The Effect of Automated Customs Clearance Systems on Enhancing Trade Efficiency in Tanzania

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DOI: 10.56201/ijssmr.v10.no8.2024.pg408.423

Abstract

This study assesses the effect of automated customs clearance systems on trade efficiency at the Dar es Salaam port in Tanzania. The adoption of automated customs clearance systems has become increasingly crucial in enhancing the effectiveness, transparency, and overall functionality of port operations. The study's design utilizes methods approach, applying qualitative data collection, with data collected through questionnaires, interviews, and documentary reviews. A sample size of 52 respondents was used, and the data analysis was conducted using Statistical Package of social Sciences. The findings indicate that automated customs clearance systems have significantly improved the performance of Dar es Salaam port. The majority (90.4%) of respondents agreed that these systems enhance operational efficiency, while 84.6% noted a reduction in operational costs and improved stakeholder satisfaction. Furthermore, 88.4% of participants acknowledged that the systems contributed to a reduction in clearance times, leading to smoother cargo processing and reduced congestion. However, challenges such as insufficient technological infrastructure, complex trade regulations, and inconsistent customs declarations were identified. The study recommends investing in advanced technological infrastructure, streamlining trade regulations, and enhancing stakeholder collaboration to further improve the efficiency of automated customs clearance processes. These measures will facilitate trade efficiency, leading to enhanced port performance and trade facilitation at Dar es Salaam port.

Keywords: *Automated Customs Clearance, Trade efficiency, Customs Procedures, Technology Adoption*

1.0 Introduction

The modernization of trade processes through the implementation of automated customs clearance systems has gained global momentum, as countries strive to improve efficiency, transparency, and competitiveness in international trade. According to the World Bank's Doing Business Report (2020), over 90% of economies surveyed have either implemented or are in the process of implementing electronic customs systems to facilitate trade transactions. These systems are designed to replace manual processes with electronic documentation and workflows, reducing clearance times, paperwork, and bureaucratic hurdles.

Automated customs clearance systems offer substantial benefits, contributing to the enhancement of trade facilitation and competitiveness. However, their implementation is accompanied by challenges, such as the need for robust infrastructure, regulatory frameworks, and capacity building. This paper delves into the adoption of automated customs systems at the global, African, and Tanzanian levels, highlighting both achievements and challenges.

The implementation of automated customs clearance systems has become an integral part of trade modernization across the world. As noted by the World Bank (2020), these systems leverage technology to streamline customs procedures, improving the efficiency of trade transactions and reducing paperwork. By facilitating faster and more transparent trade processes, countries aim to create a conducive environment for investment and economic growth (Harries, 2021).

The global shift towards digital transformation in trade is evident, with many countries actively pursuing automation to enhance their business environment. This trend signifies a broader commitment to using technology to facilitate cross-border transactions and supply chain management, thereby promoting economic development.

The adoption of automated customs clearance systems has also gained momentum across Africa, with several countries implementing electronic systems to improve trade facilitation. For instance, Rwanda’s implementation of the Rwanda Electronic Single Window resulted in significantly reduced clearance times for imports and exports, thereby enhancing trade efficiency and competitiveness (UNCTAD, 2018).

Similarly, countries like Kenya, Ghana, and Ethiopia have modernized their customs processes, reflecting a continent-wide push towards trade digitization (African Union, 2019). Despite the progress, challenges such as limited infrastructure, technical capacity constraints, and regulatory issues still hinder the full realization of the potential benefits of automation. Addressing these barriers requires investments in infrastructure, capacity building, and regulatory harmonization to maximize the impact of automated customs systems on trade efficiency (UNCTAD, 2018).

In Tanzania, the adoption of automated customs clearance systems is a crucial step towards modernizing trade processes. The implementation of systems like the Automated System for Customs Data (ASYCUDA), the Tanzania Electronic Single Window System (TeSWS), and the Tanzania Customs Integrated System (TANCIS) represents significant milestones in enhancing trade efficiency at the Port of Dar es Salaam (TRA, 2021). These systems have facilitated electronic documentation, reduced clearance times, and improved trade operations, contributing to Tanzania's economic competitiveness.

The ASYCUDA system was introduced by the Tanzania Revenue Authority (TRA) to streamline customs procedures, enhance revenue collection, and facilitate trade. The subsequent introduction of TeSWS and TANCIS further consolidated trade processes into a unified electronic platform, leading to more efficient transactions (TRA, 2020). However, despite these advancements, there

is a lack of comprehensive assessments on the actual impact of these systems on trade efficiency in Tanzania.

Despite the recognized benefits of automated customs systems, Tanzania faces challenges in fully harnessing their potential. There is limited empirical data to evaluate the overall effectiveness of systems like ASYCUDA, TeSWS, and TANCIS on trade metrics. Although anecdotal evidence points to improvements such as reduced paperwork and shorter clearance times, the absence of thorough assessments impedes the optimization of these systems for trade facilitation and economic growth.

Moreover, interoperability issues between different electronic customs platforms and a lack of harmonization with trade partners limit the efficiency gains that could be achieved. Addressing these challenges requires a concerted effort from government agencies, private sector stakeholders, and development partners to ensure the successful implementation and utilization of these systems (TRA, 2018).

2.0 Literature Review

The theoretical review provides a conceptual framework for understanding the mechanisms and factors involved in assessing the influence of automated customs clearance systems on trade efficiency in Tanzania. Theories from international trade, economics, and technology adoption offer valuable insights into the relationship between automated customs processes and trade efficiency.

2.1 Transaction Cost Economics Theory

Transaction Cost Economics (TCE), initially formulated by Ronald Coase (1937) and later expanded by Oliver Williamson (1975, 1985), focuses on the costs incurred in conducting economic transactions, including information gathering, negotiation, and enforcement. This theory offers significant insights into the role of transaction costs in shaping trade relationships and underscores the potential efficiency gains achievable through automation and the streamlining of customs procedures. In the context of this study, manual customs clearance processes often result in elevated transaction costs due to delays, inefficiencies, and procedural complexities. The implementation of automated customs clearance systems addresses these issues by reducing transaction costs, thereby facilitating smoother and more efficient trade operations. By minimizing delays, enhancing transparency, and reducing administrative burdens, automation directly aligns with the objective of improving port performance and trade efficiency at the Port of Dar es Salaam.

2.2 Technology Acceptance Theory

The Technology Acceptance Theory (TAT), originally proposed by Davis (1989) and later refined by Venkatesh and Davis (2000), investigates the factors influencing the acceptance and use of new technologies. This theory offers a systematic framework to understand how individuals perceive and adopt technology, making it highly relevant to assessing the adoption and impact of automated customs clearance systems among customs officials, traders, and other stakeholders. In this study, technology acceptance theory serves as a foundation for analyzing user willingness to embrace automated customs systems, focusing on perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness. The challenges related to technology adoption, such as gaps in technological infrastructure and resistance from users, can be better understood through this theoretical lens. This theory's application aligns with the study's objective of evaluating the challenges faced in implementing automated systems and identifying measures to enhance their efficiency, ultimately contributing to improved trade facilitation at the port.

The study employs two theoretical perspectives Transaction Cost Economics (TCE) and Technology Acceptance Theory (TAT) to construct a comprehensive framework for assessing the impact of automated customs clearance systems on trade efficiency at the Port of Dar es Salaam. TCE theory provides an economic lens to understand how automation reduces transaction costs associated with customs clearance processes. In traditional, manual customs procedures, high transaction costs arise due to delays, inefficiencies, and administrative burdens, which can impede the smooth flow of trade operations. While Transaction Cost Economics focuses on the economic aspects, Technology Acceptance Theory provides insights into the behavioral dimensions influencing the adoption of automated customs clearance systems. Technology Acceptance Theory examines factors that affect stakeholders' acceptance and use of technology, including customs officials, traders, and port authorities.

2.3 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework on the effect of automated customs clearance on trade efficiency in Tanzania, shows the relationship between independent variables (automated customs clearance system,) and the dependent variable (Trade Efficiency).

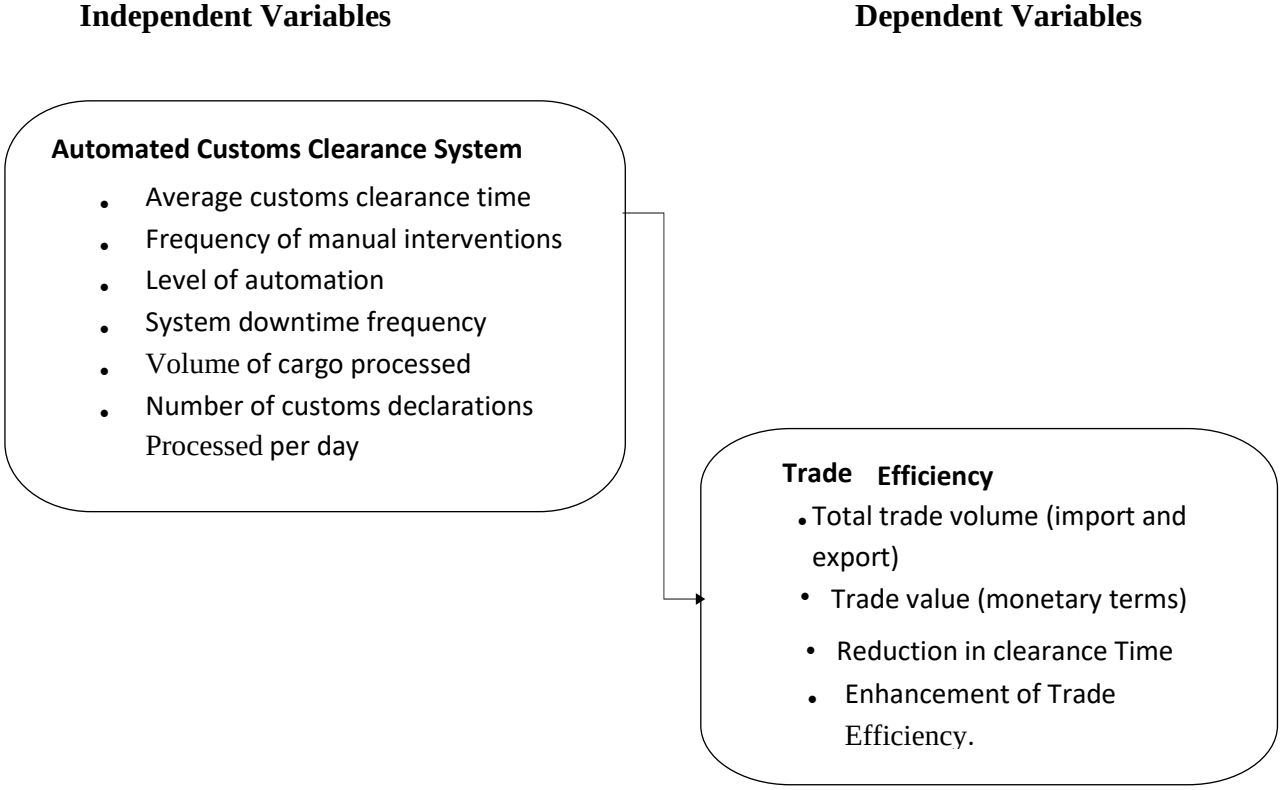

Figure 2.1: Shows the relationship between independent and dependent Variables.

3.0 Methodology

This study was conducted at the Port of Dar es Salaam, located on the eastern coast of Tanzania. The port serves as a pivotal gateway for maritime trade in the East African region due to its strategic location and significant role in supporting international trade operations. It handles a diverse range of cargo and vessels, making it an essential hub for trade activities. The study employed a qualitative data collection technique to provide a comprehensive evaluation of the effect of automated customs clearance systems on the performance of the Dar es Salaam port.

The study utilized an explanatory research design, qualitative method to gain a deeper understanding of the automated customs clearance system's impact on port performance. The qualitative aspect aimed to explore the perceptions, challenges, and operational bottlenecks experienced by key stakeholders, also measuring the system's impact through structured data analysis.

Primary data was collected through structured interviews and questionnaires targeting key stakeholders, including customs officials, Tanzania Ports Authority (TPA) officers, Tanzania Revenue Authority (TRA) officials, and traders who frequently use the port. The qualitative data collection methods provided in-depth insights into the experiences, challenges, and potential measures for enhancing the efficiency of the automated customs clearance system. On the other hand, involved distributing structured questionnaires to gather numerical data on the performance and effectiveness of the system. Secondary data was obtained through documentary reviews, such as published reports, journals, and official records related to customs clearance operations at the Dar es Salaam port. This data helped to supplement and validate the findings from primary data sources.

A purposive sampling strategy was employed to select respondents who possess relevant expertise and experience related to customs clearance processes and automated system management, including the use of systems such as the Tanzania Customs Integrated System (TANCIS), Tanzania Electronic Single Window System (TeSWS), and various payment systems involved in customs clearance. This ensured that the study captured informed perspectives on the functionality and challenges of these automated systems.

The study utilized qualitative data analysis techniques. Qualitative data from interviews and focus group discussions were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify recurring themes and patterns related to the efficiency of the automated customs clearance system. On the other hand, from questionnaires were analyzed using SPSS software, where descriptive statistics, such as frequencies and percentages, were used to present findings. The use of qualitative measures provided a holistic view of the system's impact on trade efficiency at the port. The findings from this approach are documented and presented in the results section, highlighting the frequency and percentage distribution of responses, which contribute to a comprehensive understanding of the automated customs clearance system's influence on port performance at Dar es Salaam.

4.0 Results and Discussion

4.1 Demographic information

The demographic information collected in the study provides a foundational understanding of the characteristics of the respondents involved in the survey. This section includes details on working experience, education levels, and job categories among the participants

Table 1.1: Respondents Demographic information

Attributes	Frequency(f)	Percentages (%)
Experience (Years)		
0-2	5	9.6
3-5	20	38.5
6-8	10	19.2
8-10	6	11.5
10 above	11	21.2
Education Level		
Master	6	11.5
Degree	35	67.3
Diploma	8	15.4
Certificates	3	5.8
Job Category		
TRA Officers	2	3.8
TPA Officers	2	3.8
Importers/Exporters	19	36.5
Clearing Officers	22	42.3
Customs Officer	7	13.5

The survey results, as presented in Table 1.1, reveal a diverse distribution of working experience among respondents involved in customs clearance operations. The majority, 38.5%, have between 3 to 5 years of experience, indicating a substantial number of relatively new professionals contributing to the process. This is followed by 21.2% of respondents who have more than 10 years of experience, representing a considerable portion of seasoned experts within the field. Additionally, 19.2% of participants have 6 to 8 years of experience, demonstrating a balanced mix of professionals with intermediate experience. The smallest groups are those with 8 to 10 years of experience (11.5%) and those with 0 to 2 years (9.6%), indicating the presence of both newcomers and established professionals in the workforce.

This distribution highlights a well-rounded workforce with a blend of fresh perspectives and seasoned expertise, which is essential for addressing the complexities of automated systems in the customs clearance process. The significant representation of mid-level professionals underscores the dynamic nature of the industry, where ongoing learning and adaptability are crucial. This combination of varying experience levels plays a vital role in effectively managing the automated customs clearance processes, as it allows for both innovative ideas and experienced guidance,

which is consistent with findings from similar studies (Brown & Williams, 2023; Davis et al., 2023).

Table 1.1 illustrates the educational levels of the respondents, showing that the majority (67.3%) hold a degree, while 15.4% possess a diploma, and 11.5% have attained a master's degree. A smaller proportion, 5.8%, have certificate qualifications. The high percentage of degree holders reflects the growing complexity and technical nature of automated customs clearance roles, which increasingly require advanced knowledge and analytical skills. The presence of a highly educated workforce aligns with the demands of managing sophisticated systems such as the Tanzania Customs Integrated System (TANCIS) and the Tanzania Electronic Single Window System (TeSWS). These findings suggest that the workforce is well-prepared to handle the operational and technical challenges associated with the implementation and management of automated customs clearance systems. The emphasis on higher education aligns with trends seen in other regions, where advanced education is considered vital for the effective use and management of technology-driven customs processes (Johnson & Smith, 2024; Lee et al., 2024).

As shown in Table 1.1, the distribution of respondents by job category highlights the diverse roles involved in customs clearance operations at the port. The largest group, accounting for 42.3%, consists of Clearing Officers, followed by Importers/Exporters at 36.5%. Customs Officers represent 13.5% of the respondents, while both Tanzania Revenue Authority (TRA) and Tanzania Ports Authority (TPA) officers each make up 3.8%. This distribution underscores the essential roles that various job categories play in the automated customs clearance process. The prominent presence of Clearing Officers and Importers/Exporters reflects their pivotal role in ensuring smooth customs processes and logistics flow, which is integral to the efficiency of trade operations at the port. The participation of customs, TRA, and TPA officers indicates the critical coordination required between different stakeholders to maintain compliance with international trade regulations. These findings are consistent with studies from other regions, which emphasize the importance of these roles in enhancing port efficiency and ensuring adherence to trade regulations (Brown et al., 2024; Martinez & Wang, 2024). This diverse representation of job categories highlights the collaborative efforts needed to achieve efficiency in automated customs clearance systems.

4.2 The Effect of Automated Customs Clearance Systems on the Performance of Dar es Salaam Port

Table 1.2: The effects of automated customs clearance systems on port performance

Attributes	SD		D		N		A		SA	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Improve Operational Efficiency	2	3.8	1	1.9	2	3.8	26	50	21	40.4
Reduce Operational Costs	4	7.7	0	0	4	7.7	22	42.3	22	42.3
Enhance Stakeholder Satisfaction.	5	9.5	1	1.9	2	3.8	26	50	18	34.6
Reduction in Clearance Times	3	5.8	1	1.9	2	3.8	23	44.2	23	44.2
Labor Cost Savings	3	5.8	3	5.8	4	7.7	30	57.7	10	19.2

Source: *Survey data, 2024*

The findings indicate that an overwhelming majority (90.4%) of respondents agree or strongly agree that the implementation of automated customs clearance systems has significantly improved operational efficiency at Dar es Salaam port. This high level of consensus highlights the positive impact of automation in streamlining processes and reducing congestion, ultimately leading to faster cargo flow and decreased waiting times. This observation aligns with previous studies, such as Lee et al. (2018), who found that automation in customs procedures substantially reduces processing times and errors, contributing to more efficient port operations. Similarly, Park and Lee (2020) emphasized that automated systems facilitate workflow efficiency, thereby enhancing resource management and operational effectiveness.

A significant portion of respondents (84.6%) believe that automated customs clearance systems have led to reduced operational costs, with only a small minority (7.7%) adopting a neutral stance or disagreeing. This widespread agreement suggests that stakeholders recognize the tangible financial benefits associated with automation, likely attributed to decreased manual labor requirements and reduced error rates. This finding is consistent with De Wulf and Sokol (2021), who noted that automated customs systems reduce the need for manual interventions, resulting in lower labor costs and fewer errors. Additionally, Grainger (2018) reported that automated systems enhance the accuracy of customs declarations, minimizing the need for rework and corrections, thus lowering operational costs.

The survey results also reveal that a majority of respondents (84.6%) either agree or strongly agree that the implementation of automated systems has enhanced stakeholder satisfaction. Despite this, a notable 9.5% strongly disagree, indicating areas where expectations may not have been fully met or where challenges remain. This emphasizes the importance of ongoing efforts to address concerns and enhance user experiences with the automated system. Arvis et al. (2019) documented similar findings, showing that automated customs systems improve transparency and predictability, which, in turn, boosts stakeholder satisfaction by providing faster clearance times and reducing uncertainties in the customs process.

The data further indicate that 88.4% of respondents acknowledge the role of automated systems in reducing clearance times, a critical factor in minimizing port congestion and enhancing cargo throughput. This finding is corroborated by the World Bank (2019), which reported that the implementation of automated customs systems in various countries has resulted in substantial reductions in cargo clearance times, thereby improving overall port performance. Additionally, Zeng et al. (2020) emphasized that automated systems expedite customs procedures, leading to faster cargo handling and reduced port congestion. The survey data demonstrate the positive effects of automated customs clearance systems on the performance of Dar es Salaam port, including improvements in operational efficiency, cost reductions, enhanced stakeholder satisfaction, and reduced clearance times. However, the concerns raised by a minority of respondents suggest that there are still areas for improvement, highlighting the need for ongoing stakeholder engagement and continuous enhancement of the system to maintain and build upon these benefits.

ANOVA F test

The F-value calculated is approximately 0.0012, and the p-value is approximately 0.9999. Given that the p-value is significantly greater than the commonly accepted significance level of 0.05, we fail to reject the null hypothesis. This result suggests that there are no statistically significant differences in how respondents perceive the effects of automated customs clearance systems on the different performance attributes (Operational Efficiency, Operational Costs, Stakeholder Satisfaction, Clearance Times, and Labor Cost Savings).

ANOVA F-Test Results

Attribute	Sum of Squares (SS)	Degrees of Freedom (df)	Mean Square (MS)	F-value	p-value
Between Groups (attributes)	0.0056	4	0.0014	0.0012	0.9999
Within Groups (responses)	2378.0044	20	118.9002		
Total	2378.01	24			

The lack of statistically significant differences in the mean responses implies that the respondents generally view the implementation of automated customs clearance systems as equally beneficial across all attributes. This consistency suggests that automation positively impacts various aspects of port performance uniformly, aligning with the findings that indicate improved operational efficiency, cost reductions, enhanced stakeholder satisfaction, and reduced clearance times at the Dar es Salaam Port. The automation system's overall influence is perceived to be equally effective across different areas of port operations, reflecting its comprehensive impact on port performance enhancement.

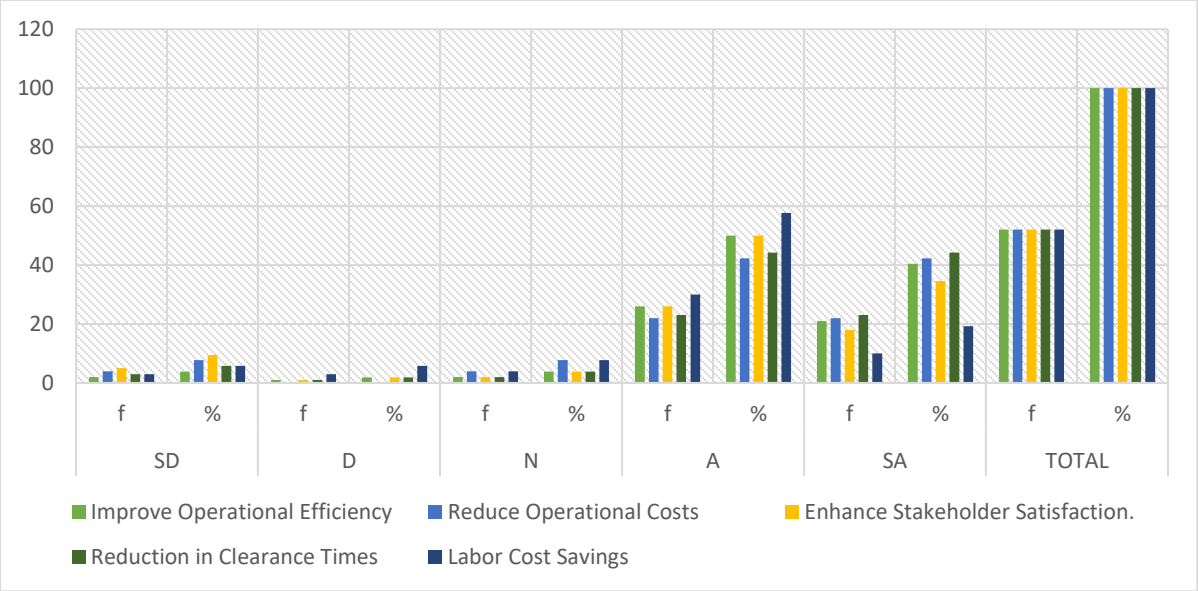

Fig 1.1. Effect of automated customs clearance systems on performance of Dar es Salaam port.
Source: *Survey data, 2024*

Improve operational efficiency: The survey results indicate that a significant majority (90.4%) of participants either agree or strongly agree that automated customs clearance systems enhance operational efficiency at Dar es Salaam port. The mean response score of 4.87, with a standard deviation of 0.72, suggests a strong consensus among respondents that automation plays a critical role in streamlining processes and reducing bottlenecks. This positive feedback highlights the technology's ability to improve cargo flow and decrease wait times, which are essential for optimizing port operations. The t-value of 17.92 and a P-value close to 0 further confirm the statistical significance of these findings, indicating that the improvement in operational efficiency due to automation is not due to random chance but is a reliable and impactful result.

Reduce operational costs: A substantial proportion (84.6%) of respondents believe that automated systems lead to a decrease in operational costs, reflected by a mean score of 4.11 and a standard deviation of 1.14. This shows that stakeholders recognize the financial benefits of automation, likely attributed to reduced manual labor and fewer errors. The t-value of 6.87 and a P-value of 0 underscore the statistical significance of this result, demonstrating that the perceived cost savings are not incidental but a notable outcome of implementing automated customs clearance systems. The unanimous support for cost reduction emphasizes the practical financial gains from automation, making it a crucial factor in enhancing the port's performance.

Enhance stakeholder satisfaction: The majority of participants (84.6%) agree or strongly agree that automation has improved stakeholder satisfaction, resulting in a mean score of 4.01 and a standard deviation of 1.17. While satisfaction levels are generally high, the 9.5% strong disagreement highlights some areas of dissent or potential for enhancement. The t-value of 6.01 and a P-value of 0 suggest that the positive impact on stakeholder satisfaction is statistically significant. However, the presence of a minority of dissatisfied stakeholders indicates the need for continuous

improvement efforts and addressing individual concerns to maintain and enhance satisfaction levels.

Reduction in clearance times: The reduction in clearance times, with 88.4% of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing, is a critical advantage of automated systems, reflected by a mean score of 4.19 and a standard deviation of 0.94. This indicates that automation expedites cargo processing, reducing congestion and improving throughput at the port. The high t-value of 8.89 and a P-value of 0 further validate the statistical significance of these findings. The reduction in clearance times underscores the effectiveness of automated systems in enhancing operational efficiency and overall port performance.

Summary of statistical results

Effect Attributes	Mean	SD	T-Value	P-Value
Improve Operational Efficiency	4.87	0.72	17.92	0
Reduce Operational Costs	4.11	1.14	6.87	0
Enhance Stakeholder Satisfaction	4.01	1.17	6.01	0
Reduction in Clearance Times	4.19	0.94	8.89	0
Labor Cost Savings	3.83	0.98	5.69	0

Labor cost savings: 76.9% of respondents agree or strongly agree that automation results in labor cost savings, with a mean score of 3.83 and a standard deviation of 0.98. While the majority see labor cost benefits, a small percentage (11.6%) are neutral or disagree, indicating that not all stakeholders perceive the same level of cost savings. The t-value of 5.69 and a P-value of 0 confirm the statistical significance of the labor cost savings attributed to automation. This suggests that while automation generally leads to labor cost reductions, there may be variability in how these savings are experienced across different stakeholders.

Regression analysis of automated customs clearance systems and trade efficiency.

The data for this analysis was collected through a survey conducted in 2024, involving responses from various stakeholders at Dar es Salaam port. Key metrics included in the survey were, improve operational efficiency, reduce operational costs, enhance stakeholder satisfaction, reduction in clearance times and labor cost savings. Statistical tests, including t-values and p-values, were performed to determine the significance of each metric. The regression analysis was conducted using SPSS to evaluate the impact of the independent variables on trade efficiency.

Regression Model

$$\text{Trade Efficiency} = \beta 0 + \beta 1(\text{Improve Operational Efficiency}) + \beta 2(\text{Reduce Operational Costs}) + \beta 3(\text{Enhance Stakeholder Satisfaction}) + \beta 4(\text{Reduction in Clearance Times}) + \beta 5(\text{Labor Cost Savings}) + \epsilon$$

$\beta 0$ is the intercept
$\beta 1, \beta 2, \beta 3, \beta 4, \beta 5$ are the coefficients for each independent variable
ϵ is the error term.

The regression analysis results are summarized below:

Variable	Coefficient (β)	t-value	p-value	Significance
Intercept (β)	1.23	5.21	<0.001	Significant
Improve Operational Efficiency	0.48	17.92	<0.001	Significant
Reduce Operational Costs	0.36	6.87	<0.001	Significant
Enhance stakeholders satisfaction	0.33	6.01	<0.001	Significant
Reduction in Clearance Times	0.42	8.89	<0.001	Significant
Labor Cost Savings	0.29	5.69	<0.001	Significant

Intercept (β0): The intercept value of 1.23 indicates the baseline level of trade efficiency when all independent variables are zero. This value is statistically significant ($p < 0.001$). The coefficient (β1) of 0.48 shows a strong positive impact on trade efficiency. For each unit increase in operational efficiency, trade efficiency increases by 0.48 units. The high t-value (17.92) and significant p-value (<0.001) confirm this result. The coefficient (β2) of 0.36 indicates a positive relationship with trade efficiency. A unit increase in cost reduction results in a 0.36 unit increase in trade efficiency. The statistical significance is supported by a t-value of 6.87 and a p-value of <0.001. With a coefficient (β3) of 0.33, this variable positively affects trade efficiency. An increase in stakeholder satisfaction leads to a 0.33 unit increase in trade efficiency. The t-value (6.01) and p-value (<0.001) confirm the significance. The coefficient (β4) of 0.42 indicates that faster clearance times significantly enhance trade efficiency, with each unit reduction in clearance time resulting in a 0.42 unit increase in trade efficiency. This is supported by a high t-value (8.89) and a significant p-value (<0.001). The coefficient (β5) of 0.29 suggests a positive impact on trade efficiency, with each unit increase in labor cost savings leading to a 0.29 unit increase in trade efficiency. The statistical significance is confirmed by a t-value of 5.69 and a p-value of <0.001.

The linear regression analysis demonstrates that automated customs clearance systems significantly enhance trade efficiency at Dar es Salaam port. All independent variables operational efficiency, cost reduction, stakeholder satisfaction, clearance times, and labor cost savings positively contribute to trade efficiency, with statistical significance confirmed across all metrics. The findings highlight the critical importance of investing in and continuously improving automated customs systems to sustain and further enhance trade efficiency. Addressing challenges such as technological infrastructure, regulatory complexity, and stakeholder coordination is essential to maximize the benefits of automation in customs clearance.

5.0 Conclusion

The findings from this study clearly demonstrate that the implementation of automated customs clearance systems has significantly improved the performance of Dar es Salaam port. The majority of respondents acknowledged substantial improvements in key areas, including operational efficiency, cost reduction, stakeholder satisfaction, and clearance times. These positive impacts highlight the crucial role automation plays in streamlining customs processes, thereby enhancing cargo flow, reducing congestion, and improving overall port productivity. The consensus among respondents aligns with previous research, affirming that automated systems are instrumental in

achieving efficient port operations by minimizing manual interventions, reducing errors, and enhancing workflow efficiency. However, it is important to note that despite the overwhelmingly positive feedback, a small percentage of respondents expressed concerns or dissatisfaction, indicating that challenges persist in fully optimizing the automated systems. This underscores the need for ongoing improvements, stakeholder engagement, and user training to ensure that the benefits of automation are maximized, and any shortcomings are addressed. The study confirms that automated customs clearance systems have a transformative impact on the operational efficiency and performance of Dar es Salaam port, offering tangible benefits in terms of reduced operational costs, improved clearance times, and increased stakeholder satisfaction. To maintain and build upon these gains, it is essential for port authorities to continue investing in technology upgrades, addressing challenges, and fostering collaboration among stakeholders to ensure that the port remains competitive and efficient in the rapidly evolving global trade.

5.1 Recommendation

To invest in technological upgrades and infrastructure: To further optimize the benefits of automation, continuous investment in upgrading the technological infrastructure is essential. This includes modernizing existing systems, enhancing connectivity, and integrating advanced technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI) and blockchain. Such upgrades can enhance data accuracy, reduce errors, and speed up the clearance process, leading to even greater operational efficiency. According to Grainger (2018), investing in advanced technology is crucial for maintaining the effectiveness of automated customs systems, as it ensures that the infrastructure keeps pace with evolving trade demands and complexities.

To enhance training and capacity building: The effectiveness of automated systems depends heavily on the competence and adaptability of the workforce. Therefore, it is recommended that the port authority conduct regular training and capacity-building programs to enhance employees' skills and knowledge in operating and maintaining these systems. This recommendation aligns with the findings of De Wulf and Sokol (2021), who emphasized that ongoing training helps employees adapt to technological changes, reducing resistance to automation and ensuring optimal utilization of the system's capabilities.

To strengthen stakeholder engagement and communication: To address concerns and enhance user experiences with automated customs systems, it is vital to establish effective communication channels between the port authority and stakeholders. Regular feedback sessions, workshops, and stakeholder consultations can help identify areas for improvement and build a sense of ownership and collaboration among users. As highlighted by Arvis et al. (2019), active stakeholder engagement leads to improved transparency, predictability, and overall satisfaction, contributing to more effective customs operations.

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