

**International
Institute of
Social Studies**

Erasmus

Trade and economic growth of Sierra Leone

A Research Paper presented by:

KEMA SAM-KPAKRA

SIERRALEONE

in partial fulfilment of the requirements for obtaining the degree of
MASTER OF ARTS IN DEVELOPMENT STUDIES

Major:

**ECONOMICS FOR DEVELOPMENT
(ECD)**

Supervisor:

Natascha Wagner

Second reader:

Dr. Binyam Afewerk Demena

The Hague, The Netherlands
December 2020

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Inquiries:

International Institute of Social Studies
P.O. Box 29776
2502 LT The Hague
The Netherlands

t: +31 70 426 0460
e: info@iss.nl
w: www.iss.nl
fb: <http://www.facebook.com/iss.nl>
twitter: [@issnl](https://twitter.com/issnl)

Location:

Kortenaerkade 12
2518 AX The Hague
The Netherlands

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List of Acronyms

AGOA	African Growth and Opportunity Act
AU	African Union
ECOWAS	Economic Community Of West African States
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GoSL	Government of Sierra Leone
ILO	International Labor Organization
IMF	International Monetary Fund
MRU	Mano River Union
NEPAD	New Partnership for Africa's Development
SLIEPA	Sierra Leone Investment and Export Promotion Agency
SME	Small and Medium Enterprises
WTO	World Trade Organization

Abstract

The government of Sierra Leone through policies is charged to control trade barriers and ensure an enabling environment within which residents and private sector at large can thrive and build capacities to produce quality goods and services competitively and on sustainable basis. This study assesses the role of trade on economic growth in Sierra Leone using both primary data acquired from 15 participants' interviews and secondary data sourced from published literature ranging from 2016 to 2020. This study employs the absolute advantage, mercantilism, and comparative advantage analytical frameworks to ascertain the effects of domestic and international trade approaches on economic growth and the Sierra Leoneans in general. Results show that trade has positive effects on economic growth of the country through improved infrastructure, systems, and trade policies that have seen the economy grow from 0.8% to 1.4%, although marred with challenges. Precisely, agricultural products related trade contributes approximately 45% of the country's GDP. Consequently, the findings revealed that Sierra Leoneans have benefited through trade on job opportunities since 6.5% of working-age population are on wages with the rest involved in trade-related activities, thus directly reflecting in poverty reduction. Finally, the government and private sector are the vital drivers of trade in the country through creation of enabling environment for direct investments and value addition, and the approach of trade in regional blocs and international market. However, corruption and importation stood as huge obstacles to realizing the full potential of trade in the country. Therefore, addressing the obstacles and productively controlling import levels will boost the economic growth through trade.

Relevance to Development Studies

This research will add more knowledge on the importance of trade in improving the economic growth and how positive or negative the national and international trade approaches have impacted the Sierra Leone people, thus enabling the country to strategize better to achieve full-fledged benefits of trade. The adequate natural resources, strategic position, and reliable rainfall and land for agriculture signify that Sierra Leone is in a better position to utilize trade for sustainable economic growth. In this regard, the government and private sector need to empower the locals to venture into trade from available resources by creating clear linkages to international market and direct investments to boost local market. These incentives will provide an avenue whereby the Sierra Leoneans embrace trade on varied products that they can provide with ease due to the financial support and clear channels of marketing. Trade play a significant role for a country's economic growth and better livelihoods for citizens, but lack of empowerment from authorities can hinder realizing the advantages. The country should foster trading on goods they have comparative and absolute advantages over trading partners within which exportation will overshadow importations. These aspects will see the country realize the significance of national and international trade approaches to the economic growth and sustainability as well as improving residents' livelihoods.

Keywords

Domestic and international trade; Economic growth; Trade role; Private Sector; Sierra Leone government

Chapter 1: Introduction

Most of the developing countries understand the importance of economic activities such as trade for the sustainability. In definition, trade is the exchange of good and services among two or more parties. National trade is the exchange of the goods and services within the country while international trade involves the trade among two or more countries.

1.1. Contextual background of the topic

Trade, both national and international, is one of the sectors of the economy that should never be underestimated. Even the most developed countries such as the US, China and Japan, have greatly depended on both national and international trade for their economic growth. One of the developing African countries such as Sierra Leone, greatly relies on national and international trade for the sustainability of its economy. The country is known for its produce of Cocoa, Coffee, fishing products and minerals such as diamonds and rutile (The Heritage Foundation, 2020). Some of these products could not be beneficial in local markets. Therefore, the country's embracement of international trade and signing of economic treaties has enabled export of these minerals and farm produce, which has greatly contributed to the economy. The strategic location of Sierra Leone, its access to the world, and relationships with other countries has been the key factor in the success of its local and international trade.

As shown in the two images below, Sierra Leone is not a land locked country. It is located in the far west of Africa, borders with Atlantic Ocean and Liberia and Guinea. This means that it has a direct advantage to Air transport, road and Water. Ports such as Bonthe, Port of Pebel, Port of Freetown, Kissy Oil terminal and Sherbro, are essential in clearing of goods shipped and transported to the neighboring landlocked countries such

as Liberia, and Guinea (World Bank, 2018). In addition, Sierra Leone shipped an estimated 676.7 million US\$ worth of goods around the globe in 2019. In a country of around 8 million people and with a GDP of around 4B US\$, it is clear that trade is the backbone for economic growth.



Fig. 1. Sierra Leone location. (United Nations, 2019)



Fig. 2. Size of Sierra Leone in Africa (United Nations, 2019)

Little research has been published in regard to the aspects of trade on economic Sierra Leone economic growth. The country has a lot of under-researched information that can be explored and contribute to literature on the importance of trade. In 1961 when the country got independence from United Kingdom, the country population was around 2Million. In this regard, there was few expertise, poor infrastructural development but with a lot of natural resources and fertile land. Being located in the coastal lines of Atlantic, international trade could be conducted easily. Therefore, it is important to investigate the transition and advancement in trade, both local and international, over the years. Finally, having faced various civil unrests, and pandemics such as Ebola, the country's trade methods have faced a lot of challenges because of the overall instability. However, their strategy and approach has always enabled smooth trade and development despite these challenges.

1.2. Research problem statement

Sierra Leone is among the poorest countries in regards to masses in Africa since most working-age citizens engage in substance farming. However, the country has significant natural resources such as minerals, forestry, and fish, which brings richness through trade to the country. The government is focused on reviving the economy to sustainable heights with the agriculture and mining sectors as the backbone. Therefore, the main problem was to investigate the role of trade in terms of economic growth in one of the African countries Sierra Leone hence, propose the importance of trade towards the improvement of the economy within the country and at the same time towards people life.. In order to achieve this, one main question and three sub-questions were posed.

1.2.1. Main question

Within the Africa continent Sierra Leone is one of the significant countries that has involved in national and international trade, what is the role of its trade on the economic growth and how positive or negative do the two trade approaches (national and international) impact Sierra Leone people?

1.2.2. Sub-questions

- What is Sierra Leone foreign trade state currently?
- What is the perspective of Sierra Leone trade towards economic growth

How does the private sectors and the government involvement in enhancing to the country's trade?

1.3. overall objectives

For this research, the overall objective included involves evaluation of the impacts of trade in enhancing the economy of a country. The following research will include different implications on the role of international trade towards the local economy and at

the same time provided the disadvantages in the country's economy. In addition, the following research will also focus on analyzing the importance of private sector contribution and governmental contribution in supporting different strategies of trade within the country.

1.3.1. Main Objectives

These are the principle objectives of conducting this study:

- To understand the impacts of trade through the involvement of different sectors within the country
- To analysis the importance of Sierra Leone international trade towards economic growth
- Investigate the specific aspects that hinder the country's economic growth
- To understand the challenges enhanced by international trade and its impacts to the country's economy
- To propose different strategic actions towards the improvement of the country's economy through trade
- To create an understanding of how various sectors contribute to trade in Sierra Leone
- To look into the scope of international trade in Sierra Leone and its role in the growth of the economy

1.4. Theoretical framework

The research on the role of trade in Sierra Leone is a great case study that demonstrates various theories developed by economic scholars such as Adam Smith. The country's political, health and civil challenges that have affected trade, yet again playing a significant role, thus its economic growth creates a basis in understanding theories in their

practical application. Adam Smith's absolute advantage theory, theory of mercantilism, and theory of comparative advantage will be critical in discussing and explaining the various impacts of trade in Sierra Leone.

Absolute Advantage Theory: As presented by Adam Smith in 1776, this theory provides that there is need of the country to integrate the immediate products able to be produced with ease and efficiently putting into consideration the issue of labor. For instance, Sierra Leone is required to address only the labor sector to sale and mine the readily available minerals such as Rutile and Diamond. There is no cost of manufacturing or buying from other countries, which makes the country at absolute advantage. Embracing this theory, the research will examine how much Sierra Leone has utilized the adequate and available natural resources to foster production of goods that can compete in both international and domestic market.

Mercantilism Model: This theory suggests that it is important for countries to encourage exports while discouraging imports. The availability of natural resources such minerals and agricultural products such cocoa and coffee coupled with the strategic position of Sierra Leone gives it an advantageous edge to expand exportation. The country is substantially opened-up to international market, which should be an added advantage to maximize on the provisions of this theory. This theory is applicable in examining whether the government of Sierra Leone has encouraged exports in favor of imports through proper utilization of subsidies and taxes respectively.

Comparative Advantage Model: This theory provides that trade is beneficial for both the involved countries hence one country gains benefits due to the availability of the products while the other country suffers from the benefits of the products. For instance, Sierra Leone can trade with Botswana on diamonds if only it expands and advances on its mining industry since both nations have the minerals in vast amounts, but

trading with countries such as US and China, which do not have the commodity, gives the country a comparative advantage. In addition, trading on agricultural products such as coffee with Kenya does not realize trade benefits since both countries enjoy adequate products of the same, not unless Sierra Leone outdoes Kenya on advancements. Through giving what other countries cannot produce, Sierra Leone should source for trade partners with countries lacking in what they can produce efficiently. This study engages the theory to examine how Sierra Leone has performed in selecting trading partners.

1.5. Justification of the research

Essentially, a research is always done to provide basis for policy formulation for purposes of sustainability of humanity. Sierra Leone, being a small country, it is easy to track down the role of trade, the challenge of trade and various contributing factors of the nature of trade in the country. Further, the fact that the country is located in strategic position, which give it an advantage over landlocked countries, make it vital in understanding international trade. However, it is worth noting that despite these intriguing factors that can be essential for policy formulation, there is little research that has focused on the country as the major case study.

Most of the researchers on trade, especially in Africa focus on bigger countries such as South Africa and Nigeria, since a country of about 8 m people and a GDP of about USD\$4 b is seen as not carrying enough weight warranting research. Further, the country has abundance of natural resources that require minimal investments. It is worth carrying the research to investigate how these resources are vital in trade and the practicality of the theories learnt in class. Finally, the incidence of the occurrence of the Ebola Virus and stretches of civil unrests that crippled the political stability of Sierra Leone makes it a vital environment to investigate trading activities during such periods.

1.6. Limitations of the research

The covid-19 pandemic is the major limitation of this research. First, the number of participants to hold interviews is limited minimizing the chances of comparing information face-to-face. The same case applies to the duration one can hold meetings for interviews, which is limited challenging comprehensive examination. Finally, interviewing a person wearing a face mask limits the analysis of informal communication such as facial expressions while responding to questions.

In addition, follow-up mechanisms were challenging. Most of the participants, especially business premises owners were not conversant with using tools such as video conferencing, responding to emails, and network connection difficulties while making calls. This implied that the research focused on the sample that was familiar with using these gadgets.

1.7. Research organization

This study is divided into different chapters. The First Chapter is the introduction whereby it provides a brief background of the research topic to lay the foundation for readers to understand what the study is about in entirety, provides the research questions, and presents the justification of research topic and at the same time introduces the limitations involved in the process. Chapter two is the literature review whereby it provides the platform to add value to existing literature related to the research subject, the role of domestic and international trade in Sierra Leone, which is a broad and complex field. Chapter three is the methodology dealing with entire aspect of data collection and analysis geared at supporting the hypothesis. Chapter four is the findings and analysis, which presents the analyzed data to simplify its understanding and display its worth as guided by the research question on the role of national and international trade on Sierra Leoneans. Chapter five presents analyzed findings on what the government and private

sector have done to contribute to promoting trade. Chapter six provides the conclusion as well as the research recommendations.

Chapter 2: Literature review

While previous literatures have not focused on the impact of national and international trade in Sierra Leone, research on other areas of trade in Sierra Leone will form the basis for this study. In this regard, this chapter reflects on contemporary research in diversified angles of trade, which include current trade patterns in the country, the significance of country's strategic trade positioning, hence highlights the importance of agriculture and mining sectors in trade. Finally, the section presents the contribution of this study to published literatures as existing gap, which puts Sierra Leone into context.

2.1. Trade patterns in Sierra Leone

Sierra Leone's trading patterns can be defined through these three approaches; trading with its ex-colonizers who amass vast commonalities, involvement in trade integrations to expand trading capabilities, and empowering the local market. First, Sierra Leone, just like most African countries, collaborates with its ex-colonizers as one of the major trade partners. Having been colonized by British, the country has, over the years, developed bilateral trade agreements with United States that have significantly benefited Sierra Leone. One of the trade agreements is what has been examined by the World Trade Organization (2017), which stated that most eligible products from Sierra Leone are exported to United States duty-free unlike other countries. According to AGOA Status (N.D), the country served for United States' 161st as one of the significant product export and 141st largest supplier of import goods in 2018. One of the major factors for this success is the fact that Britain developed infrastructure that became the foundation of modern Sierra Leon. For instance, the fact that Britain used English as the official language during the colonial period left many of the African countries such as Sierra Leone with English as their official language. Communication being the key factor in trade, even private

citizens can comfortably hold business transactions with UK and its citizens with ease. They can speak, read and write in English, which makes it easier to sign binding business contracts. According to Ghani and Reed (2015), robust relationships help in mitigating transactional hazards. Therefore, the commonalities among these countries provide a platform for trade with not only UK, but also the whole of Europe.

Secondly, involvement with regional economic integration and international trading bodies are components in expanding Sierra Leone's trading capabilities. Following the recognition of the opportunities abound globally to enhance its trading position; Sierra Leone has cooperated in initiatives including regional programs such as NEPAD, ECOWAS, AU, and MRU coupled with Preferential Trade Agreements (PTA), Bilateral Agreements, World Trade Organization, EU, and South-South Cooperation (African Export-Import Bank, 2018). This pattern is meant to expand the trading capacities. Biswas (2019) states that this trade approach has seen the formulation of the country's Export within the Export and promotion Investment Agency. Its mandate is to gain all the benefits accrued through coordinating, promotion, and generation of domestic and foreign investments, and develop traditional and non-traditional exports diversification, value addition, and SME's support provision. This signifies that the pattern is offering vast opportunities for domestic trade, international markets, and new inventions for competition and relevancy, thus a crucial pattern.

Finally, empowering the local market is a trade pattern embraced by Sierra Leone. The country has prioritized agribusiness, tourism, fisheries, manufacturing, extractive, and infrastructure sectors, and support to SMEs for investment promotion and making them more convenient for sustainable and long-term growth. As WTO (2017) states, the government has granted all sectors of the economy open access to foreign investment with no exchange restrictions. This aspect is meant to attract experts from developed

economies to the country and empower the locals with skills and knowledge of diversified forms of trade. The African Export-Import Bank (2018) backs the initiative by stating that investors generally in the country enjoy import duty exemptions on equipment, machinery and plant coupled with 125% tax deduction on training expenditure. In addition, the government has established SME Development Agency that designs and implements development support programs for SMEs, and facilitate market access, business linkages, finance and other productive resources (Kanu & Conteh, 2017). These initiatives are in line with the country's policy to promote growth and development of the domestic market by creating experts, improving infrastructure, securing linkages with foreign professionals, and fostering proper utilization of the natural resources. Therefore, the government of Sierra Leone is committed to empowering the local market as a trade pattern.

2.2. Sierra Leone's strategic position significance to trade

Sierra Leone's strategic demography is vital for both domestic and international trade. Its significance in trade is defined by accessibility, capacity to attract any country worldwide, and essentiality to West African bloc. First, the country is opened up for trade due to its strategic position. According to The Centre of Sierra Leone Studies (N.D), the facilities along the coastal area play an essential role in clearing goods shipped and transported to the neighboring landlocked countries such as Liberia, and Guinea, and makes the country a center of focus due to ease of accessibility. Therefore, its strategic position is vital component of trade to landlocked countries and ease of connection with global market.

Secondly, the country can trade with any country given the accessibility and availability of substantial resources. For instance, minerals provide the majority of export earnings since they are in plenty and many countries are in dire need of them. The

Heritage Foundation (2020) estimated the total value of imports and exports to equal 74.1% of the present GDP with a 10.3 % average tariff rate applied attributed to increased exposure of the country worldwide. Further, Konteh (2019) highlighted that the country trades freely with other global countries , thus gaining considerable economic growth due to its strategic position and availability of resources. The World Bank reports that within the GDP, the trade activities carried out approximate to 57%. The ministry of industry and trade argues that Sierra Leone resources have won them trade partners that they thought were hard to approach. Therefore, availability of resources boosts the accessibility framework to gain the country trade advantages.

Finally, the position of Sierra Leone plays a pivotal role in enhancing trade in West Africa. Most of its trading partners in the region are obliged to remain in the collaboration to sustain relevancy. The Centre of Sierra Leone Studies (N.D) argues that since independence, Sierra Leone has always involved in foreign trade with many different countries such as Nigeria, Italy, Spain, China and Belgium as well as other different nations. In addition, United Nations (2019) states that the country in 2016 had a total of \$200 billion trade average with exports making the one of the significant trade portions and the main participants were from West African partners. The article continues to report that between 2005 and 2015, an increase in trade of average 18% was realized within which 86 percent of that average increase retrieved from other countries such as Ivory Coast, Ghana, Senegal and Nigeria. These literature pieces show the significance of Sierra Leone location to the West African's region trade.

2.3. The significance of agricultural trading in Sierra Leone

Agricultural activities through trade are the backbone of Sierra Leone economic growth. Through trade, agriculture sector has gained diversification, provided employment to women thus reducing poverty rates, and promoted domestic market through

value addition mechanisms (World Bank, 2018). Through the development of SLPP in the year 2018, the country has made efforts to diversify the agricultural production by empowering small-scale farmers and attracting large-scale farming investments. According to Fielding et al. (2015), agriculture accounted for 42% of Sierra Leone's GDP in 2013 pressurizing the government to prioritize fostering rural development by supporting small-scale farming commercialization while laying the framework to attract large-scale foreign investments in agriculture. The African Export-Import Bank (2018) reports that the Makeni project, estimated at about 400 million EUR, is a clear indication of expanding agricultural production. The project is the largest agricultural investment ever made in the country, estimated at being 10000 ha of sugarcane plantation. Therefore, these are among many other reasons why trade has made the country to continue acknowledging the importance of agriculture sector diversification for economic growth.

In addition, trade has offered income-generating opportunities for women through the agriculture sector. Trade has enhanced agricultural sector contribution to alleviating poverty by providing employment for women. According to FAO and ECOWAS (2018), agriculture provides 52% of women labor and income through trading activities due to persistent gender inequalities that marginalize them from equal employment across productive sectors. This literature means that through trade, women have the opportunity to engage in income-generating activities, which help to alleviate poverty given that women suffer most in this perspective across the country. Consequently, the country has embraced sizeable private agricultural projects narrated by the proponents as synergistic collaborations to increase creation of employment opportunities for rural dwellers, mainly women and uneducated youths (Palliere & Cochet, 2018). The attraction of foreign investments have resulted to putting dormant farms in good use and

motivating the local farmers to broaden agricultural productivity, thus creating employment. Therefore, agricultural production is gaining expansion to produce enough for consumption and surplus for trade, thus greatly benefiting the women as a result.

Finally, agricultural activities are the primary drivers of domestic trade. Despite a fair contribution to the export framework, the country has adequate mechanisms to foresee to completion agricultural related products value addition, unlike others such as minerals. This aspect has realized rapid increase of manufacturing industries, focused on adding value to agricultural products. The World Trade Organization (2017) reiterates that agriculture being the largest sector of Sierra Leone has seen increased contribution to the GDP through industries related to it such as the manufacturing industries and electricity supply. Similarly, agricultural-based bioenergy investments are bringing large infusions of capital, infrastructure, and technology into rural Sierra Leone whereby small-scale farming is gaining commercialization and the government attracting large-scale foreign investments (Mabey et al. 2020). For this reason, professionalism levels are expanding thus attracting more industries to the country's rural areas, which is a vital step in promoting domestic trade. Therefore, agricultural production has attracted value addition, which directly services the domestic market with high-quality goods and in adequate quantity capable of amassing vast amounts of customers.

2.4. The impact of trade on Mining industry at Sierra Leone

Trade has influenced Sierra Leone's mining sector through facilitating the upgrading of mining policies, systems and infrastructure improvement, diversification in the sector, and a fair share of command realized by the country in the global market. First, trade has facilitated the review and upgrading of mining industry related policies. Over the past decades, the contribution of the mining sector to the development of Sierra Leone remained overshadowed by the fact that operations had adverse negative effects.

The country had weak environmental policies and mine monitoring institutions failed to supervise operations. Faiyah (2020) argues that the mining industry is among the principal constituents of Sierra Leone economy by contributing to the livelihood of the nation. The lives of the residents have benefitted from diverse minerals in the country. Among the mineral mined include the gold and iron ore discovered in the late 1920s, 1930s diamond, chromite in 1937, and bauxite and rutile discovered in the 1960s (United Nations, 2019). The industry plays a major role in the country's political and economic spheres with policy upgrading being the major input initiated by trade. These policies are founded on inclusion, which contradicts customary practices of the industry benefiting the elites, thus making life easy and comfortable for thousands of residents.

Trade has seen improvement of mining systems and infrastructures to protect the environment. It has provided a platform for extracting minerals as directed by regulatory authorities in order to participate in legal business engagements. Marissa (2019) states that policies have continued to be formulated and upgrading with the latest 'Mines and Mineral Operation Regulation' of 2013 helping the country achieve the best environmental performance index ranking of 155 out of 180 countries in 2018. In addition, there has been a substantial inflow of aids from the developed nations to promote creation of strong mining mechanisms. The African Export-Import Bank (2018) reports that the main obstacles facing other countries in need of engaging within the international trades for instance Botswana, which is increasingly transforming itself into among the fastest growing economies in the region, have forced Sierra Leone to strengthen its systems to remain relevant and sustain competitiveness in the sector's trading. Therefore, trade has forced strengthening of systems in Sierra Leone's mining sector.

Trade has introduced diversification in the mining sector. Notably, the country customarily majored on diamond mining but due to trade, other minerals have been introduced to the market. Faroh (2019) argues on the presence of governmental involvement in economy reconstructing by focusing on the main obstacles its mining industry to cement its authority over the various minerals. The argument is backed by Steinweg and Römgens (2015) who argue that introduction of diverse minerals apart from diamond such as iron ore spiked the GDP by 15.2% in 2012 compared to 4.6% growth between 2008-2001. In this regard, trade has influenced the government to realize the significance of its minerals in economic growth and the need to utilize them all to gain substantial and sustainable economic growth.

Finally, trade has made the government of Sierra Leone to utilize the mining industry to command a fair share in international trade. The sector accounts for about 90% of export revenues annually in the country (Faroh, 2019). Notably, emphases have been made on the significant role played by the mineral exports in international trade since the country lacks the structures to create value addition to these products for domestic trade. According to WTO (2017), the country has introduced incentives in the sector such as full deduction of prospection and exploration activities related fees from taxable income, 40% deduction of taxable income in production costs for first timers in the first year, and 10% amortization of start-up costs. These emphases are geared at attracting expansion of the industry to ensure consistency in exports of minerals to international markets. The United Nations Economic Growth for Africa (2017) reports that the measures in place to enhance mining industry saw foreign direct investment of 2.3 trillion Leone in 2016 accounting for 9.5% of the country's GDP. However, despite the levels of investment being shaken by the country's fragility, these measures for recovery have continuously renewed investors' confidence. This shows how the mining

sector continues to command a major share in the international trade, thus a vital concern for Sierra Leone's government.

2.5. The existing gap

Sierra Leon is one of the African countries that have taken great part in national and international trade. However, there lacks literature on the role of trade on the economy and how positively or negatively the two trade approaches affect the Sierra Leonean people. In this regard, this research narrows the broader theme of trade in Sierra Leone to settle on the task of domestic and international trade on economic growth and welfare of Sierra Leoneans. This is meant to ascertain how the trade gains are distributed and whether the ordinary citizens benefits from trade. The contribution is to add value on existing literature by simplifying the understanding on how Sierra Leoneans can maximize the trade benefits to better their livelihoods and achieve sustainable economic growth. It will be achieved by highlighting the favorable connection between the public and private sectors together with the private sector and local market impacts to development and trade.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Trade is a widely researched field due to its significance role in economic growth and overall people's welfare. In this regard, this study required robust methodologies to unearth the hidden truths to add value to existing literature related to the subject topic. This chapter begins by presenting the research method used and how they fit in in the broad field. Further, it presents the research designs coupled with the methods rationale. Finally, the section provides data processing and analysis processes, and the scope of limitations encountered in the research methods.

3.1. Research methods

The research methods in this study were descriptive, empirical, qualitative, and exploratory form approaches, whereby the attempts was to gather data and information that describe the levels of trade understanding and seek to advance the knowledge. The qualitative technique explored and reflected on trade worth through residents' perceptions and authorities' attitudes. This was achieved through phone calls to selected sample of people, video conferencing with available departmental heads and workforce, and frequent visits to nearby business premises. The venture played a vital role of obtaining first-hand information as well as determining the challenges surrounding trade recognition. The empirical strategy was a value addition to qualitative approach whereby selected participants were interviewed.

In addition, the descriptive approach focused on fact-finding inquiries and surveys of diversified types by appraising numerous peer-reviewed publications. These published literatures were written between 2016 and 2020 geared at acquiring the recent findings and from prominent and competent authors. A crucial requirement was that the writers should display competency on matters governance, trade, finance, and other

fields related to the study subject. The aim was to secure the real facts of available data as it exists currently thus broadening the understanding of state of affairs. Therefore, these methods were viable in providing reliable and unique analytical data since they cover all spheres of national, individual, and community lens, thus easing the process of making critical evaluation.

However, these approaches attracted limitations worth consideration. Descriptive data entailed massive variables that were challenging to control and interpret, thus required heightened consciousness given the subject awareness was limited. Secondly, some of the selected fields to conduct interviews such as the nearby business premises lacked seriousness and participants felt not obliged to give out the correct responses, which was a big blow to the entire research. Finally, the findings attracted immense allocation of time, effort, and resources that were challenging to achieve geared at acquiring adequate data for qualitative analysis. Nevertheless, the combination of these techniques eased the acknowledging of shared values that lightened the workload of analysis, thus promising reliable and valid findings.

3.2. Research design

This research was conducted across all lifestyles putting into consideration key players in the trade field. The study was about creating awareness that expanded the knowledge focused on a phenomenon derived from how much is happening and known concerning trade in Sierra Leone. The objective was to unearth facts crucial in exploring the growing concern to investigate the importance of trade in economic growth and why Sierra Leone has not maximized on its advantageous benefits through the adequate natural resources. A cross-sectional design was employed to ensure all relevant fields were covered and explored.

This research was done in the country of Sierra Leone to support the fact-finding interviews and survey ventures geared at incorporating the results to existing data. The key players needed for interviews in the study subject-related fields, due to busy schedules, attracted the need of local research. In addition, previous literature to more contemporary publication introduced the platforms for data mining to ascertain the full fledged of this considerably emerging field. This was meant to add value to other primary and secondary data mined through appraising government portals, online video documentaries, internet websites, and respectable local newspapers and magazines. This research embraced evaluative ramifications of disciplinary theory through statistical and observational benchmarks to analyze the data and prepare a report through sampling scheme.

This research was broad thus attracting adequate time to achieve the main objective of formulating an evidence-based report surrounding trade significance in Sierra Leone's economic growth. In this regard, cluster analysis was employed to categorize certain phenomenon comprehensively in a bid to consider crucial features of previous pieces of literature and visualize classes of sources within which similar attributes of value are shared. This secured comprehensive disclosure of public and government trade applications that ensured validity and reliability of findings.

3.3. Data collection tools

The trade field is highly researched worldwide. In this regard, the data collection tools required to be valid and reliable to mine information related to the study subject. Interviews, observation, and documents and archives presented a great opportunity to unearth the unknowns to add value to existing data. Interviews provided real time information, observation guided on selection of related documents and archives, while documents and archives presented data for comparison with interview responses to acquire evidence-based resolves.

3.3.1. Interviewing

The selected sample was 15 principle stakeholders, which included 2 staffs in the Ministry of Trade and Investment, legal advisor in the Ministry of Finance, 2 officials in the Ministry of Economic Development and Planning, 1 leader and 2 secretaries to trade unions, and 7 owners of business premises. Those in the ministries were selected based on availability, duration of working in the ministry, and the level of competence in matters related to trade. Effectively developed questions were proposed with the objective of attaining the research demand. The participation sample in the research was provided within the allocated period to provide collaboration and trust.

The interview questions were structured to seek important and relevant information based on the objectives and research topic. The responses from trade union and ministry participants were encouraging when compared to the information sourced through observation, documents, and archives. However, the participants from business premises lacked adequate information, thus limited to their line of trade. In this regard, follow-up strategies, which included phone calls and emails, played a pivotal role in sourcing clarity from business owners' sample. Since it was not possible to travel all over because of the pandemic, I had to employ an assistant who was directed on the various people to meet. In this case, I was able to communicate through whatsapp call, and Phone call particularly people at the ministry among others. The video and phone call could last 5 minutes for traders and sometimes up to 20 minutes for those who had time to express themselves more. These were open ended questions so the traders can take time to give any relevant information as much as they could. Skype was used by people from the ministry of trade and trade unions because they have gadgets and mostly preferred having structured meeting in their office or at home. Video conferencing tools provided feasible feedback from the participants within the ministries. Follow-up interviews for clarification and

elaboration were done with the trade union participants because the responses were not clear and explicit enough since they contradicted each other. The research liaised with the leadership of the ministries to issue a notice to the staff about the interviews that enhanced awareness.

This tool had challenges. First, the business owners had limited information concerning many aspects of trade. They only had ideas on their line of business, which gathered minimal data. Secondly, trade unions have different objects and goals from each other. In this regard, the participants from this department seemed to champion their agendas, drifting somehow away from the main points. Finally, the sample from the ministries had tight schedules. It was time consuming since in a few occasions we had to reschedule the interviews and required heightened patience.

In general:

- Since it was not possible to find all these people in the same day, the interview lasted over a month, where a lot of time was consumed in booking appointments
- The response rate was 85%. However, all those who accepted to respond were committed to responding the entire questionnaire
- Almost 80% of the questions were responded to by the sampled participants
- Only 11 interviewees completed the entire questionnaire

Challenges

- ❖ Most interviewees concentrated on their line of business and interest thus shifting a little away from the core objective
- ❖ Some interviewees had poor network connection making clarity challenging

3.3.2. Observation

Because of the pandemic situation, it was not possible to physically travel to various places. However, holding virtual meeting was helpful. Using various support from some of the individual who were helpful in meeting individuals and then enabling me to ask questions virtually played a significant role in coming up with primary data.

This was particularly local traders whose information was vital in making critical deductions for the research paper. People from the ministry of trade created time for the virtual meetings.

3.3.3. Archives and documentaries and procedures for the choice

Some of the primary sources include your tube videos of speeches by the important personalities in each sectors of the ministry of trade and other stakeholders. For instance the parliamentary presentation of the 2021 budget by Jacob Jusu Saffa, the Minister of Finance In sierra Leone emphasizes so much on the significant of trade. This is a youtube material in the link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ViK12jC920g> presented by the SN Radio. The procedure of choice of such primary sources basically focuses on the credibility of the material. The materials have to be credible and personality has to be carrying out the role not as an individual but in his/her capacity of the office he/she represents.

The archive materials such as from the world bank that demonstrates Sierra leones trade modernization is another primary source that is credible and provide essential information on the impact of trade in Sierra Leone.

The secondary data was also utilized and included reports, electronic articles essays, journal articles, books and any other written materials. These supplemented to official documents in government portals since in many occasions proved inaccessible or with limited information. This literature attracted heavy reliance on locally but respected publications. The idea was in line with incorporating diversified methodological approaches to deepen the research findings. The local, respected, and easily accessible sources included;

1. African Export-Import Bank reports
2. Annual trade policy review documents

3. World Bank group reports on African development initiatives identification
4. World Trade organization reports
5. International Labor Organization reports
6. 50 subject related books, journal articles, essays, and reports

3.4. Research methodology rationale

In this type of study, combined methodology approaches were vital. This research employed numerous and valid empirical models of research as well as qualitative and quantitative techniques of collecting data. The combination of the methods and techniques supported the validity and reliability of the findings. The strongholds of this research were;

- The research employed primary data with crucial aim from the stakeholder's interviews. The questions were open-ended, which allowed the respondents to provide More information.

The developed secondary data include the use of electronic and publicized materials from different researchers and scholars concerning the topic of the research study.

The use of the keyword research was also significant a sit assisted in collecting the most significant and up to date information

3.5. Data analysis procedure and ethical issues

The Data gathered was formulary analyzed by utilizing descriptive statistics for instance frequency percentages and distribution. The Questionnaire provided in the appendix 1 were categorized and grouped in accordance to the population of the research. Report findings, discussion and qualitative descriptions provided significant information in data presentation. Both the qualitative analysis and statistical analysis were provided in data interpretation in percentages and numbers. The Tables summarized the questionnaire responses. The research questions and objectives provided guidance on the findings of

the reports since all the research h questions and objectives created an analysis section in sequence

Ethical issues include confidentiality of data and personal information in regard to interviewees. Most of them did not want to be featured on such public media TV or youtube documentary and that if their information was to be used, they ensured that their names are not mentioned. For security purposes, they recommended that their responses not to be recorded but then notes can be taken without their voices being recorded. They also requested that their real names should not be recorded, and no photos should be taken. Those in the ministry had the fear that such some of this information can jeopardize their jobs. Therefore, I had to ensure that they were confident and assured that their personal information will not be shared.

Chapter 4: Analysis and Findings

This chapter will present the findings derived from analyzing data collected from previous chapter literature as guided by the research questions. A sample of 15 interviewees presented their thoughts as guided by the questionnaire as shown in appendix 1. As broadly provided in appendix 2, approximately 50 peer-reviewed articles were appraised to secure data coupled with several other secondary data sources. The results are analyzed and discussed under broader themes of the role of national and international trade on Sierra Leoneans, current state of foreign trade, and the role of trade in general economic growth of Sierra Leone.

4.1. The role of national and international trade on Sierra Leoneans

Sierra Leone has been striving for long with political instability due to civil unrest that affected almost all spheres of economic growth; especially trade either internally or externally. Notably, no business or investment can thrive in unstable micro economy. However, the return of democratically elected government in Sierra Leone has witnessed emergence of businesses and companies that are either state owned or private, thus promoting trade. Therefore, the Sierra Leoneans have realized the benefits of trade in the roles of poverty reduction, creation of employment, improved infrastructure and structures, and expanded variety of goods and services for both consumption and trade. However, these trade approaches have also given rise to negative influences.

4.1.1. Poverty reduction

At the end of the ten-year conflict in the country in 2001, Sierra Leone had approximately five and half million population whom more than a third were displaced or made refugees and currently harbors approximately seven million people (Leone, 2019).

According to Waites-Howard (2018), freed slaves released from slavery due to their loyalty to Great Britain established the country; their independence was realized in 1961 with a population of about two million people, an extremely poor country in West Africa, and among least developed countries worldwide. These incidences highlight how the country has had massive rates of poverty and unemployment given that mechanisms and resources were scarce. Nearly half of the working-age population participated in subsistence farming and more than sixty percent of Sierra Leoneans lived on less than \$1.25 per day since the climate changes brought about thunderstorms, heat waves, altered rainfall patterns, landslides, and floods that directly influence agricultural productions (World Bank Reports, 2018).

However, the peaceful transition of power registered change of trends. The government embarked on expanding mining industry and encouraging large-scale farming to promote export indices geared at curbing poverty as advocated by the mercantilism theory. In this regard, majority of the residents presently are engaged in various spheres of trade such as fishing, manufacturing, mining, self-employment business ventures, and forestry related production, which has positively influenced poverty reduction. Notably, 6.5% of the working age populations are involved in wage employment while the rest are active in trading activities (Menzel, 2016). The following diagrams from ILO, in reference to IMF statistics in Sierra Leone, reveals that poverty has declined in rural areas from 2003 to 2011 due to political stability that promoted trade with agriculture and self-employment sectors being the dominant drivers.

Fig.3. Poverty headcount (2003 and 2011): Source- ILO

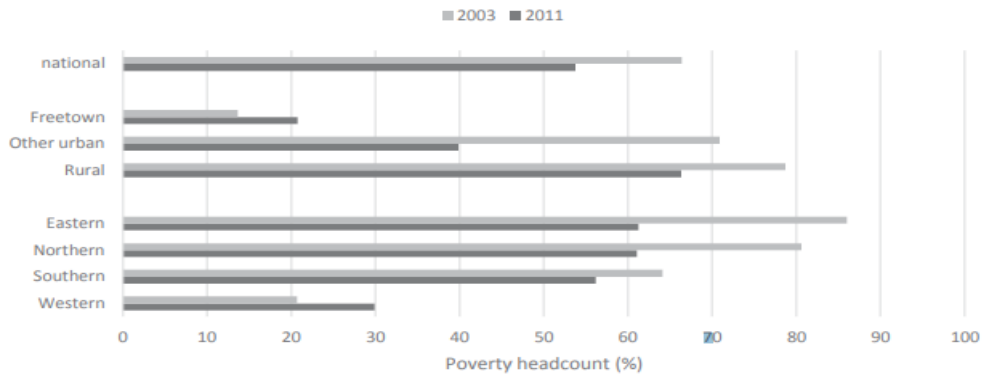
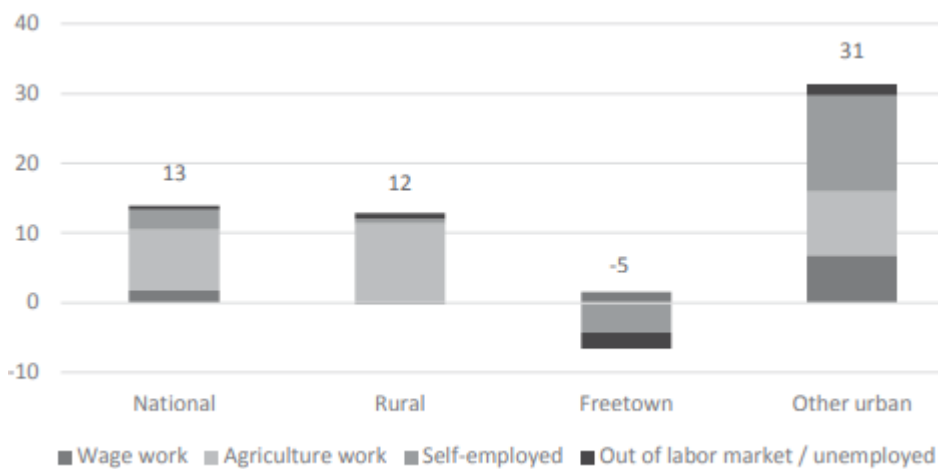


Fig.4. Trade related sectorial contribution to poverty reduction: source-ILO



The above diagrams clearly show that wage employment and urban areas respectively have registered the lowest aspects in reducing poverty. This is attributed to the fact that urban dwellers rely greatly on wage employment whereby the pay is inadequate. Agriculture and self-employment sectors, since majority of residents live in rural areas where there is land abundance, are leading in poverty declination. Arguably, these activities are directly linked to income generating sources, which logically points to trade. Therefore, shifting from wage employment and embracing agriculture and self-employment, which directly reflect in trade, shows how the residents have benefited from the sector.

Similarly, a key interviewee in the nearby business premise revealed that the residents in the community he came from lived in poverty when residents relied on subsistence farming for survival. However, after the realization that trade involved various continuums, many families have opened up businesses dealing with diversified goods ranging

from farming production to other fields such as animal rearing and selling of products, fishing, and forestry related products. He reiterated:

“I opened my business after selling few trees to a company that wanted to secure timber for construction. I was paid well so I ventured in a business that gives me enough to feed my family. Many of my neighbors are flowing in the market with different business ventures and poverty is rapidly declining in the society. (Pointing to the next shop) Even that friend of mine sold a piece of land to open the shop. The residents are taking these ventures seriously to substitute farming.”

Increased participation in trade coincides with an equally sharp decline in extreme poverty (World Bank, 2018). Arguably, trade in this country has driven productivity increases whereby residents are guaranteed of an income generating opportunities through selling their produces, thus stimulating economic growth. At the heart of Sierra Leone government, the focus has been to ensure creation of an environment where local business can thrive (World Bank, 2019). This act has lead to a reduction in poverty of the country by reducing the number of dependents in family for over half.

4.1.2. Employment creation

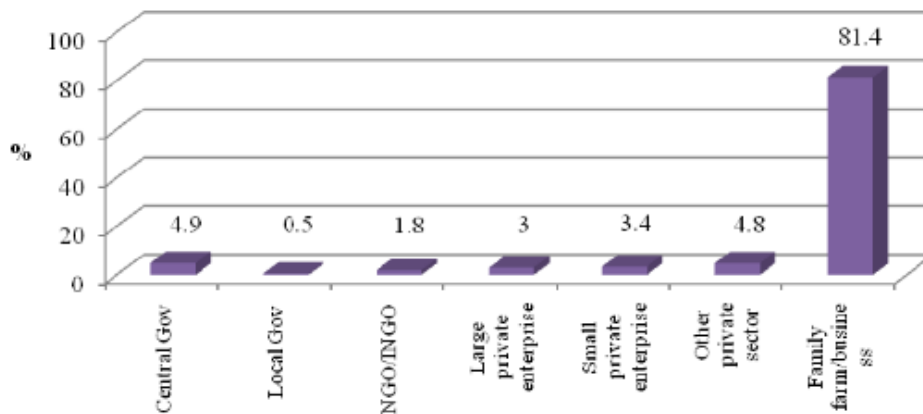
The activities of trade have shown a promise to Sierra Leone’s economic growth. In this regard, the government has improved infrastructure, structures, and systems to enhance trade, which has seen the rise of companies, firms, industries, business premises, and expansion of mining and agriculture systems as shown by the 2021 budget presentation by the minister of finance (SN Radio, 2020). These enhancements have positively benefitting the residents through creating job opportunities. A trade union secretary revealed that Sierra Leone has limited white-collar jobs and those available benefit only a few due to high rates of corruption. Further, an analysis of interviewees’ responses from the ministry of finance, and economic development and planning, the rise of companies have seen the realization of better economic development and human

resource utilization coupled with increased employment opportunities especially through increased need for efficiency and effectiveness to remain competitive and relevant. In addition, interviews with staff in the ministry of trade and investment revealed that Sierra Leone is blessed with natural endowments such as diamond, rutile, iron ore, bauxite, and gold that have become main sources of income for many Sierra Leoneans. A staff from the Ministry of Trade and Investment reiterated:

“Many people are flowing into the Ministry for licenses to open up companies and other business ventures. These ventures have massively created job opportunities since most of the youth are not roaming the urban centers as witnessed before. You find a business with 10 employees and companies with over a 100. Most of these businesses are involved in trade materials. Those engaging in exporting employ around 300 people. Trade has really created employment for the public.”

Consequently, the mining sector coupled with agriculture has attracted many international investments that support the livelihoods of Sierra Leone residents (Abubakarr & Gluschenko, 2018). Mining and agricultural sector, which are the main promoters of trade, have seen increased involvement by the Sierra Leoneans who are searching for income sources. The Makeni project that occupies approximately 10000 ha has employed hundreds of Sierra Leones as the government pushes to produce sugarcane adequate for domestic use and exports (Lebbe & Denis, 2016). Fig.5 from World Bank documents and reports clearly supports the literature from this research finding that trade has created job opportunities for Sierra Leoneans by showing that the residents are presently more involved in family or individual businesses in comparison to other sectors, which are driven by the embrace of trade.

Fig.5. Employment distribution by sector in Sierra Leone: Source-World Bank documents and reports



This figure shows how dominant it is becoming for family businesses that are eager to achieve full benefits of trade. Notably, people can argue the aspect is pushed by lack of white-collar jobs but logically, no one enters into a business without the clients. It is clear trade is gaining acceptance in the country and many have realized its worth as an income generator.

An interviewee from the Ministry of Economic Development and Planning stated:

“Mining and agricultural sectors have massively absorbed the jobless youth in this country after advancements. Most of the land that was dormant has been occupied by large scale farming firms, for instance the Makeni project, which employ many youths. Although policies require harmonizing to cater for their wage and salary requirements, most of them now can walk with their heads high since they have a source of income. Similarly, mining was predominantly focused on diamond. However, right now there is diversification to include other minerals, which expand job opportunities. Overall, mining and agriculture has really created immense job opportunities for the residents.”

Therefore, trade has helped increase the number and quality of jobs in the country, with the residents mainly poor and vulnerable reaping the benefits since most have minimal educational qualifications to land them into the few available white-collar jobs.

4.1.3. Improved infrastructure and structures

The need for enhanced trade to promote economic growth in Sierra Leone has pressurized the government to improve infrastructure, systems, and structures destroyed during the civil unrest and Ebola outbreak. The transport sector has realized improved systems of roads, harbor, airports, and railways that directly benefit the citizens. The issue of infrastructure has received nation-based investments that further unifies the country by penetrating the interior with essential services, and unlock the pockets of productivity (Barrie, 2020). An interviewee from the business premises highlighted:

“Presently, distributing orders to my customers who buy in bulk has become easy due to improved roads. I can now penetrate the interiors also to source for customers and my five drivers never fail to deliver due to bad roads on unfavorable weather. Similarly, it is easy to access regions where I get my materials for trade. In fact, the government is focused on promoting infrastructure development that eases the ways of trade. At the end, the residents benefit because taking people to hospitals, children to school, or travelling to seminars has been made easy.”

Therefore, the numerous challenges related to poor infrastructures and structures are being addressed due to increased acceptance to maximize on the benefits of trade for wider economic gains.

Consequently, the endeavor of developing structures has seen the government of Sierra Leone diligently modernize the public financial management and revenue mobilization systems geared at improving the delivery of basic government essentials. According to Leone (2019), the infrastructure, systems, and structures put in place due to trade that have affected positively the Sierra Leoneans, which have witnessed great transformation include;

- ✚ The road network of approximately 11550 km is refurbished
- ✚ Electrification ratio has shifted from 10% by 2009 to 50% recently due to completion of Bumbuna 1 & 2 hydro-power facility

- ✚ Telecommunication services has expanded to 50% of the country's population, growth to double digits in internet connection, and exceedingly declining rates of service costs
- ✚ International airport installation in the capital
- ✚ The largest and deepest harbor networks in West Africa.

All these infrastructures influence positively the Sierra Leoneans in one way or the other. Consequently, all of them have an impact in trade. In this regard, it is logical to state that the transformations are influenced greatly by trade and directly benefits the residents.

4.1.4. Variety of products and goods for trade

Sierra Leoneans have through the need to trade benefitted with varied products and goods. The customary practices involving subsistence farming and illegal mining of diamond have been substituted with honest business deals. The capital goods for trade in this country currently have expanded to include agricultural products such as cash crops and fish, minerals such as diamond, rutile, gold, and bauxite, and manufactured goods (Omolade, Fawehinmi, & Keji, 2019). According to Waites-Howard (2018), agricultural products account for 45% of the country's GDP coupled with 65% of labor force employment and cattle, sheep, poultry, and pig products, fish, coffee, palm kernels and oil, rice, peanuts, and cocoa forming the bulk of agriculture related trading capital goods. In addition, industrial related capital goods include iron ore, bauxite, diamond, and rutile mining coupled with manufacturing products such as textiles, footwear, beverages, and cigarettes (Kanu & Conteh, 2017). All these have been realized through the efforts of government to promote trade resulting to vast benefits on the residents.

An interview with a secretary of a trade union registered:

“Trade unions are increasing in the country due to diversification of goods and services.

Residents predominantly were constrained to limited products. With the acceptance of trade as

a driver to economic growth in the country, residents now enjoy a wide variety of products associated with expansion of manufacturing industries and agricultural production. The country's trading partners also export diversified goods in a bid to import our minerals, which are in plenty after the expansion of the mining sector. Almost the essential items for households are now available in the country."

Precisely, the residents have the pleasure of making choices concerning goods and services on offer, thus a great benefit from trading activities.

4.1.5. Negative influence

Trading activities have also witnessed a downside to the residents as revealed by the findings. Arguably, trading through mining sector has not realized its full potential to affect adequately the citizens of Sierra Leone. According to Jalloh et al. (2017), benefits from the mining sector end up at the hands of private companies and few officials employing corrupt means other than the citizens and the government in this country. This literature was associated to multiple civil wars witnessed in the country by interviewees, which fostered the resolution that trading has not fully influenced the country at large. A leader of a trade union highlighted that, incidences of corruptions from government officials, firm owners, to employees of mining companies are on the rise challenging the full realization of their benefits. This is the reason many participants had limited information on the significance of international trade. Figure 6 from the World Bank Group ranks corruption as the fourth obstacles towards many business and companies. .

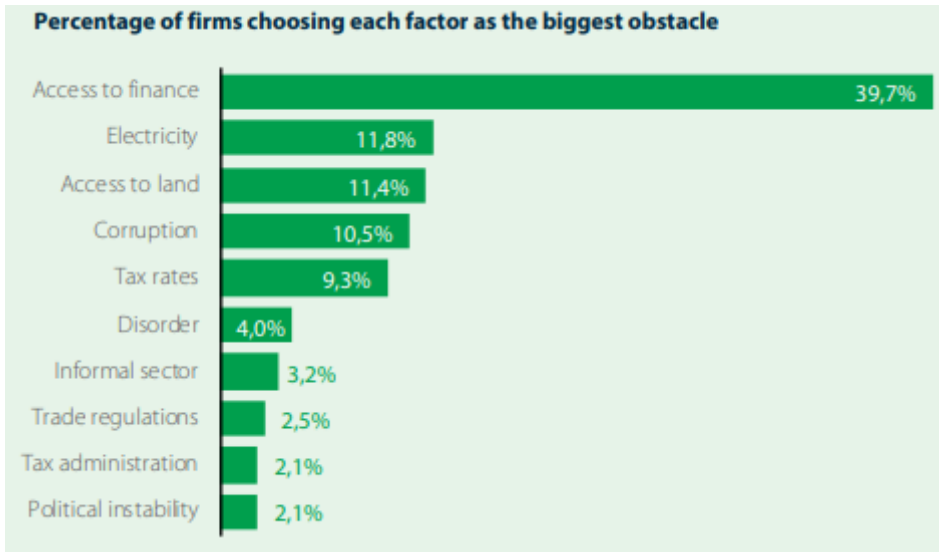


Fig.6. the overall percentage of biggest obstacles to companies: Source-World Bank

The staff from the Ministry of Trade and Investment revealed that international trade has provided ready market for the various goods produced in the country. This has been made possible by getting involved in the regional economic blocs that foster trade within and outside its member states. However, a number of respondents did not fully understand the benefits of regional economic integration involving their government and international trade. The participants argued that domestic trade was more beneficial to them than international trade. A diagram sourced from Sierra Leone EESE survey by ILO (2019) highlights mixed reactions from the public concerning the significance of regional economic integration for economic growth of their country and their benefits through trade in the bloc across various sectors.

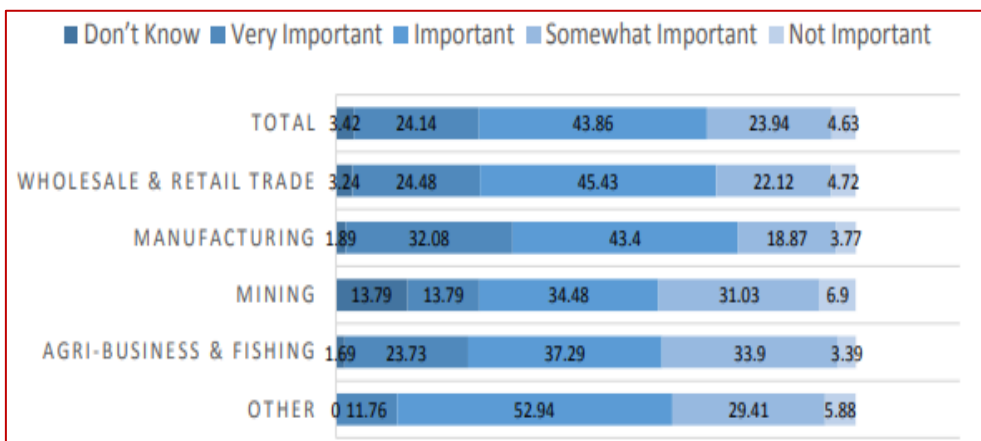


Fig.7. Sectorial public perceptions on international trade influence. Source-ILO

4.2. Current state of foreign trade in Sierra Leone

The current trade environment continues to improve because of organizational reforms and advances in human development and governance. The need for enhanced foreign trade has seen Sierra Leone expand its mining sector to boost its export demands. The country's exports have diversified to include several sectors such as mining, agriculture, forestry, and fisheries products. According to Tralac Secretariat (2017), Sierra Leone's foreign trade enjoys support from its eligibility to preferences granted by EU under "Everything But Arms Initiative, the African Growth and Opportunity Act" serviced by the US, and the benefits from unilateral trade preferences granted by majority of developed countries. An interviewee from the Ministry of Trade and Investment stated that Sierra Leone is a founding member of ECOWAS and Mano River Union whereby the blocs have substantially influenced for better the foreign trade. This country exports in bulk minerals, metals, and agricultural products and imports transportation equipment, machinery, and chemicals from their foreign trading partners (Brima & Yulin, 2016). Therefore, the foreign trade in the country remains stable but with more demands for improvement, especially on the challenges of corruption,

A comparative advantage analysis revealed that except for agricultural production that has mixed reactions, the government is focused on streamlining mechanisms to produce goods, which guarantee absolute advantages over their trading partners. On agriculture, there are more challenges, which require hastened address to reduce imports and increase exports. The government is required to settle the obstacles associated with manufacturing sector for value addition of these agricultural products. This understanding registers that the products, which can be produced with ease and efficiently mainly on agriculture, have not realized adequate attention from the government.

Nevertheless, the country's undertaking on maximizing exports over importation shows that the country is focused on proper utilization of its available resources to benefit from foreign trade. Therefore, the current state of foreign trade in the country is that with opportunities to improve and has created avenues for the country and citizens to enjoy the fruits of trade.

4.3. The role of trade in general economic growth

Sierra Leone had an apparently stable political system and economic growth that promoted trade at independence in 1961. The accounts of formal collapse of the republic generally date from March 1991 whereby conflict erupted disrupting all sectors and spheres of trade (Leone. 2019). Many residents were displaced while others turned into refugees hindering their entire wellbeing. In this regard, businesses were altered and trading stood at stand still leading to the country becoming one among the poorest in West Africa and least developed worldwide. However, after the signing of a peace agreement, the government had to focus on reviving the economy and trade was a significant feature in the entire phenomenon. Therefore, this research revealed that the role of trade on Sierra Leone's general economic growth for ease of understanding can be classified into; improved infrastructure and mechanisms, enhanced trade policies, and expanded mining and agricultural production.

4.3.1. Improved infrastructure and mechanisms

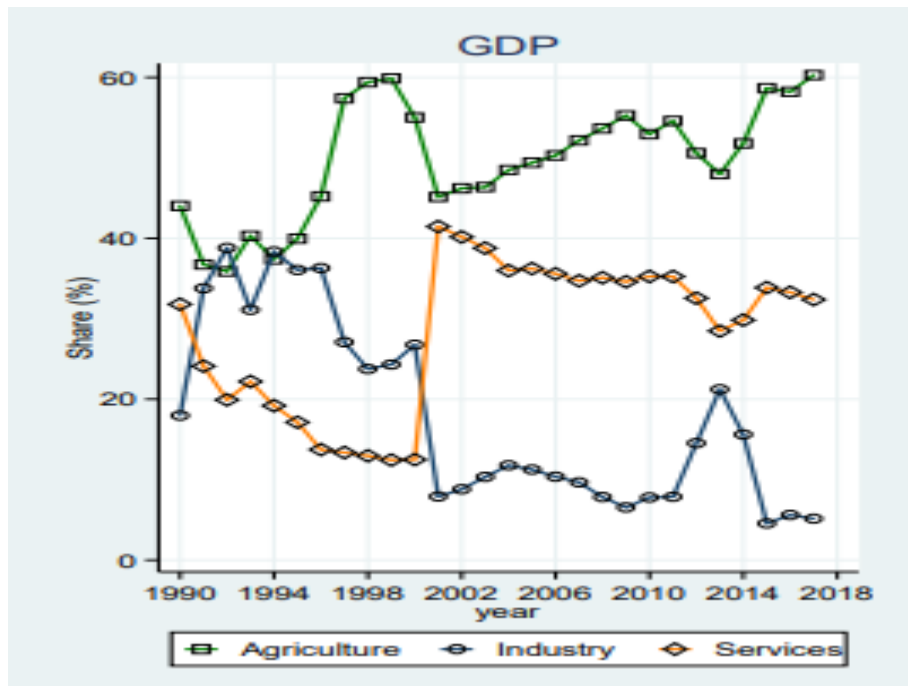
Sierra Leone has been working to stimulate economic growth following the civil unrest and Ebola outbreak that disrupted the entire infrastructure and mechanisms. Trade policies are more effective in organized systems despite the fact that trade can go on even in broken systems. According to the Ministry of Trade and Investment staff interviews:

“The economic growth has steadily gone up after the government focused of enhancing trade as a major feature. This has pressurized the government to improve infrastructure and

mechanisms to command a fair share of the international market. The need to make it easy to transport goods requires good roads, airports, and ports. That pressure I can say has contributed massively to the improved infrastructures and systems seen in the country. A good example is the Wellington-Masiaka toll road that promises safe, quick, and easy travel and transportation of products. Many sectors related to trade now have a considerable share of GDP that is a great sign to economic prosperity.”

Notably, these sectors cannot function adequately without proper infrastructure and mechanisms. The following figure 8 from Centre of Sierra Leone Studies support the literature by showing how trade related sectors have grown to boost economic growth through their respective share of GDP in the country of Sierra Leone.

Fig.8. Sectorial share to Sierra Leone’s GDP due to improved mechanisms: Source-
Centre of Sierra Leone Studies



4.3.2. Improved trade policies

After successfully conducting over two successive peaceful elections, Sierra Leone continues to show progress through reviewing and upgrading policies. The major aspiration of the country is to reach middle level income and a donor nation with extreme

poverty eradication and broadened trade networks by 2035 (WTO, 2017). In this regard, the policies in place are aimed at having a stable export-led economy. Arguably, the present developments of policies in the mining and agricultural sectors have made the economy mark double-digits growth despite difficult global economic climate. Precisely, excluding iron ore mining that collapsed due to the Ebola epidemic in 2014, the economy grew by 1.4% from 0.8% in the same year due to policies of gradual recovery in agriculture and service sectors (World Bank, 2018). In addition, the rice production doubled over two million tons between 2006 and 2012 attributed to upgrading of policies geared towards increased productivity and extended cultivation area (WTO, 2017). These policies that are promoting diversification have been facilitated by the need to foster trade for economic growth. Further, according to an interview with the staff from the Ministry of Economic Development and Planning:

“Trade is a significant feature for economic growth but in Sierra Leone, policies are not designed to generate growth by incorporating trade development policies. However, the government is focused on harmonizing trade policies to make them favorable for both large and small-scale traders. This does not mean the existing ones are pressuring since they have received extensive upgrading but there is room for improvement to achieve sustainable economic growth through trade.”

In addition, according to an interviewee from the Ministry of Trade and investment:

“Sierra Leone has rich and diverse natural resources with agriculture, forestry, and mining sectors not fully harnessed to drive the economy into higher levels of growth despite being important for trade. Nevertheless, upgrading trade policies will guarantee realizing the full potential of trade in economic growth. Existing policies have received upgrading and the government continues to review them to expand their favorability.”

Fortunately, economic growth in Sierra Leone has witnessed remarkable growth after the government and citizens realized that trade was central to the entire phenomenon. The residents are increasingly participating in trade to better their welfare that directly reflects in economic growth through poverty reduction and job creation. This is after trade made it possible for formulation of policies that favors all geared at broadening and hastening economic growth. Therefore, trade has facilitated upgrading of policies to favor many in a bid to achieve economic growth.

4.3.3. Expanded mining and agricultural production

The country's economic growth is driven by mining and agricultural sectors. In 2012, the agricultural sector contribution to the country's GDP exceeded 50% but declined later to 42% due to the boost emanating from expanded mining sector (WTO, 2017). The agriculture sector has been broadened and includes farming of cassava, rice, and sugarcane among others with the government providing farmers with processing equipment and improved planting materials. Fig.9 shows agricultural expansion from 2006-2013 due to elevated trade requirements and the need to grow the economy of Sierra Leone.

Fig.9. Expansion of agricultural sector: Source-WTO

Crop	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Food crops ('000 metric tonnes)								
Paddy	552.0	562.0	588.0	680.1	888.4	1,026.7	1,037.7	
Maize	16.2	20.3	22.9	23.5	44.5	51.4	53.2	..
Cassava	1,120.6	1,456.8	1,893.9	1,988.6	2,818.6	3,250.0	6,261.2	..
Sweet potatoes	99.9	104.9	110.2	113.5	177.0	206.2	392.0	..
Pulses	48.0	52.0	58.0	59.0	70.0	82.0	81.0	..
Cash crops ('000 metric tonnes)								
Cocoa	30.9	35.5	40.9	93.1	107.1	112.5
Coffee	76.9	88.4	101.7	116.9	134.7	141.4
Oil palm	1.6	1.6	1.9	2.9	3.4	3.6
Livestock ('000 heads)								
Cattle	271.3	325.5	390.6	470	517	568.7	625.6	688.1
Sheep	326.7	392	470.4	620	682	750.2	825.2	907.7
Goats	382.1	458.5	550.2	730	803	883.3	971.6	1,068.8
Chicken	4,161.8	5,202.3	6,502.9	8,600	9,460	10,406	11,446.8	12,591.3
Ducks	389.1	486.4	608	729.6	802.5	882.8	971	1,068.1
Rabbit	5.9	7.4	9.2	11.1	12.2	13.4	14.8	16.2
Pigs	23.0	28.7	35.9	43.1	47.4	52.1	57.3	63.0

The mining sector customarily depended on diamond. Fortunately, due to trade, it has been broadened to incorporate iron ore, gold, oil, gas, bauxite, and rutile among others

thus accounting for about 90% of export revenues annually in the country presently (World Bank, 2018). The country was ranked 10th as largest producer of diamond in volume and 3rd in rutile in 2010 (Brima & Sesay, 2017). Notably, the effects of trade have forced the government to explore all spheres to create an export-led economic growth. There are continued prospects that the country can be an oil producer through the investments involved in nine open offshore petroleum exploration block permits ongoing (James & Mamakhatov, 2017). Fig.10 shows how the mining sector is expanding in production and exports.

Fig.10. Mineral production and export: Source-World Bank

Mineral	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Production (volume)						
Diamond ('000 carats)	400.4	437.6	376.5	532.9	612.4	593.6
Bauxite ('000 tonnes)	742.8	1,089.1	1,457.5	734.5	654.1	1,178.6
Rutile ('000 tonnes)	63.9	68.2	68.0	94.5	122.1	115.1
Zircon ('000 tonnes)	0.0	0.0	7.1	22.5	128.3	2.4
Ilmenite ('000 tonnes)	15.2	18.2	14.7	21.4	32.5	35.8
Gold (ounces)	5,356	8,690	5,284	4,345	3,099	1,396
Iron ore ('000)	0.0	0.0	137.9	967.9	7,482.2	17,497.6
Exports (million US\$)						
Diamond	78.3	113.5	129.8	161.7	185.7	..
Bauxite	18.7	31.1	39.0	17.1	13.8	..
Rutile	35.9	40.6	34.4	171.7	129.6	..
Ilmenite	0.9	2.7	4.4	3.8	2.9	..
Gold	4.8	9.3	7.3	5.7	3.7	..
Iron ore	0.0	0.0	..	357.0	1,064.4	..

This two figures above show how agriculture and mining sectors have gained expansion as the government continues to champion for a trade-led economic growth. According to a staff from the Ministry of Trade and Investment:

“Diamond was previously the main mineral export product but that has expanded to incorporate rutile, gold, bauxite, and other minerals coupled with a significant maritime fishery, tourism industry, and improved agricultural production due to ample rainfall and land.”

Majority of the working population is massively engaged in agriculture that bolsters trade. Norman et al. (2018) argue that the share of agriculture, which includes fishing, hunting, farming, and forestry in trade, is increasing daily thus cementing the importance of trade in economic growth of the country. In addition, the government is encouraging and promoting manufacturing sector development that previously was undermined. In this

regard, trade is positively influencing economic growth in the country since more attention is currently focused on encouraging value addition and diversification to the mining, forestry, manufacturing, fishing, and agriculture sectors. Figure 11 shows increased exports attributed to the literature.

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Exports Total (Goods)	1542.6	1304.4	581.4	669.9	677.3
Exports Merchandise	1542.6	1304.4	581.4	669.9	677.3
O/w Mineral	1414.4	1108	380.3	473.1	421.4
Agriculture	11.8	28.4	20.5	21.5	30.9
Fishery	0.30	1.20	4.16	5.04	9.60
Reexports	24.70	61.89	24.50	4.75	5.40
Others	91.4	104.9	151.9	165.5	209.989

Fig.11. Exports growth due to diversification. Source: Centre of Sierra Leone Studies

Chapter 5: Contributions of government and public sector in boosting trade

5.1. Introduction

At independence in 1961, the country's development prospects looked encouraging with effectively distinguished educational system, diversified with natural resource, abundant tourist attractions coupled with marine resources and fertile agricultural lands, and a stable inclusive democracy (World Bank Documents & Reports, 2018). Unfortunately, the country's fragility disrupted all aspects of development and revenues forcing the economy to a nearing collapse. However, the signing of the peace treaty ended the devastating phases of civil wars creating room for economic recovery strategies. Sierra Leone's economic development presently has taken shape from the country's natural and geographic resources, demography and citizens, the interaction of the two with governance, political institutions, and the private sector that have evolved since independence (Bangura, 2018). This study classified the contributions to trade of these parties into direct investments, value addition on products, improving the local market, participation in regional economic integrations, consolidating peace, and improved systems.

5.2 Direct investments

The availability of natural resources has seen direct investments from private and foreign investors that have broadened the country's involvement in the international market. The availability of minerals has attracted major companies worldwide thus marketing the country in the end. Consequently, natural resources such as rivers, large harbor, forests, and diverse varieties of maritime fishes have enhanced tourism. Therefore, these direct investments in various fields have marketed the country thus boosting trade.

The country boasts of its effective access to the deepest and largest harbors in the world and possession of different natural and renewable resources benefactions in forests, land, and fisheries (Kemokai, Jóhannesson, & Hallgrímsson, 2019). In addition, the vast majority of its land is arable and experiences adequate rainfall that has pressured the government and encouraged the private sector to makes use of these resources to foster trade. An interviewee revealed that the presence of the river basins provide high natural fertility land whereby multiple private entities have stated on its suitability for cash crop growing for trade. Consequently, its coast has different varieties of aquatic resources and fish resources coupled with different fish species of wetlands, shellfish and finfish resources that have seen private sector provide massive investments that have helped in economic growth of the country with the products the country has absolute advantage over trading partners (Payne, 2018). These shreds of evidence highlight that the private sector is actively involved in activities that boost trade in the country. Therefore, direct investment that broadens transacting spheres is a considerable effort by the two parties to boost trade.

5.3 Value addition

These two sectors are focused on encouraging value addition to the forestry, manufacturing, fishing, and agriculture sectors. According to World Bank Documents and Reports (2018), the neo-patrimonial pattern of governance used in the country to exercise power and manage the state-society relationship has seen peace and stability crucial for trade. The interplay between structural factors has developed a significant dependencies path that shapes the policy arena currently. The government continues to explore and upgrade the main opportunities for trade and economic growth founded in productive natural resource stock utilization. A business owner interviewee stated:

“The government has exceedingly continued to organize the resources available in mutually reinforcing a comprehensible approach for both trade and growth to be inclusive and

sustainable. This involves encouraging value addition on products that creates an avenue of producing diversified goods that boost trade. Their effort is bearing fruits since now I display numerous products of high quality that attract customers from all walks of life.”

A comparative advantage theory analysis reveals that the country is more focused on producing products of high quality from easily and efficiently available materials so as to have absolute advantage over their partners in trade. Arguably, the more attention accorded to mining, fishing, and agriculture in products’ value addition is in line with maximizing on exports. These products will sustain competitiveness both in the domestic and international trade arenas. Therefore, drawing from the three analytical frameworks, the country and private sector are doing everything right to maximize on their benefits through trade.

5.4. Improving the local market

The government has promoted the local market, which provides the foundation of trade through encouraging the production of varied products and improved infrastructure. Product value addition benefits the local market by promoting competitiveness that is vital for trade development. Precisely, the local market provides the foundation of testing the quality of goods produced to ascertain the level of competitiveness in external markets. Consequently, improving infrastructure to promote trade has seen increased participation of partnerships to actualize the idea. The staff from the Ministry of Trade and Investment reiterated:

“The government has entered into various public private partnerships (PPPs) with foreign countries such as China whereby Chinese firms have built roads, ports, and airports all of which enhance trade through broadened accessibility. This opens up the local market to consumers from all over the world. Local business owners now enjoy a flow of customers from other countries due to the marketing done by the government.”

Improving structures, systems, and infrastructure is a clear indication that the government is focused on enhancing the local markets. The following table shows some of infrastructural developments facilitated by PPPs between the government of Sierra Leone and Chinese companies to promote the local market as highlighted by Mansaray (2018).

2013	Mini stadium in Bo and a 100-beds hospital	SLG and PRC	8 million	only stadium built but no investigation	China Africa, 2014
2013	New airport and 250-km railway from north to the south, a deepwater port and smelting facility	PRC and SLG	8 billion	No records	Sierra Media Express, 2014
2013	14 km Wilkinson Road/ Spur Road construction	SLG and Chinese construction company	18 million	4.5 million per km but international standard price is 250,000	Nti Bhan, 2014

Fig.12. Infrastructure developments boosting local markets. Source- China's trade and investment with Africa article

5.5 Regional economic integration participation

The government has participated in regional economic integration such as ECOWAS, AU, and NEPAD that promotes trade both within its members and internationally. Due to prolonged civil unrests, Ebola epidemic, and the country's small size using the strengths on economic integrations is a vital step to boost trade. According to Bala (2017), through Sierra Leone and other member states taking comparative advantage of each other's weaknesses and strengths, the government has opened up the space that engenders specialization potentials, development of its economic scale, and reduced costs of production. A staff from the Ministry of Finance stated:

“The GoSL is focused on enhancing the bargaining power in the blocs that seems to benefit few of its member states. It is heavily involved in participation to harmonizing tariffs and the removal of trade barriers, which are vital steps in boosting trade. Importantly, this country was nearing collapse due to the lows of civil unrests and Ebola pandemic. It is a wise idea for the government to use the strengths of blocs' member states to expand the trade sector.”

Interviews with the staffs of Ministry of Trade and Investment, and Ministry of Economic Development and Planning revealed that these blocs have helped the country realize economic growth through harmonized trade requirements since the country was nearing collapse. However, some member states from the blocs the country is involved in do not adhere and implement the agreements' requirements. The staff from the Ministry of Economic Development and Planning reiterated:

“Covid-19 pandemic outbreak has slowed processes and stronger economies and developed states of the blocs might take advantage to maximize the potentials putting the lesser economies at a disadvantage.”

Further, a staff from the Ministry of Finance highlighted that some member states of blocs such as ECOWAS take advantage of others thus not implementing the provisions of the agreements. He reiterated:

“Acquisition of a common monetary currency in the blocs is an issue the government is focused on to reduce barriers they encounter as a lesser economy”.

In this regard, the government is committed in creating a strong economic base by entering into unified regional economic integrations, with support from the private sector.

5.6. Consolidating peace

Presently, the government has hastened efforts focused on addressing challenges to consolidate peace. The government has resettled the internally displaced and refugees thus creating ample time to rehabilitate the infrastructure and re-launch the economy as reported by Awareness Times and Time Magazine among others (Bangura, 2016). The main agenda is to re-establish state authority and achieve high sustainable growth and poverty reduction. A number of economic growth programs supported by several development partners such as IMF and World Bank have been enhanced in supporting the prospects of human development and growth (Vordtriede, 2019). These partners have

engaged in several collaborations of economic rehabilitation and recovery, and governance reform and growth grants and credits, with trade being the genesis of the correlation. In this regard, the government is transforming their infrastructure such as the national transportation network, which is the driving force for trade thus guaranteeing creation of a strong economic base.

The government understands that a peaceful environment boosts trade that guarantees economic prowess. Fortunately, the government efforts have shown increased exports and imports trend respectively as indicated by the diagram below from IMF statistics in Sierra Leone in correspondence with Alagoa (2018). These evidences records the government effort and focus in creating a strong economic base founded on trade due to adequate availability of natural resources such as minerals and fish

Fig.13. Sierra Leone exports of primary commodities (2018): Source-IMF Statistics

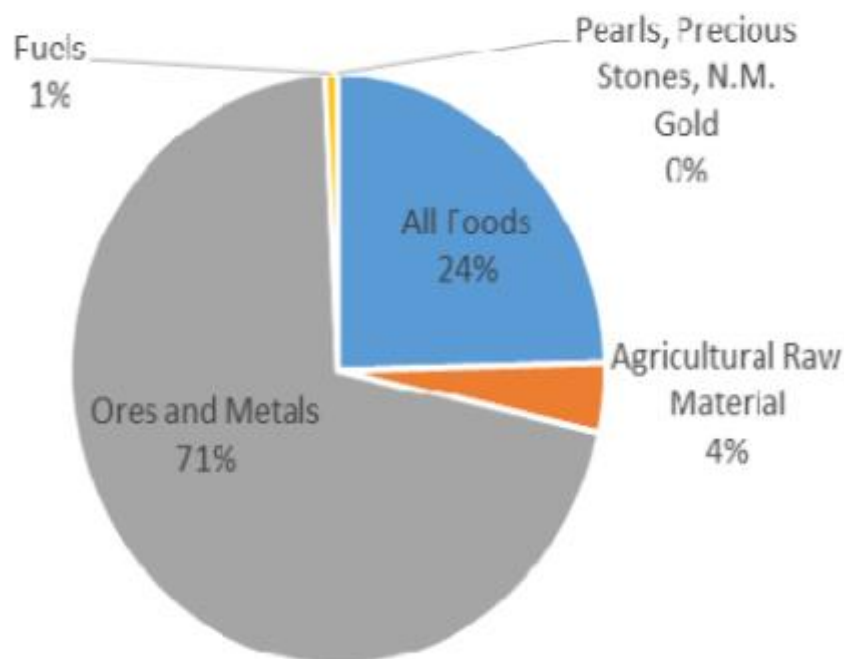
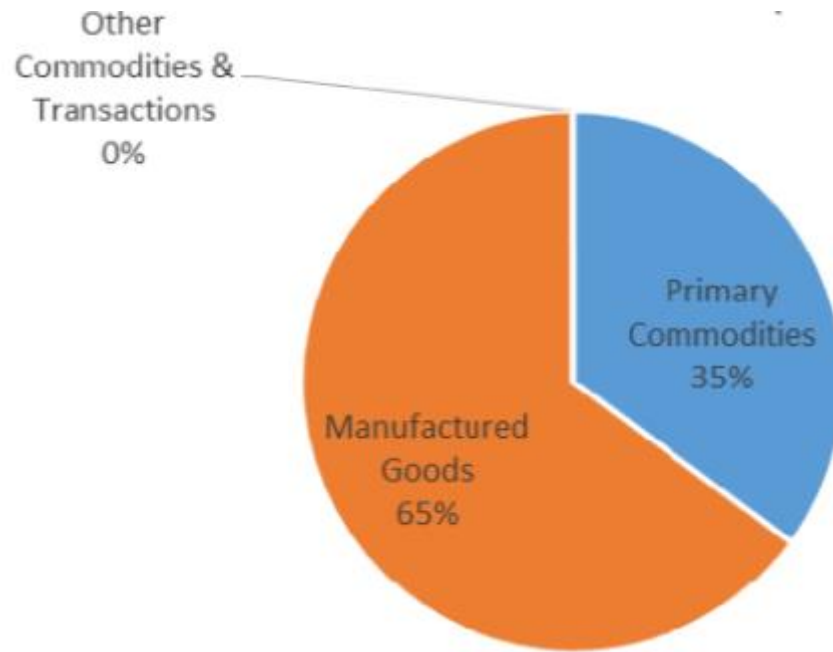


Fig.14. Sierra Leone imports of all products (2018): Source-IMF Statistics



These improved exports and imports reveal that the government is emerging successful in consolidating peace, which provides a favorable environment for trade that is a key component of economic growth in the country. Logically, trade cannot thrive in hostile environment and Sierra Leone has to rely on trade for economic prosperity given that it harbors adequate natural resources crucial in creating competitive products in the global market.

5.7. Improved systems

Sierra Leone has registered improved systems, mainly those related to trade, while others funded from the trade proceeds. The health sector has seen transformation through the launching of free initiatives on health care to children under the age of five years, lactating mothers and pregnant women (Witter et al. 2018). This lays the framework for mothers to reengage in trading activities within the shortest time possible due to the declined worries of expanded bills. Further, the education system has witnessed construction of schools all over the country thus improving the completion rates. This literature shows that the literacy levels are broadening daily, thus the more reason citizens are

engaged in income-generating activities away from concentrating on limited white-collar jobs. Moreover, the government has in place an integrated financial management information system that enhances accuracy in reporting, reconciliation and recording of financial public transaction (Norman et al. 2018). This follows the urge to streamline economic growth pillars of agriculture and mining sectors that are filled with corruption due to lack of control mechanisms. This aspect is geared at improved economic governance and management that gives hope recently given the facts that the country underwent difficult times since independence. There are more efforts in stabilizing and upgrading trade mechanisms that lays the foundation of strong economic base through boosting trade.

5.8. Summary

The research has revealed that trade has influenced the Sierra Leoneans positively. The factors hindering witnessing the full potential of trade in this country both within and externally are associated with the civil unrests and Ebola outbreak. Nevertheless, the government and private sector are heavily involved in upgrading the capital goods for trade and direct investments with the local market playing a vital role in economic growth and trade. This has been presented by the current proper of natural resources in the country that have increased the country's involvement in the international market. These resources are in plenty in the country that require more review and upgrading of policies to secure their maximum capacity in enhancing trade and promoting sustainable economic growth.

Consequently, the government is heavily involved in boosting trade. This has been shown through efforts of encouraging value addition on fishing, forestry, and mining. In correspondence with the annual national communication reports on economic growth strides and trade policy review documents, ILO (2019) argue that the Sierra Leone government is strengthening institutions and systems that nurture enterprises since it widely

acknowledges that efficient and strong markets require effective and robust institutions. In addition, the government's active participation in regional integration such as ECOWAS bloc involvement cements the urge to maximize trading. However, there is need for questioning why some of ECOWAS members do not adhere and implement policies of partnership, which result in benefit a few countries of the bloc. Not with standing, the government is enhancing accountability and promoting the development of infrastructure. Finally, foreign trade in the country is slowly expanding due to improved structures. There is need to hasten the process since Sierra Leoneans and he governance have realized that trade is central to economic growth.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

This research has tested significance of trade towards economic growth of Sierra Leone in different fields that are crucial. The results have suggested that trade is central to economic growth of this country and its role in the development process is widely accepted. Using the theories of mercantilism, absolute advantage, and comparative advantage, this study registers that Sierra Leone's economic development has shifted from mineral exploitation overdependence to trade. Commodity products provided through large scale agriculture, sustainable investments have earned government's attention as the country forge to foster trade driven economic growth. These advancements have shown the command trade has on positive impacts to Sierra Leoneans. Therefore, both national and international trade approaches have a positive influence on Sierra Leone's residents.

Sierra Leone continues to invest in agriculture and mining industry to foster trade. These sectors are the drivers of trade, which provide trade roles in general economic growth of this country. According to absolute advantage theory, the country has focused on expanding these sectors due to the ease and efficient nature of producing related goods since the labor force is ready. Arguably, many residents are involved with these sectors as income-generating opportunities whereby through trade, poverty and unemployment continues to decline rapidly. This clearly shows that the country believes trade can solve many challenges directly linked with hampering economic growth. The theory therefore has highlighted that this country is on the right track for residents to realize full benefits of trade. The country is involved on producing goods that are handled with ease, thus increased efficiency.

Further, despite the country's need to import goods from trading partners, exportation has raised to greater heights in recent years. This study registers that the country is on the run and continues to empower the local market through investments and infrastructure in

order to add value to goods and services that stand a chance of competitiveness in both domestic and international markets. As recommended by mercantilism theory, Sierra Leone is focused to expand exportation in favor of importation to realize the advantages of the available natural resources and agricultural products in trade. Its involvement with regional economic blocs is evidence that Sierra Leone is out to maximize on trade for economic growth through creation of trade patterns, which will ensure inclusivity of all its residents.

This study reports that Sierra Leone chooses its trading partners cautiously and keenly. Given its strategic position, this country is opened-up to the world thus making it easy to choose trading partners whereby the country has absolute advantage of the trading products. Sierra Leone's trade-driven economic growth greatly depends on the trading partners' selection in order to give them what they cannot produce. Notably, the comparative theory presents an opportunity for this country to produce high-quality goods and services that have a competitive edge in the international market, given that most regional blocs produce related goods and services. The study suggests that the government's agenda on enhancing the local market should broaden value addition practicums. It is through these aspects that the government and residents of Sierra Leone will enjoy all benefits associated with trade.

Participation in global trade holds numerous benefits for Sierra Leone economic growth. It presents an avenue for larger markets to access the country's exports while at the same time enhancing access to imports to support domestic production. Precisely, the continued participation of the country in the international trade promises sustainable economic growth. This has seen the need for improved infrastructure and creation of transparent and fair import-export regimes, which enhance standardization of goods and reduced smuggling of natural resources, thus promoting trade and encouraging investments.

Notably, the address of these obstacles mentioned has broadened the spheres for residents to benefit from trade.

This study concludes that trade is important for economic growth of Sierra Leone. However, the volume, value, and policies of trade in the country require putting into context the poor and vulnerable population in order to amass the full potential of trade in the country. The government and the private industries play a significant role to play in order to increase trade. This ensures inclusivity and formulation of policies that guarantee positive influence of both domestic and international trade to Sierra Leoneans. The major role of trade is to empower everybody citizen, which directly reflects on sustainable economic growth.

6.1. Recommendations

Drawing from the understanding mentioned above, this research recommends that:

Corruption remains pervasive in Sierra Leone's trade approaches, institutions, and policy implementation, and steps taken by the country's successive governments to consolidate power seems slow to improve rule of law (Mansaray-Pearce, 2019). This study revealed that land titling system is weak, judicial corruption is significant, and traditional justice prevails in most rural areas. These challenges obstruct productivity, which in turn affects trade, posing a threat of not securing sustainable trade benefits. In this regard, this study recommends that the government fights corruption and formulates policies that favor all, especially the poor and vulnerable populations in rural areas. This will go a long way in ensuring that the residents maximally benefit from trade, hence enhanced economic growth.

According to Sesay (2016), setting a firm in Sierra Leone is easy, but completing licensing requirements takes ages, which expands the cost of doing business. This hampers the numerous opportunities of establishing industries that add value to agricultural

production to raise the income of residents, especially in rural areas. In addition, this condition has provided unsustainably high subsidies and political maneuvering that ultimately results into expanded failures. In this regard, this study recommends the need to take lessons from other countries, which indicate the need to promote private sector involvement, to provide an enabling environment to negotiate smart subsidies, regulations, research, and extension on production to enhance trade. This will guarantee ease of doing business that will definitely reflect on economic growth and citizens' empowerment to establish firms.

The agricultural sector has numerous challenges that require hastened address. They include low technological inputs, poor agricultural infrastructure and limited financial services, mainly in rural areas, weak coordinating mechanisms, and limited capacity for processing and preserving products (Balié et al. 2019). In this regard, the government is required to provide mechanisms, which ensure equitable share of trade proceeds to promote favorable environment for all in trade. There is need to address these issues, especially in rural areas where infrastructure and mechanisms are weak. Empowering the citizens in equal measures will guarantee sustainable economic growth.

The financial sector entails systematic and institutional inefficiencies, which has resulted to financial intermediation cost and minimal productive investment finance availability, especially in rural areas whereby the majority of firms are small and medium enterprises (Camara & Diallo, 2020). Further, legislative and other structural inadequacies such as high volumes of non-performing loans and inadequate credit risk evaluation mechanisms also handicap loan acquisition for most residents. The government should formulate measures to address this problem through policies to provide sound legal framework and prudential guidelines to enhance ease of acquiring finances. This will

make many residents to secure loans to expand their businesses hence supporting economic growth through trade.

Finally, Van den Boogaard, Prichard, and Jibao (2018) argue that the legal backing and framework of trade policies as well as institutional frameworks for their implementation and monitoring are significant parameters requiring definition. In this regard, the government needs to define the legal basis of trade policies to all residents and enjoin stakeholders to foster the framework by working within it. In addition, trade policies require legal backing to for amending them from time to time to reflect the realities of a period, which keep on changing daily. Therefore, in the process, the government will strengthen the coordinating committees on trade, which will guarantee a favorable environment for trade.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Information on questionnaires

Interview questions

Local small-scale traders and Trade Union

- ✚ How is the perception among rural dwellers concerning operating a business, either individual or family owned?
- ✚ How do residents in the rural areas raise capital to open a business?
- ✚ How is the current trend towards opening businesses?
- ✚ What opportunities are the youth involved in currently?
- ✚ How do you and your friends understand about domestic and international trade?
- ✚ How do trade unions help you and the rural dwellers?
- ✚ How has the peace enjoyed in the country favored trade?
- ✚ How has the government empowered the local market?

Ministry of Finance and Trade staff

- ✚ What is the current employment rate of the mining and agricultural sectors?
- ✚ How has diversification of trade goods and services benefited you and the country as a whole?
- ✚ What is current shape of infrastructure and structures related to trade?
- ✚ What is the economic growth rate in reference to trade?
- ✚ What is the shape on trade policies presently?
- ✚ How is the government and citizens going about to harness the country's rich and diverse natural resources in trade to drive economic growth?
- ✚ How have regional economic integrations benefited the citizens?
- ✚ How has the government empowered the local market?
- ✚ How has the peace enjoyed in the country favored trade?

Appendix 2

Appendix 2: Information on research articles

List of studies

- See reference list

Selection process of studies

- Articles needed to be from scholars and researchers

- Articles needed to be peer-reviewed
- The articles and journals were required to be of between 2015 to 2020
- Keywords search was crucial

Engines used for selection

- Google scholar
- BASE Advanced search
- Microsoft Academic
- RefSeek