

Peer Review

Review of: "Strategic Synergies: The Untold Interactions Between Global Competitiveness and Logistics Performance in Sub-Saharan Africa"

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The paper is interesting and uniquely combines Tree-Augmented Naïve Bayes (TAN-BN), Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM), and Importance-Performance Map Analysis (IPMA). This multi-method strategy offers a robust framework to explore both direct and indirect relationships and prioritise policy focus areas. Unlike prior studies that focus only on direct linkages, this research explores the interactions among the 12 GCI pillars and their combined effects on logistics performance, offering a systems-level understanding of competitiveness. The study moves away from generalised cross-country comparisons to focus specifically on Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), allowing for context-sensitive policy insights relevant to the region's economic development and integration goals. It provides actionable insights for policymakers, particularly the need to prioritise technological readiness and higher education and training, which show strong direct and indirect links to logistics performance. The findings can help SSA governments allocate limited resources more efficiently. Anchored in new trade theory, the study provides a strong theoretical basis for understanding how competitiveness and logistics are intertwined in global trade and regional integration. The paper makes four distinct contributions: territory-specific focus, recognition of indirect effects, integration of multiple analytical techniques, and practical policy guidance — positioning it as a valuable addition to both academic and practitioner literature.

Notwithstanding these strengths, there are several areas that need clarification:

- Table 2 reports a Composite Reliability and AVE of 1.000 for most constructs (GCI pillars), which is statistically unusual. It raises questions about the robustness or the way latent variables were handled.

- While unbalanced panel data is used, which may be due to missing observations, the paper does not discuss the implications of missing data.
- Innovation (Pillar 12) is found not to have a significant direct relationship with logistics performance, which contradicts some prior studies. Any justification?
- While higher education is found to have an indirect effect, its pathways are not fully explored.
- IPMA results indicate the highest performance–importance ratio for Pillar 9 (Tech Readiness), but Pillar 11 (Business Sophistication) is low in importance and high in performance. Explain.

Declarations

Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.