

ECOWAS Protocol Implementation on Free Movement of Persons and Trade between Nigeria and Benin Republic: An Overview

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Abstract

The ECOWAS protocol on free movement of persons and trade is inevitable within the African sub-region since no nation is an island; there is necessity for these sovereign nations within the West African sub-continent to interact together in terms of trade, security, and good governance which requires the free movement of persons across the borderline. However, reverse is the case as the implementation of the protocol was not properly implemented by the leaders of the two (2) countries. Consequently, this study examined the extent at which Nigeria and Benin Republic have not complied with the implementation of the ECOWAS protocol on free movement of persons and trade and investigated the level of challenges that hindered the effective implementation of the ECOWAS protocol along Nigeria and Benin Republic on the borderline. The study adopted the qualitative and quantitative methodology for analysis of data collected in respect of the stated objective and the study discovered the following: only the first phase of the ECOWAS protocol was well implemented but others experienced failure in the process of implementation of the protocol, such as trade, and illicit movement. The study recommends that ECOWAS needs to lobby member states to comply with the implementation of the treaty signed on protocols.

Keywords

ECOWAS protocol, free movement persons, free movement of trade, migration and socio-economic development

Introduction

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) treaty was signed in Lagos on 28 May, 1975 as a response to the emerging trends in trade and the need to harness resources for the overall development of the West African sub-region. Countries in the sub-region faced economic challenges after the attainment of independence as well as weak economies and there was a need to put measures to tackle these challenges confronting the sub-region.

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This facilitated the establishment of Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) as a sub-regional organization. The ECOWAS organization consists of fifteen member states including Burkina Faso, Guinea-Bissau, Niger, Togo, Mali, Benin Republic, Senegal, Cote D'Ivoire, Ghana, Guinea, Nigeria, Liberia, The Gambia, Sierra Leone and Cape Verde. According to Article 27 of the treaty, the main objective of the Economic Community of West African States is to create unified citizenship for all ECOWAS states to help increase the standard of living among member states.

In line with the ECOWAS treaty, the ECOWAS Protocol was adopted in 1979. It emphasizes the Free Movement of Person, Right of Residence and Establishment. The protocol granted ECOWAS citizens the right to free entry and exit within an ECOWAS state for a maximum of 90 days. Member states were given a period of fifteen years to fully implement the protocol. The free movement protocol provides member states with the right to enter, reside and establish business in any part of the West African sub-region. It was conceived as one of the bedrock of regional integration efforts in West Africa in the firm belief that the free movement of persons, goods and services not only constitutes the fundamental basis for enhancing and consolidating the dividends of economic integration under the protection of ECOWAS but also capable of influencing positively the harmonious development of social, economic and cultural activities within the sub-region. The protocol has three phases (Mbachi & Ikeanyibe, 2017).

The first phase of the protocol is the abolition of visa and entry permits for community members who wished to move to other states within the sub-region. Any citizen of the community who desires to enter the territory of another member state will be required to possess a valid travel document as well as an international health certificate. Citizens of the community visiting any member states for a period not exceeding ninety (90) days shall enter the territory of that member state through the officially designated point of entry without visa requirements. The second phase of the protocol is the right to seek and carry out income earning employment, to community citizens in host ECOWAS states, provided they have obtained an ECOWAS residence card or permit. Additionally, it obliged member states to grant migrant workers, complying with the regulations governing their residence under ECOWAS, equal treatment with nationals in areas such as security of employment, participation in social and cultural activities and, in certain cases of job loss re-employment and training (ECOWAS protocol, 1979).

The definition of migrant workers excludes persons whose working relations with an employer have not been established in the host member state which in effect excluded a majority of migrants, as most people in the sub-region work in the informal sector. It requires member states to harmonize the rules and regulations relating to the condition for the issuance of residence card or residence permit in view of establishing an ECOWAS residence card. Furthermore, it prohibits mass expulsion and limits grounds for individual

expulsion to national security, public order or morality, public health, and non-fulfillment of essential conditions of residence. It stipulates that no matter the condition of their authorization of residence, migrant workers who comply with rules and regulations governing residence, shall enjoy equal treatment with nationals of the host country in areas such as security of employment, participation in social and cultural activities, re-employment in certain cases of job loss and training, access to institution of general and professional education as well as to training centre for children, and benefit of access to social, cultural and health facilities (Ike, 2013).

The third phase of the protocol is the right of establishment. This allows facilitation of business through the right of community citizens to establish enterprises, have access to carry out and manage economic activities in member states other than their state of origin within the sub-region. Member states are to cooperate closely in order to make possible the acquisition and exploitation of landed property situated in the territory of one-member state by a national of another member state. They shall also undertake to encourage the establishment or enhancement of exporting financing and regional payment mechanisms likely to facilitate intra-community trade as well as undertake harmonize national legislation and regulation governing the investments.

According to Mbachi & Ikeanyibe (2017), ECOWAS Commissioner for Trade stated that ECOWAS vision of a borderless region, integrating and creating a single currency union can be achieved through regional cooperation and integration among member states. He, however, stated that the inter-state boundaries are still barriers to free movement, noting that ECOWAS citizens go through stress and pain while crossing borders, though entry visa has been abolished, travellers still face difficulties at borders of member states and this has resulted to harassment of officials at the borders and also caused into various economic loses. The free movement of persons and trade can promote socio economic development; member states are to make efforts to effectively mainstream labour migration into development planning and policy. It is against this backdrop that this study seeks to assess the implementation of the ECOWAS protocol on free movement of persons and trade in Nigeria and Benin Republic.

Statement of Problem

Nigeria and the Benin Republic recognize the prospects and benefits that can be derived from the integration into a community, and however, it is the responsibility of West African countries to realize that it is almost impossible or difficult for individual states especially the developing country to single handedly attain economic development. The implementation of ECOWAS protocol can only take place if the member states carry out their obligations which they have undertaken under the ECOWAS treaty. One of the presumed

obstacles to the full implementation of the ECOWAS protocol has been the tendency to adopt restrictive national policies and laws, thus contradicting the provisions of the protocol and also the incomplete alignment of national legislations with the provision of the protocol resulting to uneven implementation in practice. National interest has often taken precedence over regional interest among member states. The much needed political zeal to drive the regional agenda at the national level of policy advancement is lacking. The lack of political commitment by member states has bedeviled ECOWAS efforts towards building a viable sub-regional economic community. Also the absence of mechanism of sanction in the protocol itself, thereby preventing ECOWAS to impose penalties on member states for non-compliance (Adaawen, 2017).

Research Questions

To address the issue of the presumed problem discovered, it is imperative to ask the following questions:

- i. To what extent do Nigeria and Benin Republic have complied with the implementation of the ECOWAS protocol on free movement of persons and trade?
- ii. What are the challenges that hinder the effective implementation of the ECOWAS protocol along Nigeria and Benin Republic border?

Research objectives Consequent upon the questions raised, the study aimed at addressing the following objectives:

- i. To examine the extent at which Nigeria and Benin Republic have complied with the implementation of the ECOWAS protocol on free movement of persons and trade.
- ii. To investigate the challenges on effective implementation of ECOWAS protocol on the Nigeria and Benin Republic.

Research Hypotheses

The study tests the following hypotheses stated in its null form;

- H₀₁: Nigeria and Benin Republic play no significant role in the implementation of the ECOWAS protocol on free movement of persons and trade.

H₀₂: There are no significant challenges facing the implementation of the ECOWAS protocol on free movement of persons and trade along the Nigeria and Benin Republic border.

Literature review

ECOWAS Free Movement Protocol

Effort to promote cooperation and integration of the ECOWAS countries dates back to 1975, when the ECOWAS treaty was adopted by member states. The treaty conferred the status of community citizens on nationals of member states. The treaty also enjoined member states to gradually work towards the abolition of the obstacles to free movement of persons, services and capital (Adepoju, 2005). In line with the ECOWAS treaty, the ECOWAS free movement protocol was adopted in 1979. It emphasizes the free movement of persons, right of residence and establishment. The implementation of ECOWAS policies and decisions can only take place if the member states carry out the obligations, which they have undertaken under the ECOWAS treaty. Peprah (2016) was of the view that the primary objectives that has brought these states together to establish the community is to institutionalize their cooperation in different fields. To that end, member states of ECOWAS have established structures for coordinating their policies for the execution of some of common projects and actions. The organs of the community have been endowed with some powers to make policies and decisions on matters falling within their field of competence so that the aims and objectives of establishing the community would be achieved. Such can be achieved by member states of the community giving effect to such policies and decisions by implementing them. The implementation of ECOWAS decisions and policies by member states takes place at two levels: the community level and the municipal level of member states (Ike, 2013). Peprah (2016) further explained that the community level refers to the whole of the West African sub-region, which has become one single region for the purpose of ECOWAS activities. The implementation of ECOWAS decisions and policies at the community level within the sub-region has placed it in a control position to establish certain standards and rules over a wide range of different fields of endeavour. For example, under the ECOWAS treaty, the community has the responsibility to ensure that the fundamental principles and objectives for which the community is established are realized. These principles can only be actualized if member states maintain the standard and observe the rules and carry out the obligations, which they have imposed on themselves under the treaty. It is also the responsibility of the community to ensure compliance with the rules of the community within the sub-region, therefore extends to ensuring compliances with the rules and

standards set by it. And, it is against the background that the legal framework for implementing ECOWAS policies and decisions is considered.

UNESCO (2006) affirmed that the economic boom of the Nigeria state due to the discoveries and presence of oil in the 1970 and also, the ECOWAS protocol brought about the influx of undocumented migrants from West African neighbouring countries in and out of the nation state. The West African states entered into an ECOWAS treaty with a view of promoting cooperation and development amongst member states. This was achieved by dissolving the obstacles and barriers restricting the free movement of persons and residence of the labour force within the community, this protocol was formed for this purpose. It means that entry conditions for community citizens are comparatively easy and simple in comparison to aliens coming from the non ECOWAS countries. Thus, a community citizen may enter any member states of the community for 90 days without a visa, provided he possesses a travel document and international health certificate. Adeloju, Boulton and Levin (2015) provided a summary of the features of the protocol on free movement of the people. The first phase of this protocol provides for free entry of citizens of member states without visa for ninety days which all the ECOWAS member states adopted and ratified in 1980. In the second phase of the protocol, right of residence aims at extending the residency of visiting member states beyond the 90 days and became effective in 1986 as adopted and ratified by all member states. The third phase of the protocol, right of establishment emphasizes the right of member states nationals to have access to and also carry out economic activities in another member state. The Economic Community of West African States free movement protocol encapsulates what is considered the most significant of the organization's objectives. According to Opanike (2015), genuine integration is facilitated by free movement of citizens who perhaps constitute the main agents of this cause and this makes the free movement protocol the organization's overall goal. Agyei and Clotey (2007) on their part, noted that the coming into force of the ECOWAS protocol on free movement coupled with globalization and the changing nature of migration have led to some convergence among states within the sub-region to cooperate and improve the movement of people. Adebusuyi (2012) gives a brief background of ECOWAS and what it was established for. However, Adebusuyi further explained the various protocols which are projected as an integral part of enhancing greater interaction within all citizens within the sub-regions. Martins (2007) identified the unwillingness on the part of the states to fully operationalize the various protocols on movement of persons, goods and services within the sub-region. He enriches the discussion when he asserts that the free movement protocol has remained elusive due to problems with implementation and accessibility.

The Concept of Socio Economic Development

Socio-economic development in any nation state refers to meaningful improvement in the state's economy and most especially the comfortable standard living of her citizens. This is evidenced through the socio economic development strategies of the country. For a nation to be respected in international system there must be a high level of socio economic development in the state. This development involves the effectiveness of all sectors that make up the government (Patrick *et al.*, 2014). Uju and Joy (2014) revealed that socio-economic development is necessary for the health and safety of a nation state. Ebiri (2017) also contributes to the validity of the study revealing socio-economic development to be a positive process and process that initiates sustainable development in the lives of her beneficiaries (Babalola, 2015). Development is a progressive process; it is associated with growth and advancement of nation states. Fayemi (2013) reveals that the human society sees development as a physical process which is mostly associated with the quality and quantity of production in a nation state, her technology status, cultural development and psychological directions of individuals. According to Fayemi (2013), development refers to reasonable increase which is gradually physical and obviously seen. This leads us to say that development is a process. Development is also synonymous to progress in a nation-state's economy. It has to do with positive change as it is a maintained contentious progress (Brobbe, 2010).

For a nation state to experience development and economic growth, the state must pay a price of effective and dedicated strategy. Lawal and Oluwatoyin (2011) noted that development is associated with advancement, it is the presence of improvement shown in every aspect of a nation state's life such as culturally, economically, politically, educationally among others areas not mentioned. Development can be associated with productivity, producing and expanding positively at a reasonable pace. Development is also a tool for measuring the status and progress of a nation state. Assessing Nigeria, the nation is blessed with resources but has not attained the height it is expected to be due to mismanagement of resources and her low productive status. Socio-development explains the affordable lifestyles as well as the suitable living standard of individuals in the society. Social development cut across improvements in various areas of the state. These include the education system, employment, social amenities provisions among other areas. Socio-economic development is associated with positive transformation in state's economy.

Migration as a Concept

According to Iheanacho and Ughaerumba (2015), migration can be traced to the existence of the first set of humans on earth. Migration has taken various

patterns such as slave trade, colonization, urbanization, industrialization and globalization. Movement of persons from one place to another has been a trend adopted by various individuals. International migration in Nigeria can be traced from pre-colonial era to colonial era. Tacoil and Okali (2001) also explained international migration to be a feature of globalization as the world is interconnected and interdependent on each other. This reveals that international migration is the movement across international borders or nation states. For this study, international migration is the movement of nationals from other Regional Integration through Common Policies: A Case Study of the Free Movement Policy in the EU and the ECOWAS in the West African states to Nigeria and also the movement of Nigeria to the developed countries. International migration is seen as a reaction to the pull and push factors exposed to migrants as they are expected to act as human beings first before acting up as migrants. Adetunji (2014) also reveals that international migration is the movement of individuals across national boundaries. One of the reasons behind the migrant movement from one nation state to another is the desire for a better life than the previous or the present status.

Migration has the potential to serve as an engine of growth and development for all parties involved - host and source countries and the migrants themselves. In destination countries, migration has rejuvenated workforces, rendered economically viable traditional sectors like agriculture and services, promoted entrepreneurship, supported social security and welfare schemes, and met the demand for skills for emerging high tech industries. In migrant origin countries, positive contributions of migration are reflected in capital inflows through remittances and investments, transfer of technology and critical skills through return migration, and increased exports and international business facilitated by transnational community relations. In brief, migrants sustain development and partnership through the monetary, human and social capital they supply, the international flows of finance and trade they bring about, their involvement in social networks and their contributions to exchanges between cultures.

The United Nations Secretary-General's report on International Migration and Development for the UN High Level Dialogue 2006 stated:

“We are only beginning to learn how to make migration work more consistently for development. Each of us holds a piece of the migration puzzle, but none has the whole picture. It is time to start putting it together.”

Whether or not emigration contributes to development varies according to many factors, including what forms of migration take place, where to, and on how well countries put in place policies to take advantage of benefits and address adverse consequences of migration. The latter suggests that migration can contribute positively to development where a country is already poised to

develop; it cannot, however, create such a condition. Excessive, emigration of workforce and skills, as well as the inability of unemployed workforce to emigrate, are harmful to the country of origin development. There is also a huge potential for enhanced country of origin development through diaspora contributions and by returning and circular migration, providing that the infrastructure allows it. There is increasing international recognition of the links between migration and growth and development in both destination and source countries (ILO, 2004).

The investigation shows the connection between migration (both emigration and immigration) and development, and the practical manifestations and applications of such connections. Migration and development may be mutually causative in both source and destination countries. Contemporary international migration can generally be explained by increasing socio-economic differences between countries and the lack of gainful employment, decent work, human security and individual freedoms in certain countries. The world's population of 6.7 billion in 2006 was growing by about 75 million every year, mostly in developing countries. The International Labour Organization report, *Global Employment Trends 2007*, estimated the world's labour force in 2006 at around 2.9 billion people. In the same year, there was an estimated 195.2 million unemployed, about 6.3 per cent of the total global labour force. The number of "working poor" - or persons living on the equivalent of US\$ 2 per day or less - has continued to grow, reaching 1.37 billion in 2006.

Theoretical Framework

To further explain the contending issue in the study, the research work adopted Functionalism theory.

Functionalism is a theory of international relations that was developed by David Mitrany in response to the development of the interwar period, basically an offshoot of concerned about the obsolete role of the state as a form of social organization and the need to replace the state as a dominant actor in the international system. Rather than self-interest notion presented by the realist as the motivation in international relation, functionalism focused on common interest and mutual needs shared by state and non-state actors in a process of global integration triggered by the erosion of the state sovereignty and the increasing weight of knowledge (Rosamood, 2000). In Mitrany's view, the basic reason for the existence of any political system is welfare and security, and that once what people want and need are provided for them they tend to pursue and keep peace. In this light functionalism provides the foundation to the theory of globalization and strategy. Functionalism seeks to build a system based on functions and needs, which links authority with needs and responsibilities, scientific knowledge, expertise and technology. Functionalism

rejects the idea of state power in explaining the reason for the proliferation of international organizations during the interwar period. Right from the days of Mitrany, functionalism has always focused on cooperation, togetherness and peace against conflict, disunity, disintegration and discord which characterized the power politics of the realist as evidenced in the interwar period.

As a functionalist effort at regional integration and security, the use of functionalist theory for this study logically connects with the reason for the establishment of ECOWAS. As well, the theory is relevant to the extent that the various colonial blocs, Anglophone and francophone because of the variegated interests they represent, as a result of differentiated colonial experiences, are in them capable of generating conflicts. Hence the functionalist theory also formed the intellectual background to the establishment of emergent regional bodies. Critics of functionalism theory have strongly illuminated the setbacks involved in a regional integration program based on the functionalist prism. This includes especially the reluctance of member states in regional organizations to transfer sovereignty to a higher level particularly in areas of strong national interests. For them, the condition would only reproduce a supra-national body with state-like functions and solely dominated by the most powerful states. They point also to the inadequacy of the logic of spill over since there is no guarantee of stopping neither war through functional cooperation nor seeming difficulty in entirely separating social, technical or economic problems from political. The theory is said to lay too much emphasis on technocratic logic to the detriment of the importance of politics, while some dismissed it for its poor record of prediction and lack of scientific rigour. The theory of functionalism is applicable to the study because it explains the essence of establishing an organization or institution to foster integration and also enables states to function effectively under the established organization. In line with the integration theory, ECOWAS member states interact and function effectively while engaging in political, economic and social affairs. This is a result of ECOWAS as an organization being able to manage and control the activities or affairs of states in order to achieve the set goals of ECOWAS objective which is to create a borderless free trade area. National issues will become sub-regional issues.

Research Methodology

The study describes the research methodology as the steps to be taken by the researcher to carry out the research objectives. Specifically, it considers the research design, the population of the study, the sample size and sampling techniques, methods used in carrying out this study for data collection and data analysis.

Research Design

This study made use of a mixed method research design which involves the combination of the qualitative and quantitative research method. Many research works have pointed out the importance of mixed method particularly in comparison to mono methods. Mixed method is a research approach whereby the study collects and analyses both quantitative and qualitative data within the same study (Bowers, Cohen and Elliot, 2004). The adoption of this method is to enable the research work ensures proper validity and reliability.

Study Area

The study area is Idiroko border post in Ogun state, Nigeria. Idiroko is purposively selected for this study because it is a legally recognized border post linking Nigeria and Benin republic and serves the interest of this study.

Population of the Study

Bernard and McCarthy (2012) define population as the entire set of people or data that are of interest to a researcher. Population of the study covers the data collected from every individual that is related to the interest of the research work. According to the census data released in 2006, Idiroko has a population of 7, 487 and this was discovered during the preliminary interview conducted for the study. The population for the study comprised traders, tourist, travellers, border officials that are managing the Idiroko border from where the sample was selected for the study.

Method of Data Analysis

Quantitative and qualitative data were used for the analysis of the data generated from the questionnaire distributed. And analyzes were taken by making deductions from the submission of the respondents, considering the research objectives and questions. Information from the returned questionnaire was appropriate Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Descriptive statistical techniques such as percentages, figure, and chat were used for data presentation. Inferential statistical techniques were used to test for the existence of a relationship between the variables of study and the strength of this relationship with the use of chi-square. Responses were coded and analyzed using the Statistical Data collected response in the questionnaires to the objectives of the study is recorded according to the the questionnaires to the objectives of the study is recorded according to the themes in this research. Those obtained from the questionnaire were interpreted, using statistical tools such as tables, simple percentages and the chi-square (χ^2). The χ^2 , being a non-parametric inferential statistical technique, is used to test the hypotheses of the study with a view to enabling the researcher draw valid conclusions on the hypotheses.

Research Instruments for Data Collection

Closed-ended questionnaires and semi structured interview were employed as the instrument of data collection in this study. The reason for the adoption of the use of questionnaires was because of its advantage over other instruments; it is a way of sourcing vital information which cannot be obtained from the library materials, its respect for anonymity of respondents can equally be measured. In designing the questionnaire, the researcher put the research questions. This, therefore, determines the nature and type of survey questions that would be asked from respondents. Each item on the questionnaire is measured with a close-ended 5point Likert scale and other normal scales. It allows respondents to select the degree to which they agree or disagree on a question, ranging from Strongly Agree, Agreed, Disagree and Strongly Disagree.

The questionnaire section is divided into two categories, section 1, consists of demographic information to elicit personal data from the respondents, such as the age, sex, educational level, marital status and occupation. Section 2, was divided into two parts with emphases on the objectives stated below.

Part 1: To assess the extent to which Nigeria and Benin Republic have complied with the implementation of the ECOWAS protocol on free movement of persons and trade.

Part 2: To determine the challenges hindering the implementation of the ECOWAS protocol on free movement of person and trade.

Data Analysis, Results and Discussion of Findings to research Questions 1&2

Below are the analyses of data generated from the administered questionnaire to respondents at Idi-iroko border post. The section revealed the respondents' opinion on the research questions pertaining to research objectives on the assessment of the implementation of ECOWAS protocol on free movement of person and trade in Nigeria and Benin Republic.

This section is divided into the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents, the analysis of research questions and the discussion of findings.

Rate of Returns

Number	Item	Frequency	Percentage
1	Questionnaire Collected for Analysis	370	100%
2	Questionnaire unreturned	0	0%
	Questionnaire Distributed	370	100%

Source: Study Fieldwork, 2019

The rate of returns as shown in table above is a hundred per cent of sample size the researcher administered. This was made possible because the researcher administered questionnaires above the sample size in order to make up for any questionnaires that would not be returned or not properly filled. Data presented for analysis was 370.

The figure above shows gender of the respondents. The majority of the respondents were female with almost 57.5% and male 43.5% respectively.

Classification on Basis of Gender

Number	Items	Frequency of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
1	Male	161	43.5 %
2	Female	209	56.5%
	Total	370	100%

Source: Study Fieldwork, 2019

The table above shows the gender distribution of the respondents. The result on the table reveals that respondents with 43.5% were males while 56.5% were female. It thus shows that more than the average percent of the respondents were females.

Occupation of Respondents

No	Items	Frequency of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
1	Traders	145	39.2%
2	Tourist/travelers	97	26.2%
3	Border Officials	47	12.7%
4	Others	81	21.9%
	Total	370	100%

Source: Study Fieldwork, 2019

From the table above, the questionnaires revealed that about 145 respondents or 39.2% were traders, 97 respondents or 26.2% were tourists, 47 respondents or 12.7% were border officials, and 81 respondents or 21.9% represented other professions.

Age of Respondents

Items	Frequency of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
21-25 Year	107	41.1%
26-30 Year	99	32.2%
31-35 Year	86	17.8%
36 Year and Above	78	8.9%
Total	370	100%

Source: Study Fieldwork, 2019

The table above shows that 41.1% of the respondents were within the age range of 21-25 years, respondents with 32.2% were within the age range of 26-30 years, respondents or 17.85 were within 31-35 years of age, while respondents within the age range of 36 years and above were 8.9% respectively. This data indicates that the majority of respondents in the study were within the age range of 21-25 years of age, followed by age grade of 26-30 years, and respondents within 36 and above years were the least. Generally, it is glaring that most of the respondents were young and energetic people that are involved in the day to day activities across the border of Nigeria and Benin Republic.

Marital Status of respondents

No	Items	Frequency of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
1	Single	180	48.6%
2	Married	108	29.2%
3	Divorcee	40	10.8%
4	Widow	42	11.4%
	Total	370	100%

Source: Study Fieldwork, 2019

The table above shows the distribution of the respondents by their marital status. The table above shows that 180 or 48.6% of respondents were single, 108 or 29% respondent were married, 40 or 11% of respondents were divorcees, while 42 or 11.4% of respondents were widows. The result from the data revealed that majority of respondents who participated in the study were singles, followed by married respondents, while the least were divorcees and widows.

Education Background of respondents

No	Items	Frequency of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
1	Primary	80	21.30%
2	Secondary	176	47.6%
3	Tertiary	114	30.8%
	Total	370	100%

Source: Study Fieldwork, 2019

The table above shows the educational background of respondents, 80 respondents or 21.30% had primary school leaving certificates, 176 respondents or 47.65 had secondary school education, while 114 respondents or 30.8% had a university degree or other prerequisite qualification. The data revealed that the holders of secondary school certificates were the majority participants in the study, followed by the tertiary qualification, while primary leaving certificate was the least qualification of respondents.

Years of crossing border by respondents

No	Items	Frequency of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
1	Less than 5 Year	44	11.9%
2	5 – 10 Years	89	24.1%
3	11 – 15 Years	59	15.9%
4	16 – 20 Years	74	20.0%
5	21 Years and Above	104	28.1%
	Total	370	100%

Source: Study Fieldwork, 2019

The table above shows respondents' period of crossing the Nigeria-Benin Republic borders for commercial and other activities. 44 or 11.9% of respondents indicate that they have been crossing the border for a period less than 5 years, 89 or 24% of respondents claimed 5 – 10 years, 59 or 15.9% respondents attested 11 – 15 years, while 74 or 20% claimed 16 – 20 years, and 104 or 28.1% claimed to have been crossing the border for 21 years and above respectively. The data revealed that the majority of the respondents have been crossing borders for more than 21 years, followed by respondents within 5 – 10 years while respondents with less than 5 years were the least.

Purpose of Crossing Border

No	Items	Frequency of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
1	Trade	154	41.6%
2	Guide/Language Help	54	14.6%
3	Official Duties	54	14.6%
4	Clearing and Forward	72	19.5%
5	Others	36	9.7%
	Total	370	100%

Source: Study Fieldwork, 2019

The table above shows the purpose of respondents crossing the border. It revealed that 154 or 41.6% of respondents cross the border for the purpose of trade, 54 or 14.6% of respondents cross the border for the purpose of guide and language help, as well as 54 or 14.6% respondents cross the border for the purpose of official engagement, while 72 or 19.5% of respondents cross the Nigeria-Benin borders for the purpose of clearing and forwarding, and 36 or 9.7% of respondents cross border for the purpose of other activities. The result from the data indicates that the majority of respondents cross the border for the purpose of trade, followed by the respondents who cross the border for the purpose of clearing and forwarding, then, respondents who cross the border for the purpose of official engagement and guide/language help respectively.

Respondents' opinion on the Implementation of the ECOWAS protocol on free movement of persons in Nigeria and Benin Republic

Construct	SA	A	SD	D	Mean	S-dev.
Abolition of Visa and entry requirements for 90 days	144(38.9%)	121(32.7%)	55(14.9%)	50(13.5%)	2.8946	1.70135
Harmonized immigration/emigration forms	228(61.6%)	92(24.9%)	23(6.2%)	27(7.3%)	3.3456	1.82909
National committee for monitoring free movement of persons and vehicles.	203(54.9%)	101(27.3%)	36(9.7%)	30(8.1%)	2.9171	1.70795
Right of Residence	40(10.8%)	102(27.6%)	208(56.2%)	20(5.4%)	2.8895	1.69985
Right of Establishment	06(1.6%)	91(24.6%)	22(5.9%)	251(67.9%)	2.9154	1.09486

Source: Fieldwork, 2019

The data generated from the field shows that Nigeria and Benin Republic have done well with the implementation of the ECOWAS protocol on free movement especially with respect to the first phase. Both Nigeria and Benin Republic have abolished visa requirements for ECOWAS citizens entering the country. In this regard, it could be said that the first phase of the protocol has been accomplished. Awumbila (2014) noted that all the 15 ECOWAS countries including Nigeria and Benin Republic have abolished visa and entry requirements for 90 days. Nigeria has granted entry to a large number of West Africans most of who were compelled by economic difficulties to leave their countries. Touzenis (2012) posited that irrespective of the fact that the protocol has not been well implemented, in the aspect of free movement of persons and intra-regional migration the protocol has been successfully implemented by member states. He further expressed that only phase 1 of the protocol has been well implemented by ECOWAS members. The two countries also adopted the harmonized immigration and emigration form of ECOWAS member states which aim to facilitate and simplify cross-border formalities in Member states.

Challenges that hindered the implementation of the ECOWAS protocol on free movement along Nigeria-Benin republic borders

Construct	SA	A	SD	D	Mean	S-dev.
Low level of knowledge about the ECOWAS protocol	247(66.7%)	102(27.6%)	13(3.5%)	8(2.2%)	2.886	1.11492
Corrupt practices of border officials	239(64.6%)	100(27.0%)	21(5.7%)	10(2.7%)	2.9396	1.10275
Economic crisis	247(66.8%)	104(28.1%)	6(1.6%)	13(3.5%)	2.8964	1.09195
Threat to national security	204(55.1%)	108(29.1%)	32(8.7%)	26(7.1%)	2.9188	1.09195
Lack of domestication	252(68.2%)	102(27.5%)	9(2.5%)	7(1.8%)	2.9223	1.10167

Source: Study Fieldwork, 2019

Furthermore, on the opinion of the respondents on whether corrupt practices of border officials hindered the implementation of ECOWAS protocol along

Nigeria-Benin Republic borders. 239 or 64.6% of the respondents strongly agreed, 100 or 27% of respondents agreed, while 21 respondents or 5.7% strongly disagreed and 10 or 2.7% of respondents totally disagreed as well. The result from the analysis revealed that respondents who participated in the study strongly agreed that corrupt practices by border officials affect the implementation of the ECOWAS protocol along Nigeria – Benin republic borders. The construct is significant with the mean and standard deviation ($\chi= 2.9396$, $\alpha= 1.10275$). The data indicates that many migrants from member states are still harassed at the borders and asked to make unofficial payments before being allowed to cross the border. This, however, affects free movement within Nigeria and Benin Republic borders.

Variable on whether economic crises which have occasionally resulted in closed borders or expulsion of ECOWAS citizens hinders the implementation of the ECOWAS protocol along Nigeria-Benin Republic border shows that 247 or 66.8% of respondents Strongly agreed, 100 or 27% of respondents Agreed, 6 or 1.6 % of respondents Strongly disagree and 13 or 3.5% of respondent Disagreed. This finding revealed that occurrence of economic crises leading to closure of borders hindered the implementation of the ECOWAS protocol along Nigeria-Benin borders. The data is significant with mean and standard deviation ($\chi= 2.8964$, $\alpha= 1.09195$).

It was cleared that security threat affected the effective implementation of the ECOWAS protocol along Nigeria-Benin border revealed that 204 or 55.1% of respondents Strongly Agreed, 108 respondents or 29% Agreed, while 32 or 8.7% of respondents strongly disagreed and 26 or 7.1% of respondents disagreed. The construct is significant with the mean and standard deviation ($\chi= 2.9188$, $\alpha= 1.10167$) respectively. Ogochukwu (2017) supported this assertion by indicating that the issue of security challenges has continuously posed a threat to the full implementation of the ECOWAS protocol. A good illustration is the case of terrorist insurgency in Nigeria. The incidence of terrorist attacks such as Boko Haram has made member countries to tighten their borders and strengthen their security measures to ensure adequate protection of lives and properties of their citizens. Hence both countries have to apply more restrictive measures and monitoring agencies to beef up security at the borders and target areas of terrorist attack which has affected the free movement of persons and trade.

Table: Chi-square

	The extent to which Nigeria and Benin Republic have complied with the implementation of the ECOWAS protocol on free movement of persons and trade	Challenges that hindered the implementation of the ECOWAS protocol on free movement and trade
Chi-square	92.759 ^a	54.643 ^b
Degree of freedom	3	3
Asymp. Sig.	0.05	0.05

Source: Fieldwork, 2019

The table above explains the result derived from the Chi-square analysis of the two sets of objectives, and it was discovered that the sig. for both the objectives analyzed to be 0.05.

Test of Hypothesis

H₀₁: Nigeria and Benin Republic play no significant role in the implementation of the ECOWAS protocol on free movement of persons and trade.

H₀₂: There are no significant challenges facing the implementation of the ECOWAS protocol on free movement of persons and trade along Nigeria and Benin Republic border.

Recommendations/Conclusion

The free movement protocol was intended to ease the problems encountered by people when they move from one country to another within the sub-region. The protocol, therefore, sought to remove all visa requirements thereby making movement easy and convenient. The intended provisions of the protocol were expected to be beneficial to citizens of ECOWAS member states. The assessment has shown that intra-regional migration is an integral part of livelihood in the ECOWAS sub-region. While both Nigeria and Benin Republic have made progress in the implementation of the ECOWAS free movement protocol, however on the basis of the available empirical evidence, the study concludes that the ECOWAS protocol has not been completely implemented due to several challenges the protocol is facing with respect to its implementation.

These challenges are; low level of knowledge about the ECOWAS protocol by ECOWAS member states citizens, corruption and harassment by border officials at the border post; lack of domestication, insecurity and other related criminal activities within the ECOWAS sub-region, contributed significantly to the state of affair thereby undermining the border relations between the two West African countries and affecting the intended benefits

that are supposed to be derived from the protocol on free movement of persons and trade along Nigeria- Benin Republic borders. The study also concludes that the future mobility patterns and outcomes of the ECOWAS protocol depend largely on the commitment of the member states and financial support of ECOWAS and its development partners.

Recommendations

Consequent upon the research findings, the study proffers some recommendations that can promote the integration of West African states and strengthen the implementation of the ECOWAS protocol.

1. ECOWAS needs to lobby the member states to comply with the implementation of the protocols of the signed agreement. And measures should be taken to sanction the non-compliant states.
2. Deepening of bilateral relationship between Nigeria and Benin Republic by working together as a team so as to ensure uniformity in the implementation of the ECOWAS protocol. For effective implementation of the ECOWAS protocol depends largely on the commitment of member states and financial support that they can receive from ECOWAS and its development partners.
3. The finding highlights the need for more public education on free movement and acquisition of genuine travel documents. Awareness must be raised among ECOWAS citizens as well as the border officials in regards to the provision of the ECOWAS protocol on free movement to ease the process of the implementation along Nigeria –Benin Republic borders.
4. Border officials should be trained for a positive attitude towards the people within the borderline, this will encourage travellers regardless of their origin or their destination.
5. ECOWAS should organize more public education on the relationship between free movement protocol and development so that member states can recognize immigrant's contribution to socio-economic development of their host countries as this could go a long way to enhance willingness of member states to welcome ECOWAS migrants as development agents.

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