka, 2012 observes that correlation coefficients that are greater than 0.50 show strong associations between variables. This positive correlation coefficient proves that coherence Trade policies have a relationship with the increased economic diplomacy. It has a statistically significant relationship at 0.01 level and gives a confidence level of 99 percent in the relationship observed. This observation is consistent with the studies that indicate that Kenya has trade policies and diplomatic relations aimed at enhancing regionalization, increasing trade relations, and encouraging foreign investments. Kenya is also an active member of regional economic blocs such as the East African Community (EAC) and the Common Market of Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) and has also entered into bilateral and multilateral agreements with different countries as well. The foreign policy of Kenya is based on economic diplomacy, interest towards the diaspora, and responding to the problems of the world such as climate change. The correlation implies that the economic diplomacy by Kenya in the East African Community (EAC) is signaled by various key factors which include the encouragement of regional integration, trade, investment and infrastructure development. These are undertakings that seek to enhance the economic growth and power of Kenya in the region. The statistical relationship offers empirical data of the linkage between trade policies and diplomatic activities of Kenya in the EAC paradigm results identified in the literature review.

4.5.4 Economic partnerships and Kenya's diplomatic engagements

Table 4.15 below presents the correlation between economic partnerships and Kenya's diplomatic engagements.

Table 4.15 : Correlation between Economic partnerships and Kenya's diplomatic engagements

Variables	Economic partnerships	Kenya's diplomatic engagements
Economic partnerships	1	0.712**
Kenya's diplomatic engagements.	0.712**	1
** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)		

Source: Field Data (2025)

The correlation between economic partnerships and diplomatic engagements of Kenya in the EAC paradigm was found to be strong and positive ($r=0.712$, $p<0.01$). Schober et al., (2019) state that the correlation coefficients of 0.70 or more represent especially strong associations between variables. The correlation coefficient illustrates that the more the level of economic partnerships, the greater the outcomes of the economic diplomacy. The correlation is statistically significant at 0.01 level which gives high confidence to the observed correlation. This observation is consistent with the Kenya economic relations that exist in EAC (East African Community) characterized by the efforts to enhance trade, investment, and integration of the region. The most important signs are high levels of trade, development of infrastructure and harmonization of policies. Under the EPA, Kenya enjoys duty-free and quota-free access to the EU market, which has increased exports, such as agricultural and horticultural goods to the EU. The European Parliament puts Kenya as a significant trading partner of Kenya, both in imports. The high correlation is an indication that integration of economic partnership provides a major contribution towards improvement of diplomatic missions under the EAC paradigm. The connection between economic integration and diplomatic engagements hypothesized in the literature review has a statistical basis that is presented through the analysis of the statistical relationship.

4.6.2 Challenges and Kenya's diplomatic engagements within the EAC paradigm

Table 4.16 presents the correlation between challenges and Kenya's diplomatic engagements within the EAC paradigm

Table 4.16 :Correlation between Challenges and Kenya's Diplomatic Engagements

Variables	Challenges	Kenya's diplomatic engagements within the EAC paradigm
Challenges	1	0.698**
Kenya's diplomatic engagements within the EAC paradigm.	0.698**	1

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Source: Field Data (2025)

The correlation analysis showed that there was a high positive relationship between Challenges and the diplomatic engagements of Kenya in the EAC paradigm ($r=0.698$, $p<0.01$). The positive correlation proves that the issue of challenge exists widely in economic partnerships in the EAC paradigm. The correlation is statistically significant at level of 0.01 which means that there are high levels of confidence in the correlation observed. The observation agrees with the claim that the Kenya diplomatic meetings in the East African Community (EAC) are characterized by setbacks such as the continuous trade obstacles, the regional integration, and political and economic ideologies. These factors do not contribute to successful collaboration and economic developments in the bloc.

4.6.3 Strategies and Kenya's diplomatic engagements within the EAC paradigm

Table 4.17 presents the correlation between Strategies and Kenya's diplomatic engagements within the EAC paradigm.

Table 4.17 : Correlation between Strategies and Kenya's diplomatic Engagements

Variables	Strategies	Kenya's diplomatic engagements
Strategies	1	0.723**
Kenya's diplomatic engagements	0.723**	1

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Source: Field Data (2025)

The analysis revealed that there was strong positive correlation between strategies and diplomatic engagements of Kenya in EAC paradigm ($r=0.723$, $p<0.01$). This correlation

coefficient also suggests the existence of a rather strong relationship between the variables. The positive correlation shows that highly competitive advantage is linked with effective strategies in Kenya in terms of diplomatic engagements. The correlation is statistically significant at 0.01 level which gives high confidence to the observed correlation. This observation is consistent with the fact that the diplomatic activities of Kenya are aimed at serving its national interests, promoting regional and international cooperation, and being involved in the global solutions. Some of the leading approaches were economic diplomacy, digital diplomacy, and the exploitation of multilateral institutions. The strategies are informed by the foreign policy of Kenya which focuses on national security, economic growth, and international interaction. The high correlation statistically supports those strategies are very important in determining economic diplomacy. This relationship strength is a reinforcement of the theoretical knowledge on the role of diplomatic engagement on economic diplomacy.

4.7 Regression Analysis

The relationship between the Influence of Trade Policies, Economic partnerships, Challenges, and Strategies and diplomatic engagement of Kenya in the EAC paradigm was analyzed using the Multiple Regression analysis. Multiple regression analysis assists in establishing the overall and individual impacts of independent variables on a dependent variable.

4.7.1 Model Summary

Table 4.18 presents the regression model summary statistics.

Table 4.18 :Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.842	0.709	0.695	0.384

a. Predictors: (Constant), Strategies, Economic partnerships, Trade policies, Challenges.

Source: Field Data (2025)

The regression model registered an R value of 0.842, which shows that the combined independent variables have a strong correlation with the diplomatic engagement in Kenya. The value of R square of 0.709 implies that 70.9% of the variation in diplomatic engagements can be accounted by the four independent terms. A more conservative estimate of the explanatory power of the model is given by the Adjusted R square of 0.695 and this estimate is explaining the number of predictors in the model. The values of Adjusted R Square exceeding 0.60 suggest high explanatory power of social science studies. The standard error of the estimate (0.384) implies the average distance between the predicted values and the real ones, which indicates

that the ability to produce accurate predictions is reasonable. These model fit statistics indicate that the practices of regional trade stratagem are joint accountable in clarifying a significant part of the variation in economic diplomacy to be precise the Kenya diplomatic venture in the EAC paradigm.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the summary, conclusion and the recommendations derived from the findings from the study on regional trade stratagem affecting Kenya's diplomatic engagements within the EAC paradigm. This research was guided by four main objectives: analyzing the influence of trade policies, exploring the influence of economic partnerships, challenges faced and lastly strategies for enhancement on Kenya's diplomatic engagements within the EAC paradigm. Through statistical analysis of data from 92 respondents, the study started off by administering the research questionnaire to the respondents', gathered findings through exploratory and explanatory approaches and discussed the relationship between regional trade stratagem and Kenya's diplomatic activities in the EAC in both correlation and regression analysis. The findings of the study indicated that the associations between all variables were strong, positive, with strategic approaches having the greatest impact on the role of Kenya in the region as a diplomat. The chapter gives a cohesive overview of the results in accordance with each research aim, makes conclusions on the basis of statistical data, and presents practical recommendations on enhancing the diplomatic activity of Kenya at EAC. It also brings to the fore the wider implications of the findings to economic diplomacy and the future research areas. Despite the fact that the study was able to achieve its aims, it also highlights some limitations in terms of scope and methodology, which must be taken into account when interpreting the results and coming up with future research.

5.1 Summary of Findings

5.1.1 Trade policies and Kenya's diplomatic engagements within the EAC paradigm

Trade policies were measured through four key indicators that examined different aspects which included, Kenya's Trade policies being favorable to Kenya leading in economic diplomacy within the EAC paradigm, Currency fluctuations affecting Kenya's regional trade, Kenya's export earning superseding imports earning within the EAC paradigm and Kenya has a strong domestic market for the regions goods and services. The analysis revealed varying levels of Kenya's diplomatic engagements within the EAC paradigm. The highest mean was observed for "Kenya has a strong domestic market for the regions goods and services" ($M=3.55$, $SD=1.067$), indicating strong recognition of the link between strong domestic market for goods and services and economic diplomacy. Balancing national, regional and global

priorities, financing and regional instability were noted as continuing challenges that can be mitigated with continued monitoring and evaluation, policy innovation, diplomatic efforts to secure regional stability, and building partnerships and investments. This shows the importance of maintaining a stable domestic economic base to enhance Kenya's trade and diplomatic leverage within the EAC.

The statement with the second-highest mean was the statement "Currency fluctuation impacts Kenya regional trade in the EAC framework" ($M=3.46$, $SD=1.088$) which reveals how the inflation rates impact financial planning and restrict the optimization of resource streams. The assertions that the export earnings exceed the import earnings in the EAC ($M=3.33$, $SD=1.148$) and the assertion that the trade policies in Kenya give it a competitive edge in the EAC framework ($M=3.31$, $SD=1.124$) had slightly lower means, indicating areas that require more focus. Regression analysis revealed a positive and significant correlation between trade policies and diplomatic activities of Kenya in EAC ($b=0.245$, $t=3.657$, $p<0.001$). The coefficient standardized (0.256) indicates the moderately significant role of these policies among the factors under investigation. In summation, the results show that Kenya has a strong economic diplomacy which is influenced by its trade policies, but can be improved by enhancing financial planning and resource utilization in order to enhance Kenya in its diplomacy in the EAC.

5.1.2 Economic partnerships and Kenya's diplomatic engagement within the EAC paradigm

The economic partnerships were evaluated through four major indicators that analyzed how economic infrastructure, bilateral, and multilateral relations impacted the Kenyan diplomatic participation in the EAC. The findings revealed varying degrees of success in various areas of economic diplomacy. "Kenya's economic diplomacy in the EAC is integrated and policy-driven" was the highest mean score ($M=3.52$, $SD=1.107$). This indicates that a great awareness of Kenya integration campaigns and how economic infrastructure has been used to enhance its diplomatic ties in the region. Respondents cited Kenya membership in the founding of the EAC, its position as the first signatory to the Treaty, regular contribution payments and adherence to EAC protocols. Such results confirm the idea that the diplomacy of Kenya is deeply entrenched in institutionalized structures and is directed by the principles of the common market and the customs union.

The second-largest mean was linked with the statement "Trade is a major tool for Kenya's economic diplomacy in the EAC" ($M=3.41$, $SD=1.133$) in that there were positive perceptions

of trade as a means of Kenya engaging in diplomacy in the regional context. Respondents noted that Kenya's economic diplomacy is more focused on regional integration rather than protectionism and that with integration Kenya can take advantage of critical mass to access meaningful market. The lowest mean scores were obtained on "Trade has strengthened the position of Kenya in the EAC paradigm" ($M=3.37$, $SD=1.125$) and the scale "Economic diplomacy in Kenya is informed by bilateral and multilateral agreements" ($M=3.29$, $SD=1.140$). These findings are indicative of the areas that might require further attention and policy. The regression analysis revealed that economic partnerships had a significant positive impact ($b=0.278$, $t=4.277$, $p<0.001$), and the standardized coefficient of 0.298 indicates that the given factor has a significant role in the set of predictors. The results indicate that despite the already existing positive effects of economic partnerships in Kenya, there is more to expand by strengthening the economic infrastructure, enhancing regional collaboration, increasing integration, and coherent policy frameworks in the EAC.

5.1.3 Challenges and Kenya's diplomatic engagements within the EAC paradigm

Four key indicators (tariffs tax complexities, compliance hurdles, logistical problems, and currency fluctuations) were used to explore the challenges that influence the diplomatic activities of Kenya within the EAC. The discussion has shown that some of these problems still significantly affect the involvement of Kenya in the regional system.

Mean ($M=3.66$, $SD=1.046$) was highest in "logistical issues" which captured issues to do with integration, security, inflation, and legal barriers in the EAC. According to the respondents, the lack of follow up on resolutions of EAC sector council meetings has hampered progress. Nonetheless, efforts are being made to cope with this by bilateral technical-level consultations with partner states.

The second and third highest mean were found in Tariffs tax as an indicator challenge ($M=3.58$, $SD=1.076$) and Currency fluctuations as a challenge on Kenya diplomatic engagements within the EAC paradigm ($M=3.57$, $SD=1.077$). Such results indicate that there is an urgent necessity to coordinate legal and legislative processes among member states. The lowest mean was indicated in the compliance hurdles within the EAC paradigm ($M=3.51$, $SD=1.107$), indicating, however, the existence of ongoing structural issues.

Results of regression confirmed that there was a significant positive correlation between these challenges and the diplomatic involvement of Kenya in the EAC ($b=0.236$, $t=3.420$, $p=0.001$)

and the standardized coefficient of 0.248. Combined, the results indicate that Kenya is still experiencing significant yet controllable issues that affect its diplomatic operations in the context of the EAC.

5.2 Conclusions

Regarding the impact of trade policies in Kenya and its diplomatic activities in the EAC paradigm is concerned, the research unveiled a number of valuable findings. One of the major discoveries is associated with the regional integration, where Kenya is actively involved in regional economic blocs, including the East African Community (EAC) and the Common Market of Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA). Kenya aims at reinforcing intra-African trade and enhancing economic growth through these platforms. The other significant factor is the expansion of trade in the world where Kenya has been diversifying its trade partners, expanding market access to its products and even to foreign investment. The trade regime in Kenya is also influenced by trade liberalization and it adheres to the market-driven principles and the framework of the World Trade Organization (WTO). In addition, economic diplomacy has continued to be the core of the foreign policy of Kenya to promote trade and investment relationships, promote foreign investment, and support the transfer of technology.

Another aspect that was found to characterize diasporas in the study is the engagement of the diaspora, where the Kenyan diaspora was viewed as a crucial national resource in terms of their skills, knowledge, and financial resources. Moreover, policy alignment means that trade policies in Kenya are aligned with its overall foreign policy objectives- especially peace and security, economic prosperity and international influence. Some of the most important features of Kenya in its diplomatic activities in the EAC paradigm include regional leadership where Kenya seeks to strengthen its position by fostering peace, security, and regional collaboration as well as enhancing African interests in the international arena. The regression analysis showed a strong positive correlation between trade policies and diplomatic engagement ($b=0.245$, $p<0.001$), indicating that trade policies do affect largely the diplomatic status of Kenya in the EAC.

Despite the fact that Kenya has already developed a good base with the available trade policies, the results indicate that more can be done to intensify economic growth and enhance intra-African trade. The average effect size suggests that trade policies operate in a broader system of interconnected variables that affect the diplomatic relations of Kenya. The study specifically

highlighted the necessity to enhance investment linkages, skills and knowledge and mobilization of resources more efficiently. On the whole, these findings underscore the need to embrace more robust and dynamic trade policies to continue facilitating the economic diplomacy of Kenya.

The examination of economic alliances and their impact on the diplomatic activities of Kenya in the EAC exposed some interesting facts about the role of integration in regional cooperation. The results indicated that there was a significant positive influence ($b=0.278$, $p<0.001$) that economic partnerships can play a crucial role in utilizing both established and new relationships to enhance the trade, investment and development. Other important features of economic relationships of Kenya are the diversification of international relationships, where Kenya keeps on diversifying the international relationships in accordance with the changing trade relationships and regulatory settings. Another area of core activity is infrastructure development, where Kenya is looking to collaborate with others to facilitate the development of infrastructure projects like the extension of the Standard Gauge Railway and the development of highways- both vital to economic development.

Kenya is also looking to enhance trade and investment relations with existing partners and look at new markets and to attract more foreign investment. It has a special focus on regional integration, especially intra-African trade, as a basis of socio-economic and political integration of the continent. The Kenyan diaspora is also considered as a significant contributor to economic growth and their economic and intellectual capital has been instrumental in the development of the country. Moreover, Kenya has a high-level bilateral relation with the neighboring states in the EAC and is working on diplomatic initiatives which promote mutual respect and cooperation. Economic diplomacy is a critical instrument in advancing economic interests of Kenya, luring investors, and expanding export markets. The research established a close relationship between economic relations and Kenya diplomatic relations, which reflects the relevance of trade and investment relations as part of the EAC. Although the results were encouraging, they also indicated areas of enhancing economic relationships to guarantee future integration and development. These findings confirm that regional integration is necessary to sustain and promote the Kenya diplomatic presence within the EAC paradigm.

The examination of the issues that influenced Kenya in its diplomatic interactions gave a clear indication of the effect it has had. The paper captured a large positive impact ($b=0.236$,

$p=0.001$), which shows how these issues still undermine economic diplomacy in Kenya under EAC. Among the challenges are tariffs, tax complexities, compliance barriers, logistical barriers, and currency fluctuations. Greater socio-economic issues, like poverty, inequality, youth unemployment, and insufficient transparency, continue to be barriers to the diplomatic and economic performance of Kenya in the region. The research on the role of the strategies in the diplomatic activities of Kenya indicated the most significant effect among all the variables under analysis. It was found that there was a significant positive correlation ($b=0.289$, $p<0.001$) between strategic approaches and the determination of the diplomatic performance of Kenya in the EAC.

The overall diplomatic policy of Kenya is established with the aim of improving the international image of the country and advancing national interests with the help of a variety of international relations. The results highlight the importance of the regional supremacy, licensing and legal regulation, export and import promotion, and the support of joint venture as essential elements of the Kenya economic diplomacy. The close connection between strategic planning and diplomatic participation underscores the role of structured trade strategies in determining desirable results of Kenya in the EAC. Finally, Kenya needs to maintain its leadership and enhance its economic diplomacy within the regional context through the formulation of well-planned and synchronized strategies.

5.3 Recommendations

From the empirical findings, the following policy-oriented recommendation is drawn to strengthen Kenya's diplomatic engagement in the framework of East African Community (EAC). The recommendations are grounded on gaps in the effectiveness of trade policies, economic cooperation, and ongoing structural issues that could stand to be improved for regional integration.

With relation to trade policy coordination, this study recommends that Kenya improves policy harmonization with EAC protocols by strengthening the implementation of the trade facilitation instruments, the development of regional value chains and export competitiveness frameworks. This should involve full implementation of the Customs Union and Common Market measures, and building on Kenya's status as an anchor state to promote coherent regional trade diplomacy and ensure that the country's economic interests are protected in multilateral trade talks.

Secondly, on economic partnerships, Kenya should build more economic cooperation with partner states in the EAC by institutionalizing structured cooperation with EAC partner states as well as

economic networks in the EAC diaspora. The cross-border trade facilitation, investment promotion and strategic partnerships in emerging sectors should be emphasized in the policies. Also, regional cooperation mechanisms need to be strengthened to include climate resilience and sustainable development goals in the economic diplomacy agenda.

On institutional and structural challenges, the study recommends the synchronization of domestic policy institutional frameworks with the integration goals of the EAC by improving the coordination and participation of stakeholders, including the non-state actors, across different ministries and sectors. Greater efforts should be directed towards public awareness campaigns to increase citizens' understanding of the advantages of regional integration and promote greater policy legitimacy.

Priority investment should be made in transport, logistics, and energy infrastructure to lower transaction costs and enhance regional connectivity to overcome infrastructural and trade-related barriers. At the same time, member states should step up their actions to remove the non-tariff barriers, and rationalise customs procedures and improve the regulatory convergence to ensure uninterrupted flow of goods and services.

5.4 Suggestions for Further Research

Based on the results of this study, the following research areas are suggested for further studies to better understand regional trade strategy and diplomatic engagement in the East African Community (EAC). Comparative studies should be conducted across the EAC member states to analyse the use of economic diplomacy in the region; the differences and similarities in the use of economic diplomacy in the region as measured by regional trade strategies and economic diplomacy effectiveness. These studies would give a wider regional overview of a situation other than the Kenyan case. Second, there is a need for sector analysis of economic diplomacy to gain insight into the role of key sectors like agriculture, manufacturing, digital trade and logistics in shaping economic diplomacy and outcomes of regional integration. This would assist in pinpointing opportunities and impediments to trade diplomacy.

Further, the research suggests that future studies focus on the influence of non-state actors, such as private sector, civil society and diaspora, in regional diplomacy, particularly in shaping the terms of trade and diplomatic outcomes in East Africa. Finally, further studies should be conducted on the effectiveness of institutional implementation of the EAC governance system in monitoring implementation of trade agreements, dispute resolutions, and policy harmonisation among partner

states. This would enable valuable inputs on the capacity of regional institutions to continue the integration process.

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APPENDICES

Appendix i: Questionnaire

Questionnaire on Regional trade stratagem influencing Kenya's Diplomatic

Engagements within the East African community paradigm

Introduction

My Name is Samson Kemboi Koech, a student at Riara University undertaking A Master's Degree in Diplomacy and International Relations. I'm doing a research thesis on **Regional Trade stratagem influencing Kenya's Diplomatic engagements within the East African community paradigm**. I Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study. Your responses will remain confidential and will be used solely for academic research. Please answer all questions honestly. This questionnaire is specifically for academic purposes.

Section A: Respondent Background & Demographics

1. **Name (Optional):**
2. **Designation/Position:**
3. **Organization/Institution:**
4. **Sector:**
 - ☐ Government
 - ☐ Diplomatic Mission
 - ☐ Private Sector (e.g., importer/exporter, trade investor)
 - ☐ Academic/Research
 - ☐ Other (please specify): _____
5. **Years of Experience in International Relations/Trade/Diplomacy:**
 - ☐ 0–5 years
 - ☐ 6–10 years
 - ☐ 11–20 years

☐ 21+ years

6. **Highest Educational Qualification:**

☐ Diploma

☐ Bachelor's Degree

☐ Master's Degree

☐ Doctorate

☐ Other: _____

Section B. Effect of Trade policies on Kenya's Diplomatic Engagement within the EAC

Paradigm

TICK THE APPROPRIATE OPTION

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
5	4	3	2	1

ITEM	5	4	3	2	1
Kenya's Trade policies are favorable to a leading position in EAC paradigm.					
Currency fluctuations affect Kenya's regional trade.					
Kenya's export earning supersedes imports earning within the EAC paradigm.					
Kenya has a strong domestic market for the region's goods and services					

7. **In your own words, describe the nature of Kenya's economic interests within the**

EAC.?

(Open-ended)

8. Do you think Kenya's trade policies are aligned with the broader goals of economic diplomacy in the EAC?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not Sure

Please explain: _____

9. How important is economic diplomacy to Kenya's overall foreign policy?

(Please tick one)

- ☐ 1 – Not important
☐ 2 – Slightly important
☐ 3 – Moderately important
☐ 4 – Very important
☐ 5 – Extremely important

10. To what extent do you agree with the following statement: "Regional Trade is a critical instrument in advancing Kenya's economic diplomacy?"

(Please tick one)

☐ 1 – Strongly disagree ☐ 2 – Disagree ☐ 3 – Neutral ☐ 4 – Agree ☐ 5 – Strongly agree

11. In your experience, which trade policies have had the most significant influence on

Kenya's diplomatic Engagement within the EAC? (Select all that apply)

- ☐ Tariff and Non-Tariff Barriers Policies
☐ Regional Trade Agreements
☐ Import/Export Regulations

☐ Investment Incentives

☐ Other (Specify) _____

12. Can you mention the key trade outcomes that has helped Kenya achieve/gain influence in the EAC?

13. How would you rate the impact of Kenya's trade policies on economic diplomacy within the EAC?

☐ Very High ☐ High ☐ Moderate ☐ Low ☐ Very Low

Section C: Effectiveness of Kenya's Economic partnerships in the EAC paradigm

TICK THE APPROPRIATE OPTION

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
5	4	3	2	1

ITEM	5	4	3	2	1
Trade as a tool for Kenya's economic diplomacy in the EAC paradigm.					
Kenya's economic diplomacy within the EAC is integrated and policy driven.					
Kenya's economic diplomacy is driven by bilateral and multilateral agreements.					
Trade has strengthened Kenya's position in the EAC paradigm?					

14. How effective is trade as a tool for Kenya's economic diplomacy in the EAC?

☐ Very Effective ☐ Effective ☐ Neutral ☐ Ineffective ☐ Very Ineffective

15. How would you describe the nature of Kenya's economic diplomacy within the EAC?

(Select the option that best describes your view, and explain briefly.)

- ☐ Proactive and integration-driven
- ☐ Reactive and policy-driven
- ☐ Largely symbolic with limited practical impact
- ☐ A mix of strategic and opportunistic approaches
- ☐ Other (please specify): _____

Explain Please:

16. Which areas of economic diplomacy has trade influenced the most? (Select all that apply)

- ☐ Bilateral and Multilateral Agreements
- ☐ Foreign Direct Investment (FDI)
- ☐ Regional Peace and Stability
- ☐ Infrastructure Development
- ☐ Other (Specify) _____

17. How effective do you find Kenya's current trade strategies in enhancing its diplomatic influence in the EAC?

(Please rate on a scale of 1 to 5)

- ☐ 1 – Not effective
- ☐ 2 – Slightly effective

☐ 3 – Moderately effective

☐ 4 – Very effective

☐ 5 – Extremely effective

18. How well do Kenya's economic diplomacy initiatives align with its broader foreign policy objectives?

(Please rate on a scale of 1 to 5)

☐ 1 – Not aligned

☐ 2 – Slightly aligned

☐ 3 – Moderately aligned

☐ 4 – Highly aligned

☐ 5 – Perfectly aligned

19. Please describe any strengths or weaknesses you have observed in Kenya's approach to economic diplomacy in the EAC

(Open-ended)

20. To what extent do you think trade has strengthened Kenya's position in the EAC?

☐ Very Large Extent ☐ Large Extent ☐ Moderate Extent ☐ Small Extent ☐ No Impact

21. Provide specific examples of how trade has been leveraged to enhance Kenya's economic diplomacy in the EAC

Section D: Challenges faced in advancing Kenya's diplomatic engagements within the EAC Paradigm

TICK THE APPROPRIATE OPTION

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
5	4	3	2	1

ITEM	5	4	3	2	1
Tariffs, Tax complexities challenges affect Kenya's diplomatic engagement in the EAC Paradigm.					
Compliance hurdles challenges affect Kenya's diplomatic engagement in the EAC paradigm.					
Logistical issues affect Kenya's diplomatic engagement in the EAC paradigm.					
Currency fluctuations challenges affect Kenya's diplomatic engagement in the EAC paradigm.					

22. To what extent do you agree that Kenya diplomatic engagement possesses a significant comparative advantage in trade within the EAC?

(Please rate on a scale of 1 to 5)

- ☐ 1 – Strongly disagree
- ☐ 2 – Disagree
- ☐ 3 – Neutral

- ☐ 4 – Agree
- ☐ 5 – Strongly agree

23. Which sectors do you believe provide Kenya Diplomatic engagement with its strongest comparative advantage?

(Select all that apply)

- ☐ Manufacturing
- ☐ Agriculture
- ☐ Finance and Banking
- ☐ Tourism
- ☐ ICT/Technology
- ☐ Transportation/Logistics
- ☐ Other (please specify): _____

24. What do you consider to be the primary challenges hindering the effective use of trade as a tool in Kenya's economic diplomacy?

(Select all that apply)

- ☐ Bureaucratic inefficiencies
- ☐ Corruption
- ☐ Trade Barriers (Tariffs, Non-Tariff Barriers)
- ☐ Political and Diplomatic Tensions
- ☐ Regulatory inconsistencies
- ☐ Intense regional competition
- ☐ Weak Infrastructure and Logistics
- ☐ External economic pressures
- ☐ Other (please specify): _____

25. Please rate the impact of each of the following challenges on Kenya's trade-based economic diplomacy (1 = minimal impact, 5 = very high impact):

1. Bureaucratic inefficiencies: ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

2. Corruption: ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

3. Regional competition: ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

4. Regulatory barriers: ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

26. In your view, which EAC member states present the biggest challenges to Kenya's trade efforts?

Why? _____

27. How do you think these challenges can be best addressed?

(Open-ended)

28. What role do trade disputes play in affecting Kenya's economic diplomacy in the EAC?

☐ Major Role ☐ Moderate Role ☐ Minor Role ☐ No Role

29. How has the implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) impacted Kenya's trade within the EAC?

Section F: Strategies adopted in Kenya's Diplomatic Engagement

TICK THE APPROPRIATE OPTION

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

5 4 3 2 1

ITEM	5	4	3	2	1
Kenya enjoys regional dominance in pursuit of its economic diplomacy within the EAC paradigm.					
Licensing and legal regimes offer Kenya a competitive advantage over other states within the EAC paradigm.					
Kenya has more exports as compared to imports and enhances Export and import Promotions within the EAC paradigm.					
Kenya is involved in viable Joint ventures that promote Economic diplomacy within the EAC paradigm.					

Do you think Kenya's government is doing enough to use trade as a diplomatic tool in the EAC?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not Sure

30. What strategies can Kenya adopt to enhance the use of trade as a tool for its economic diplomacy in East Africa?

(Select all that apply)

☐ Strengthening Regional Trade Agreements

- ☐ Enhancing Infrastructure and Logistics
 - ☐ Reducing Bureaucratic and Regulatory Barriers
 - ☐ Encouraging Public-Private Partnerships
 - ☐ Other (Specify)
-

31. What policies or agreements should be prioritized to strengthen Kenya's trade position in the EAC?

32. Please rank the following strategies in order of effectiveness (1 = most effective, 5 = least effective) in strengthening Kenya's economic diplomacy through trade:

1. Strengthening bilateral/multilateral trade agreements: _____
2. Policy and regulatory reforms: _____
3. Investment in trade infrastructure (ports, logistics, etc.): _____
4. Diversification of export sectors: _____
5. Enhancing private sector and academic partnerships: _____

33. In your view, what role should non-state actors (e.g., private sector, academia, research institutions) play in enhancing Kenya's economic diplomacy?

(Open-ended)

34. In your opinion, what additional measures or strategies should Kenya adopt to further leverage its comparative advantage in trade?

(Open-ended)

Section G: Regional trade stratagem and Kenya's diplomatic engagements within the EAC paradigm.

23. Overall, how would you rate the impact of trade on Kenya's diplomatic influence in the region?

(Please rate on a scale of 1 to 5)

☐ 1 – Negligible impact

☐ 2 – Low impact

☐ 3 – Moderate impact

☐ 4 – High impact

☐ 5 – Very high impact

24. What trends do you foresee in the relationship between trade and economic diplomacy in East Africa over the next 5–10 years?

(Open-ended)

25. Do you have any additional comments or recommendations regarding Kenya's economic diplomacy strategies through trade?

(Open-ended)

Appendix ii: Interview Schedule

APPENDIX II: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR KEY INFORMANTS

1. Highlight the importance of Trade policies in Kenya's economic diplomacy within the EAC paradigm.

2. To what extent do economic partnerships address Kenya's diplomatic engagements within the EAC paradigm?

3. Would you say Kenya's diplomatic engagements within the EAC paradigm promote Kenya's national interests?

4. What are the challenges that Kenya's diplomatic engagements within the EAC paradigm? How are these challenges being addressed?

5. What major economic interventions have the ministry of Trade and industrialization, and ministry of foreign and Diaspora affairs Kenya undertaken between 2010–2025 to address Kenya's diplomatic engagements within the EAC paradigm.

Section H: Consent and Acknowledgment

26. **Do you consent to the use of your responses for academic research purposes with the assurance of anonymity?**

- ☐ Yes
☐ No

Thank you for your time and valuable input.

Appendix iii: Budget

ITEMS	TOTAL COST
Printing and binding of research proposal	Ksh.25,000
Photocopies and stationery	Ksh.15,000
Transport and research subsistence	Ksh.150,000
Typewriting, printing service and binding of the final thesis	Ksh.35,000
SUBTOTAL	Ksh.225,000
Contingencies (10% of total)	Ksh.2,250
Grand total	Ksh.227, 050

Appendix iv:Time Frame							
Time/activity	April- May 2025	Feb- April 2025	Jan-sept 2025	Nov Feb 2025	- April- July 2025	Aug- Nov 2025	Jan- April 2026
Concept Note	*						
Proposal writing		*					
proposal Defense							
Data Collection			*				
and Analysis							
Thesis Writing				*			
Presentation of					*		
Findings							
Submission for						*	
Examination							
Final defense/							*
Graduation							

Appendix v: Clearance Letter



INSTITUTIONAL SCIENTIFIC ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE

Ref: LU/APP/158/2025

9th May, 2025

Samson K. Koech
P. O. Box 30551-00100
NAIROBI

Dear Mr. Koech,

Re: Regional Trade Stratagem Influencing Kenya's Diplomatic Engagements within the East Africa Paradigm

This is to inform you that the Laikipia University Institutional Scientific Ethics Review Committee (LU-ISERC) has reviewed and approved your above research proposal. Your application approval number is **LU/APP/158/2025**. The approval period is **9th May, 2025 – 8th May 2026**

This approval is subject to compliance with the following requirements;

- i. Only approved documents including (informed consents, study instruments, MTA) will be used;
- ii. All changes including (amendments, deviations, and violations) are submitted for review and approval by Laikipia University Institutional Scientific Ethics Review Committee;
- iii. Death and life-threatening problems and serious adverse events or unexpected adverse events whether related or unrelated to the study must be reported to Laikipia University Institutional Scientific Ethics Review Committee within 72 hours of notification;
- iv. Any changes, anticipated or otherwise that may increase the risks or affect the safety or welfare of study participants and others or affect the integrity of the research must be reported to Laikipia University Institutional Scientific Ethics Review Committee within 72 hours;
- v. Clearance for export of biological specimens must be obtained from relevant institutions;

Page 1 of 2

A

Vision: Nurture and Transform for the World

Mission: To Contribute to the World through Education, Research, Training, Consultancy, Innovation, Outreach and Collaboration

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- vi. Submission of a request for renewal of approval at least 60 days prior to expiry of the approval period. Attach a comprehensive progress report to support the renewal and
 - vii. Submission of an executive summary report within 90 days upon completion of the study to Laikipia University Institutional Scientific Ethics Review Committee.
- Before commencing your study, you will be expected to obtain a research license from National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI) <https://research-portal.nacosti.go.ke> and obtain other necessary clearances.

Yours sincerely

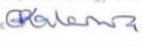


Prof. Mbuthia Ngunjiri PhD

Chairman - Laikipia University Institutional Scientific Ethics Review Committee



Appendix vi: NACOSTI Research Permit

 REPUBLIC OF KENYA		 NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & INNOVATION	
Ref No: 757458		Date of Issue: 28/May/2025	
RESEARCH LICENSE			
			
This is to Certify that Mr.. Samson Kemboi Koech of Riara University, has been licensed to conduct research as per the provision of the Science, Technology and Innovation Act, 2013 (Rev.2014) in Nairobi on the topic: Regional Trade Stratagem Influencing Kenya's Diplomatic Engagements within The East-African Community Paradigm for the period ending : 28/May/2026.			
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		 Deputy Director NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & INNOVATION	
		Verification QR Code 	
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