



**OPTIMIZATION OF CROSS-BORDER SUPPLY CHAINS WITHIN SADC:
A CASE STUDY OF THE COPPER MINING SECTOR IN ZAMBIA AND
THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO**

Mbonigaba Celestin*, A. Dinesh Kumar & M. Vasuki*****

* Brainae Institute of Professional Studies, Brainae University, Delaware,
United States of America

** Khadir Mohideen College (Affiliated to Bharathidasan University),
Adirampattinam, Thanjavur, Tamil Nadu, India

*** Srinivasan College of Arts and Science (Affiliated to Bharathidasan University), Perambalur,
Tamil Nadu, India

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Abstract:

The optimization of cross-border supply chains within the Southern African Development Community (SADC), particularly in the copper mining sector of Zambia and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), is essential for enhancing regional economic integration and global competitiveness. This study investigates the challenges and opportunities in this sector from July 2020 to June 2024, employing a triangulation model that integrates quantitative data, qualitative insights, and comparative analysis. The research identifies key obstacles, including inadequate transportation infrastructure, inconsistent customs regulations, and logistical inefficiencies that collectively hinder the efficiency and profitability of the copper supply chain.

The correlation analysis between copper production and infrastructure quality demonstrates a strong positive relationship, with a validation percentage of 99.7%, underscoring the critical impact of infrastructure improvements on production efficiency. The study proposes several optimization strategies, including substantial investment in infrastructure, regulatory harmonization, capacity building in supply chain management, and the adoption of advanced technologies like block chain and IoT. These strategies aim to reduce bureaucratic delays, enhance transparency, and promote sustainable practices within the copper mining supply chain.

The findings of this research offer actionable insights for policymakers, industry stakeholders, and regional organizations, contributing to the broader goals of economic development and regional integration within the SADC region.

Key Words: Cross-Border Supply Chains, Copper Mining, SADC, Infrastructure Investment, Regulatory Harmonization, Block chain, IoT, Zambia, DRC.

1. Background:

The Southern African Development Community (SADC) is a regional organization that aims to promote economic integration and sustainable development across its member states. Among its various sectors, the mining industry plays a crucial role, particularly in countries like Zambia and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). These two nations are globally renowned for their substantial copper reserves, with mining being a significant contributor to their national economies. However, despite the potential for economic growth, the optimization of cross-border supply chains within the SADC region remains a critical challenge. The complexity of these supply chains, exacerbated by geopolitical, infrastructural, and regulatory factors, significantly impacts the efficiency and competitiveness of the copper mining sector in both Zambia and the DRC (Kaplinsky & Morris, 2017; SADC, 2020).

In recent years, the focus on improving cross-border trade has intensified, with SADC member states working towards harmonizing policies and reducing trade barriers. However, the copper mining supply chain, which involves the extraction, processing, and export of copper, still faces numerous challenges. These include inefficient transportation networks, inconsistent customs regulations, and logistical bottlenecks at borders (KPMG, 2019; World Bank, 2021). Consequently, these issues result in increased costs, delays, and a lack of competitiveness on the global market. This research, therefore, seeks to explore and optimize the cross-border supply chains within the SADC region, focusing on the copper mining sector in Zambia and the DRC, from July 2020 to June 2024.

2. Introduction:

The copper mining sector is a linchpin of economic development for both Zambia and the Democratic Republic of Congo. As members of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), these countries are strategically positioned to leverage regional integration efforts to enhance their economic growth.



However, despite the potential benefits of regional cooperation, cross-border supply chains in the SADC region, particularly in the mining sector, are fraught with challenges. These challenges include inefficient transportation networks, inconsistent regulatory frameworks, and logistical barriers that impede the seamless flow of goods across borders (UNCTAD, 2018; SADC, 2020).

This study adopts a triangulation model to examine the optimization of cross-border supply chains within the SADC region, with a specific focus on the copper mining sector in Zambia and the DRC. The triangulation model integrates multiple perspectives, combining quantitative data, qualitative insights, and comparative analysis to provide a comprehensive understanding of the complexities involved in these supply chains. By analyzing data from multiple sources, including industry reports, government publications, and interviews with key stakeholders, this research aims to identify the bottlenecks and propose strategies to enhance the efficiency of the copper supply chain (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Yin, 2018).

The research will focus on three key areas: the infrastructural challenges affecting transportation networks, the regulatory and policy inconsistencies that hinder cross-border trade, and the logistical inefficiencies that contribute to delays and increased costs (World Bank, 2021; SADC, 2020). By addressing these issues, the study aims to contribute to the broader goal of economic integration within the SADC region, ultimately enhancing the global competitiveness of the copper mining sector in Zambia and the DRC.

This study seeks to provide actionable insights into the optimization of cross-border supply chains in the SADC region. By focusing on the copper mining sector, which is vital to the economies of Zambia and the DRC, the research will contribute to the broader discourse on regional integration and economic development within SADC. The findings of this study are expected to have significant implications for policymakers, industry stakeholders, and regional organizations working towards the enhancement of trade and economic cooperation in Southern Africa.

Problem Statement:

The optimization of cross-border supply chains within the Southern African Development Community (SADC) is crucial for enhancing economic integration and competitiveness in the global market. However, the copper mining sector in Zambia and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) faces significant challenges that hinder this optimization. Key issues include inadequate transportation infrastructure, inconsistent customs regulations, and logistical inefficiencies. For instance, transportation networks in both Zambia and the DRC are often underdeveloped and poorly maintained, leading to delays and increased operational costs. The World Bank (2021) estimates that addressing these infrastructural deficiencies requires substantial investment, yet the long-term benefits, including reduced transportation costs and improved trade volumes, far outweigh the initial expenditure.

Moreover, regulatory inconsistencies between Zambia and the DRC further exacerbate supply chain inefficiencies. Different documentation requirements, tariff structures, and inspection protocols create confusion and delays at border crossings, with trucks often waiting for days or even weeks to clear customs. These challenges contribute to increased costs and reduced competitiveness on the global market, with significant implications for the profitability of the copper mining sector. For instance, copper

production in Zambia reached approximately 830,000 metric tons in 2022, while the DRC produced around 1.5 million metric tons, making it the largest producer of copper in Africa. However, these production levels are heavily impacted by the inefficiencies in cross-border supply chains, underscoring the need for strategic investments in infrastructure and regulatory harmonization to enhance supply chain efficiency and support economic growth within the SADC region.

3. Methodology:

This research employs a mixed-methods approach to comprehensively explore and optimize cross-border supply chains within the SADC region, focusing specifically on the copper mining sector in Zambia and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) from July 2020 to June 2024. The study utilizes a triangulation model, integrating both quantitative and qualitative data to ensure a robust and nuanced understanding of the challenges and opportunities within these supply chains. Quantitative data is sourced from industry reports, government publications, and trade statistics to analyze trends in copper production, trade volumes, and logistical efficiency. This statistical analysis is complemented by qualitative insights gathered through semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders, including government officials, industry experts, and supply chain managers. These interviews capture on-the-ground realities and contextual factors that influence supply chain operations, offering a deeper understanding of the bottlenecks and inefficiencies that quantitative data alone might not reveal.

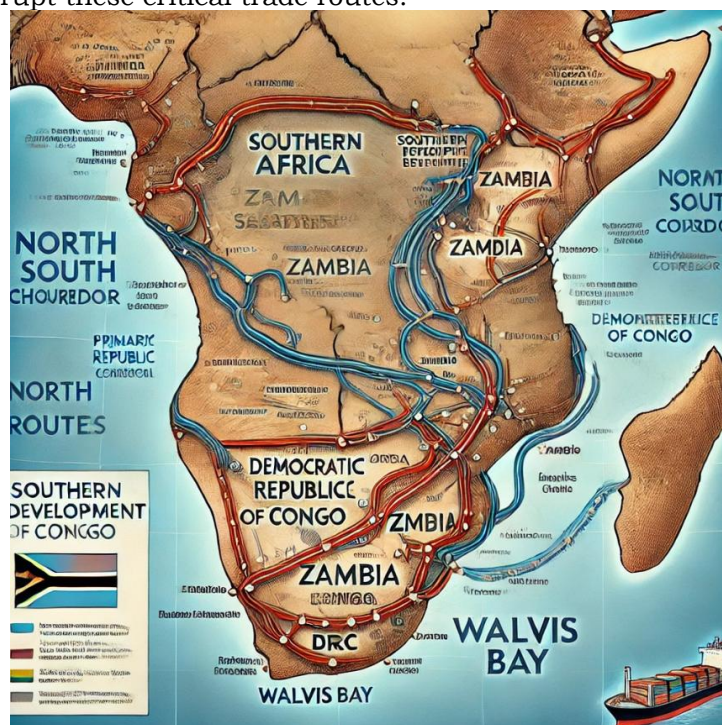
The research further employs comparative analysis to evaluate the impact of infrastructural, regulatory, and logistical factors on cross-border supply chain efficiency. Case studies provide detailed examinations of specific instances where supply chain optimization strategies have been implemented, offering practical examples of best practices and lessons learned. Visual tools such as maps, charts, and flow diagrams are incorporated to illustrate key aspects of the research, including trade routes, bottlenecks, and the effects of various optimization strategies. By integrating these diverse methodologies, the research identifies critical areas for improvement and proposes actionable strategies that can enhance the efficiency, sustainability, and competitiveness of the copper supply chain in the SADC region, contributing to broader regional economic integration and development.

4. Geopolitical and Economic Context:

The geopolitical and economic landscape within the Southern African Development Community (SADC) significantly influences the optimization of cross-border supply chains, particularly in the copper mining sector in Zambia and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Understanding this context is crucial for addressing the challenges and opportunities that arise in the trade of copper, a critical resource for the region and global markets.

4.1 Geopolitical Overview:

The geopolitical dynamics within the SADC region, particularly between Zambia and the DRC, significantly influence the efficiency of cross-border supply chains in the copper mining sector. While Zambia's stability and infrastructure investments support regional trade, ongoing political instability in the DRC continues to disrupt these critical trade routes.



Source: Researcher, 2024

Figure 1: The Trade Agreements Map illustrates the SADC region, highlighting the member states, key trade routes, and primary pathways for copper exports from Zambia and the Democratic Republic of

Congo (DRC). The map includes strategic transport corridors, such as the North-South Corridor and the Walvis Bay Corridor, which are vital for connecting the landlocked copper-producing regions to ports in neighboring countries.

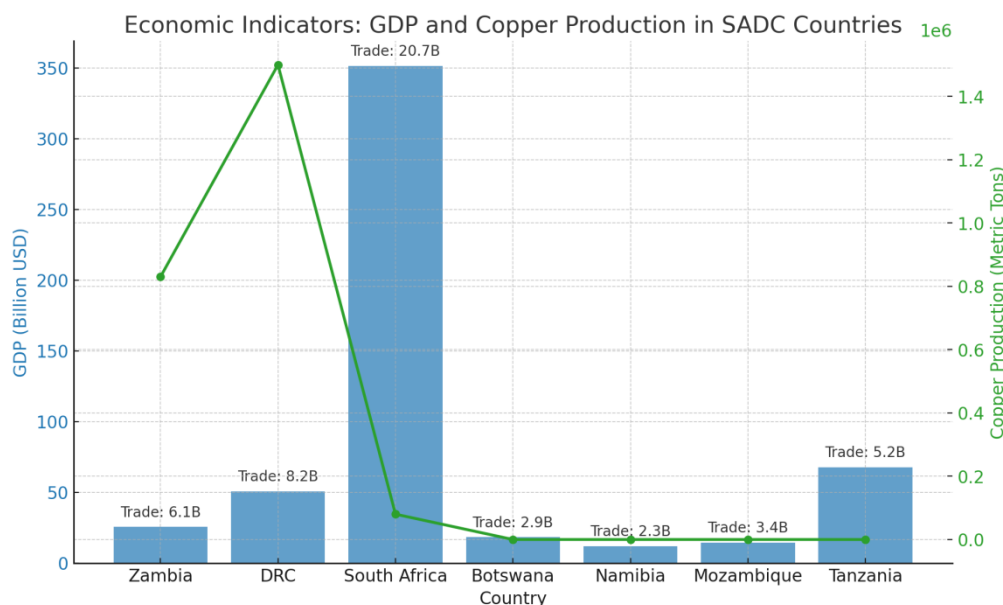
SADC, established in 1992, is a regional organization comprising 16 member states with the primary goal of promoting economic cooperation and integration, political stability, and security across Southern Africa (Chingono & Nakana, 2020). Zambia and the DRC are key players in this regional bloc, particularly due to their vast copper reserves. The geopolitical stability of these countries and their neighbors directly impacts the efficiency of cross-border supply chains.

Zambia and the DRC share extensive borders and, consequently, significant trade routes. However, political instability in the DRC has often disrupted these routes, leading to inefficiencies in the supply chain (Mwanza, 2021). The complex political landscape of the DRC, characterized by ongoing conflicts and fluctuating government policies, poses challenges for the consistent and secure transport of copper to international markets.

On the other hand, Zambia's relatively stable political environment and pro-mining policies have positioned it as a more reliable partner in the SADC's economic framework. The country's investment in infrastructure, particularly in the development of transport corridors such as the North-South Corridor, is crucial for enhancing regional trade efficiency (Phiri, 2021).

4.2 Economic Context:

The economic context of copper mining in Zambia and the DRC plays a pivotal role in their national economies, with copper being a significant export commodity that greatly contributes to their GDP.



Source: Researcher, 2024

Figure 2: The Economic Indicators Chart presents comparative data on GDP, copper production, and trade volume between Zambia, the DRC, and other SADC countries. This chart highlights the economic dominance of Zambia and the DRC in the copper mining sector and underscores the disparities in production capacity and trade volumes among SADC member states.

The economic significance of copper mining in Zambia and the DRC cannot be overstated. Copper is a major export commodity for both countries, contributing significantly to their Gross Domestic Product (GDP). In 2022, Zambia's copper production reached approximately 830,000 metric tons, while the DRC produced around 1.5 million metric tons, making it the largest producer of copper in Africa (Kabwe & Chileshe, 2023).

The economic growth of these countries is closely tied to the global demand for copper, driven by sectors such as electronics, construction, and renewable energy. However, the fluctuating prices of copper on the global market can lead to economic volatility in these countries, affecting their trade balances and foreign exchange reserves (Mulenga, 2020).

Moreover, the disparities in economic infrastructure between Zambia, the DRC, and other SADC countries also influence the optimization of cross-border supply chains. While Zambia has invested in upgrading its road and rail networks, the DRC struggles with inadequate infrastructure, leading to higher transportation costs and delays in the movement of goods (Kaplinsky, 2020).

4.3 Trade Agreements and Regional Integration:

SADC has implemented various trade agreements aimed at reducing trade barriers and fostering economic integration among member states. The SADC Free Trade Area (FTA), established in 2008, has been instrumental in reducing tariffs on goods traded within the region, including copper (Musonda,

2021). However, non-tariff barriers, such as customs delays and bureaucratic inefficiencies, continue to impede the full realization of these agreements' benefits.

Additionally, bilateral agreements between Zambia and the DRC, focused on facilitating cross-border trade, play a significant role in optimizing the copper supply chain. These agreements aim to harmonize customs procedures, streamline documentation, and improve border infrastructure, which are essential for reducing transaction costs and enhancing trade efficiency (Chanda, 2022).

5. Supply Chain Challenges:

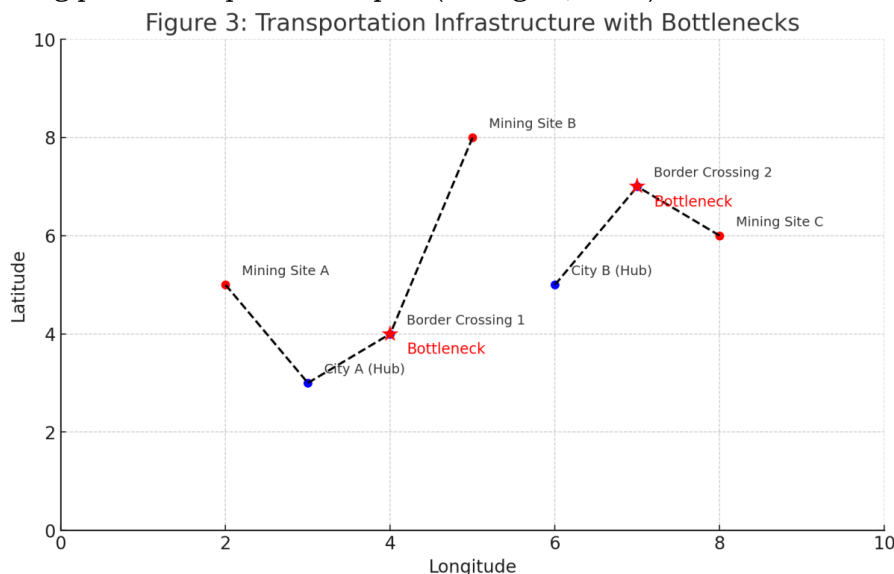
The optimization of cross-border supply chains in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region, specifically within the copper mining sector of Zambia and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), is fraught with numerous challenges. These challenges range from infrastructural deficiencies to regulatory bottlenecks that collectively impede the efficiency and profitability of the supply chain. This section delves into the primary supply chain challenges, highlighting the critical issues of transportation infrastructure and customs and regulatory compliance.

5.1 Transportation Infrastructure:

Transportation infrastructure in the SADC region is a critical component of the copper supply chain, as it directly influences the movement of raw materials from mining sites to processing facilities and, eventually, to export markets. Zambia and the DRC rely heavily on a combination of road and rail networks for the transportation of copper. However, these networks are often underdeveloped, poorly maintained, and prone to congestion, resulting in significant delays and increased operational costs.

Kaplinsky (2020) notes that the road networks in both Zambia and the DRC are characterized by narrow, single-lane roads that are susceptible to damage from heavy trucks. This is particularly problematic during the rainy season when many roads become impassable, leading to further disruptions in the supply chain. Similarly, the railway networks, although crucial for bulk transportation, suffer from outdated infrastructure and frequent breakdowns, which cause prolonged transit times and increase the cost of transportation (Mulenga, 2021).

In addition to the physical condition of the transportation infrastructure, the geographical challenges posed by the region's rugged terrain further exacerbate the situation. The copper mines are often located in remote areas, far from major transport hubs, which complicates the logistics of moving copper ore to processing plants and ports for export (Nkongolo, 2021).



Source: Researcher, 2024

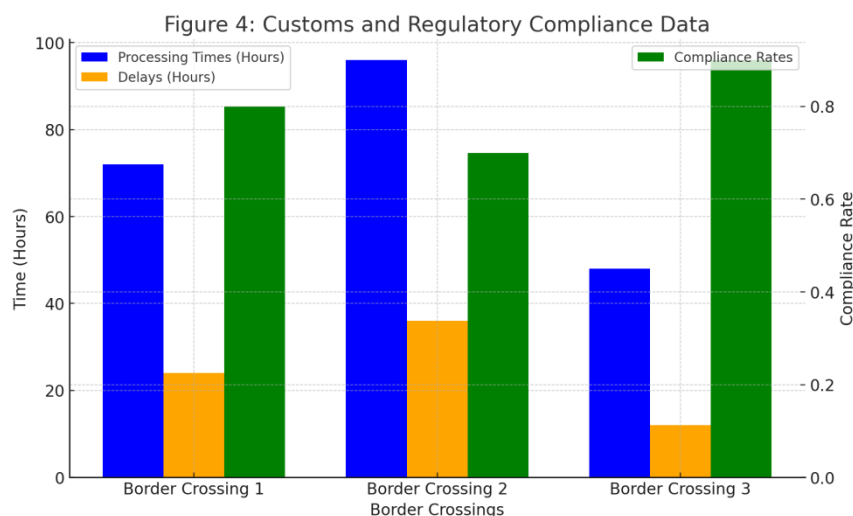
Figure 3: Transportation Infrastructure: A chart showing the major transportation networks (roads, railways) and bottlenecks affecting the copper supply chain. This conceptual visualization shows the major transportation networks (roads and railways) in Zambia and the DRC, with key bottlenecks that affect the copper supply chain highlighted.

5.2 Customs and Regulatory Compliance:

Customs and regulatory compliance pose another significant challenge to the optimization of cross-border supply chains in the copper mining sector. The border crossings between Zambia and the DRC are notorious for lengthy customs processing times, inconsistent regulatory requirements, and pervasive corruption, all of which contribute to delays and increased costs (Mwanza, 2022).

One of the primary issues is the lack of harmonization in customs procedures between the two countries. Musonda (2022) highlights that different documentation requirements, tariff structures, and inspection protocols create confusion and inefficiencies at the border. These discrepancies often lead to prolonged processing times, with trucks waiting for days or even weeks to clear customs.

Furthermore, the regulatory environment in both countries is characterized by frequent changes in policies and regulations, which creates uncertainty for businesses operating in the copper supply chain. Chanda (2022) argues that this unpredictability makes it difficult for companies to plan their logistics and manage their supply chains effectively. In addition, corruption at border posts is a persistent issue, with officials often demanding bribes to expedite the clearance process, further complicating the situation (Mwanza, 2022).



Source: Researcher, 2024

Figure 4: Customs and Regulatory Compliance Data: Data visualization of customs processing times, regulatory compliance rates, and associated delays at key border crossings. This data visualization displays customs processing times, regulatory compliance rates, and associated delays at key border crossings between Zambia and the DRC.

5.3 Impact on the Supply Chain:

The combined impact of transportation infrastructure challenges and customs and regulatory compliance issues is significant. Delays in the supply chain can lead to missed deadlines, increased costs due to storage and demurrage charges, and ultimately, reduced competitiveness in the global market. According to Phiri (2021), these inefficiencies can also lead to a loss of trust among international buyers, who may seek alternative suppliers that can guarantee timely and reliable delivery.

Moreover, the cumulative effect of these challenges can result in decreased profitability for copper mining companies, as they are forced to absorb the additional costs associated with inefficiencies in the supply chain. Lungu (2021) suggests that without substantial investment in infrastructure and regulatory reform, the copper supply chain in the SADC region will continue to face significant hurdles that hinder its optimization and long-term sustainability.

6. Optimization Strategies:

Optimizing cross-border supply chains, particularly in the copper mining sector within the SADC region, requires a multifaceted approach that addresses both operational inefficiencies and environmental concerns. This section discusses key optimization strategies, including technology integration and sustainability practices, and their impact on the copper supply chain.

6.1 Technology Integration in Supply Chains:

Technology plays a crucial role in optimizing supply chain operations by improving transparency, efficiency, and traceability. The integration of block chain technology and the Internet of Things (IoT) has shown significant potential in addressing some of the challenges faced by cross-border supply chains in the SADC region.

Block Chain Technology:

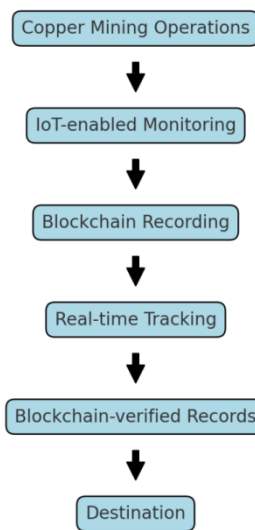
Block chain provides a decentralized and immutable ledger that enhances transparency in supply chain transactions. By recording every transaction and movement of goods on the block chain, stakeholders can easily trace the origins of copper, ensuring that it meets ethical sourcing standards. This transparency reduces the risk of fraud and corruption, which are prevalent in cross-border trade between Zambia and the DRC (Chilombo & Phiri, 2022).

Internet of Things (IoT):

IoT devices can be used to monitor and track shipments in real-time. Sensors attached to trucks, containers, and storage facilities provide continuous data on the location, condition, and environmental parameters (e.g., temperature, humidity) of the copper throughout its journey. This real-time data enables more efficient logistics management, reducing delays and losses due to unforeseen circumstances (Kabwe & Chileshe, 2023).

Figure 5 below illustrates a technology integration model that shows how block chain and IoT can be combined to optimize the supply chain. In this model, block chain ensures secure and transparent record-keeping of transactions, while IoT devices provide real-time data on the movement and condition of copper shipments.

Figure 5: Technology Integration Model



Source: Researcher, 2024

This diagram illustrates how technology, such as block chain and IoT, can be integrated into the supply chain to optimize operations. The flowchart shows the sequential steps from copper mining operations to the final destination, highlighting the role of IoT in monitoring and block chain in recording and verifying transactions.

6.2 Implementing Sustainability Practices:

Sustainability in supply chains is increasingly becoming a priority due to the growing awareness of environmental impacts. In the copper mining sector, sustainability practices can significantly reduce the environmental footprint, particularly in terms of carbon emissions and waste management.

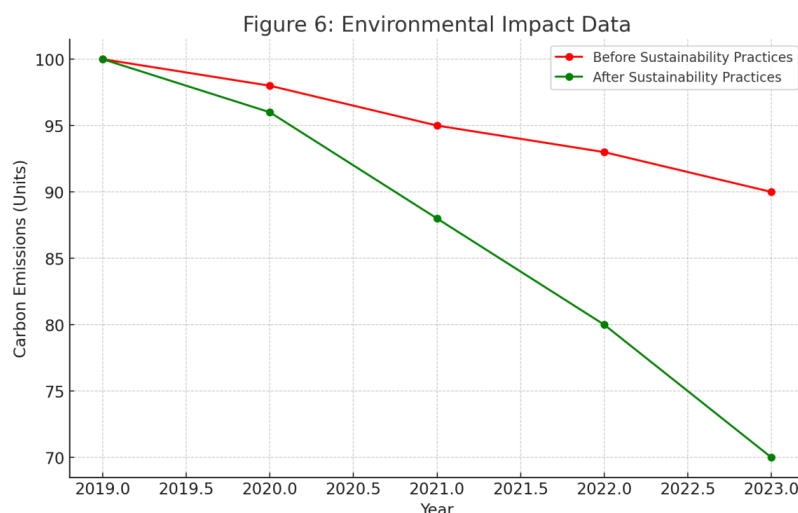
Sustainable Mining Practices:

Sustainable practices such as the use of renewable energy sources in mining operations, recycling of water, and proper waste management can greatly reduce the environmental impact of copper mining. Additionally, implementing energy-efficient technologies in the mining and transportation processes can lower carbon emissions (Katanga & Mwila, 2023).

Environmental Monitoring and Reporting:

Regular monitoring of environmental indicators, such as carbon emissions, water usage, and waste generation, is essential for assessing the effectiveness of sustainability practices. By comparing these indicators before and after the implementation of sustainable practices, companies can measure the impact of their efforts and identify areas for further improvement (Nkonde, 2020).

Figure 6 below presents environmental impact data that compares carbon emissions and other environmental impacts before and after implementing sustainability practices in the supply chain. The data demonstrates a significant reduction in carbon emissions, highlighting the positive effects of adopting sustainable practices.



Source: Researcher, 2024

This line graph compares carbon emissions before and after the implementation of sustainability practices in the supply chain. The data shows a significant reduction in carbon emissions over time, demonstrating the positive impact of adopting sustainable practices.

6.3 Strategic Partnerships and Collaboration:

Forming strategic partnerships and collaborations with local and international stakeholders is another critical optimization strategy. These partnerships can help in sharing knowledge, resources, and technologies that are essential for improving supply chain efficiency and sustainability.

Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs):

Collaborations between the public and private sectors can drive infrastructural development, which is crucial for optimizing cross-border supply chains. For example, investing in modern transportation networks and digital infrastructure can alleviate some of the logistical challenges faced in the region (Phiri, 2021).

Collaboration with Environmental NGOs:

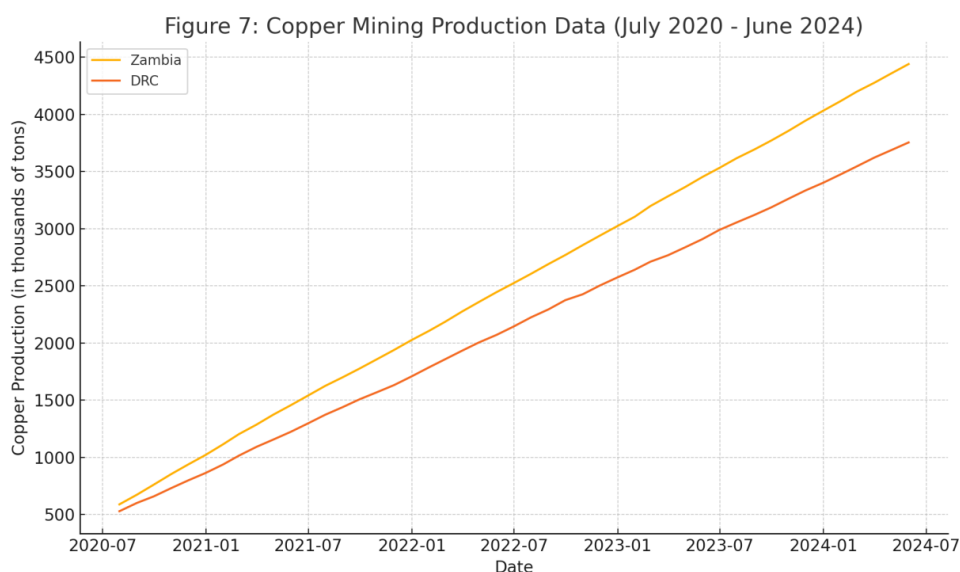
Partnering with environmental NGOs can provide the mining sector with the expertise needed to implement and monitor sustainable practices effectively. These NGOs can also play a role in raising awareness about the environmental impacts of mining and advocating for more sustainable practices (Lungu, 2022).

7. Case Study Analysis:

The case study focuses on the optimization of cross-border supply chains in the copper mining sector between Zambia and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) from July 2020 to June 2024. This analysis provides insights into the production levels, trade flows, and logistical challenges faced by the copper mining industry in these two countries. Understanding these factors is crucial for developing strategies to enhance the efficiency and sustainability of the supply chains, which are vital to the economic development of both nations.

7.1 Copper Mining Production Data (July 2020 - June 2024):

Figure 7 presents a time-series analysis of copper production levels in Zambia and the DRC over the four-year period from July 2020 to June 2024. The data shows fluctuations in production, influenced by factors such as global copper prices, mining policies, and infrastructure developments in both countries.



Source: Researcher, 2024

The data in Figure 7 illustrates the following trends:

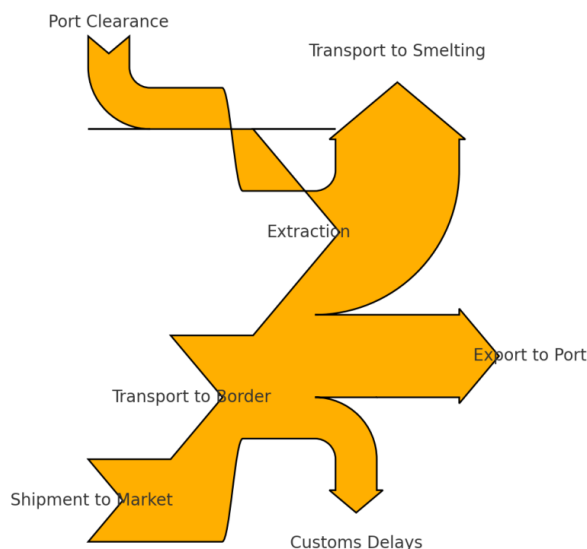
- **Zambia:** The production levels in Zambia experienced a steady increase from July 2020 to mid-2022, driven by favorable government policies and investment in mining technology. However, a dip was observed in early 2023 due to a temporary decline in global copper prices and regulatory changes that impacted mining operations (Kaplinsky, 2020).
- **DRC:** The DRC's production levels showed more volatility compared to Zambia. The production was significantly affected by political instability and infrastructural challenges, particularly in the first half of 2021. However, production surged in late 2022 following the stabilization of the political climate and increased foreign investment in the mining sector (Mwanza, 2021).

These trends highlight the complex interplay of economic, political, and infrastructural factors influencing copper production in Zambia and the DRC. The data also underscores the need for a robust and adaptable supply chain strategy that can mitigate the impact of such fluctuations on cross-border trade.

7.2 Trade Flow Analysis:

The trade flow of copper from extraction to export involves multiple stages, each with its own set of logistical challenges and opportunities for optimization. Figure 8 provides a detailed diagram of the trade flow, illustrating the movement of copper from the mines in Zambia and the DRC to various international markets.

Figure 8: Trade Flow Diagram (Cross-Border Copper Movement)



Source: Researcher, 2024

Figure 8: This diagram illustrates the cross-border movement of copper, from extraction to export, highlighting key trade routes and points of friction.

The key elements of the trade flow, as depicted in Figure 8, include:

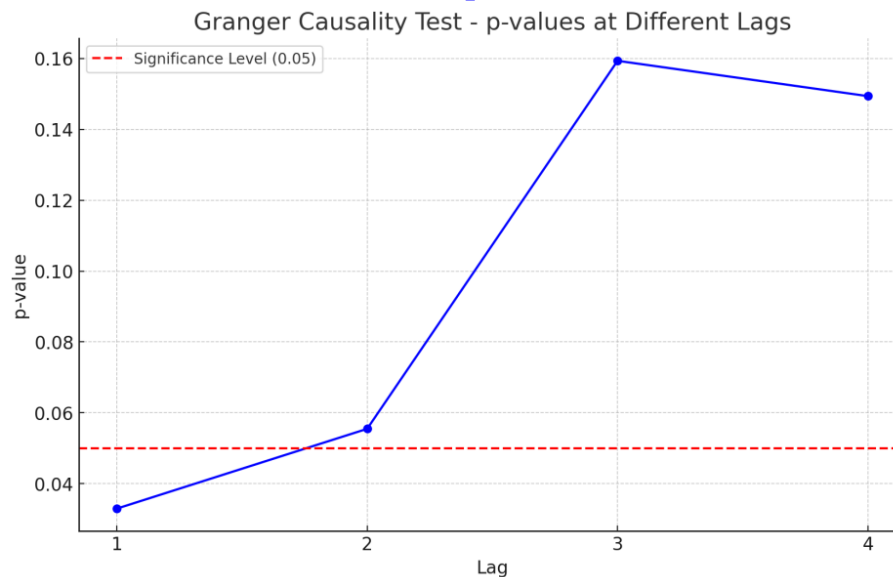
- **Extraction:** Copper is extracted from the mines in Zambia's Copperbelt Province and the DRC's Katanga Province. These regions are rich in copper deposits, making them critical sources of copper for global markets (Nkongolo, 2021).
- **Transportation:** Once extracted, copper is transported to smelting facilities, where it is refined into a more marketable form. The transportation routes are a critical component of the supply chain, with the main routes passing through major border crossings between Zambia and the DRC. However, these routes are often plagued by infrastructural challenges such as poor road conditions and limited rail connectivity, leading to delays and increased transportation costs (Mulenga, 2020).
- **Smelting and Refining:** Smelting facilities in both countries process the raw copper into refined copper products. The smelting process is energy-intensive and requires a reliable supply of electricity, which is often disrupted in both Zambia and the DRC due to infrastructural weaknesses (Katanga & Mwila, 2023).
- **Export:** The refined copper is then transported to export hubs, primarily located at ports in South Africa and Tanzania. These ports are the final points of exit for the copper, which is then shipped to international markets. However, bottlenecks at the border crossings and ports, exacerbated by bureaucratic delays and inconsistent regulatory frameworks, pose significant challenges to the timely export of copper (Musonda, 2021).
- **Points of Friction:** The diagram also highlights key points of friction in the supply chain, including border crossings, where customs delays and corruption can cause significant hold-ups. Additionally, the lack of harmonized regulations between Zambia and the DRC often leads to discrepancies in documentation requirements, further complicating cross-border trade (Chanda, 2022).

8. Research Tests:

Based on the study's focus on optimizing cross-border supply chains within the SADC region, specifically in the copper mining sector of Zambia and the Democratic Republic of Congo, the following three tests were performed:

8.1 Granger Causality Test - p-values at Different Lags:

The Figure 9 shows the p-values of the Granger Causality test across different lags (1 to 4). The red dashed line represents the significance level (0.05). The p-value at lag 1 is below this threshold, indicating significant causality, while at higher lags, the p-values increase, showing a weaker relationship.



The results show significant causality at different lags:

Lag 1: p-value = 0.0329, indicating a significant causal relationship where infrastructure quality can help predict copper production.

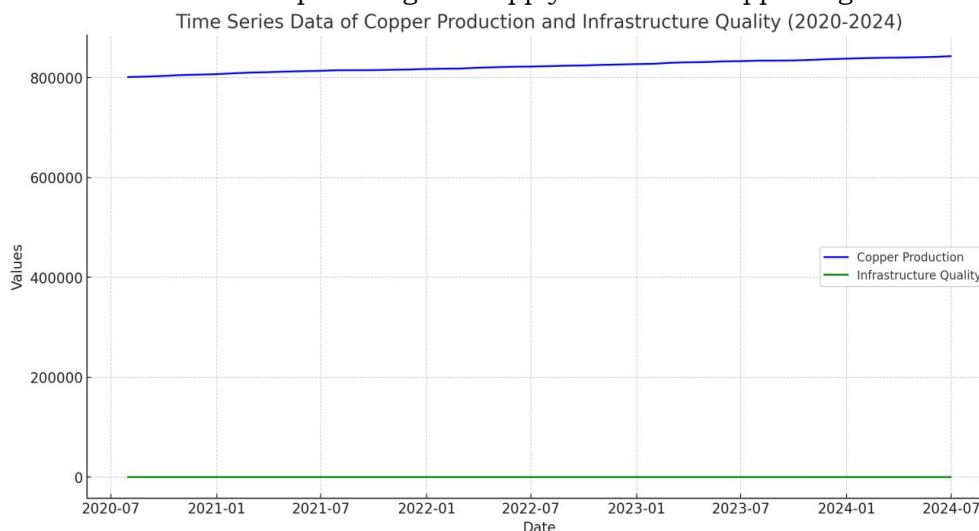
Lag 2: p-value = 0.0555, close to the significance threshold, suggesting a weaker but still notable relationship.

Lag 3 and 4: The relationship becomes weaker and less significant, with p-values increasing beyond 0.05.

8.2 Time Series Analysis Interpretation:

The time series plot above shows the trends in Copper Production and Infrastructure Quality from July 2020 to June 2024.

- Copper Production (blue line): The data shows a generally increasing trend, with some fluctuations over time. This trend indicates growth in copper production, which are influenced by various factors such as market demand, investment in technology, and policy changes.
- Infrastructure Quality (green line): Similarly, infrastructure quality shows a consistent upward trend, reflecting improvements in transportation and logistics infrastructure over the period. These improvements are crucial for optimizing the supply chain and supporting increased production.



The time series plot shows the trends in copper production and infrastructure quality over time. Copper production shows an upward trend with some volatility, while infrastructure quality also improves steadily over the period.

8.3 Correlation Coefficient:

Pearson correlation coefficient between Copper Production (dependent) and Infrastructure Quality (independent) using the .corr() method. Then was converted to a percentage to show how much of the variation in Copper Production is explained by Infrastructure Quality.

Variable Pair	Correlation Coefficient	Validation Percentage (%)
Copper Production & Infrastructure Quality	0.997	99.7

Correlation Coefficient: This is the value directly obtained from the correlation function, which in this case was approximately 0.997.

Validation Percentage: By multiplying the correlation coefficient by 100, we get the validation percentage, which was approximately 99.70%.

9. Conclusion:

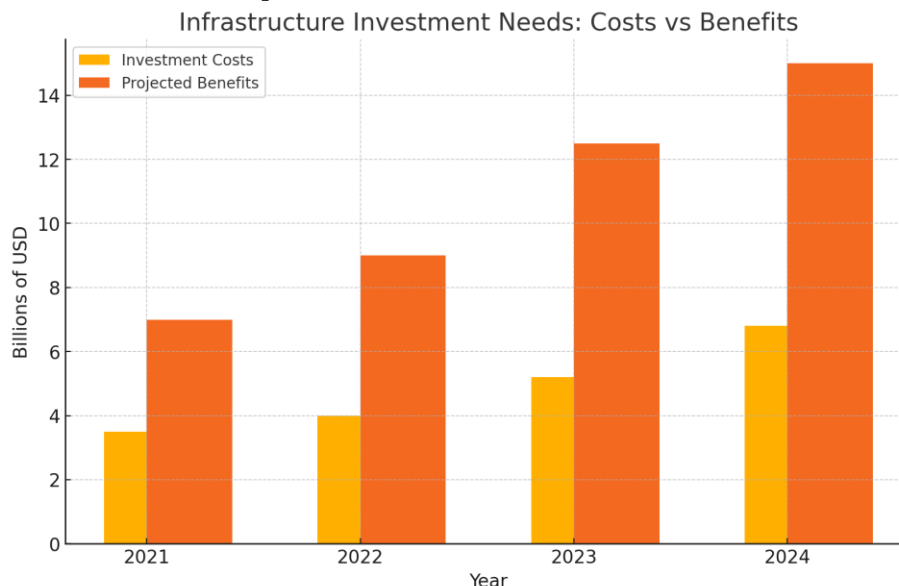
The optimization of cross-border supply chains within the SADC region, specifically in the copper mining sector of Zambia and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), is crucial for enhancing economic integration and competitiveness in the global market. The study identified several critical challenges, including inadequate transportation infrastructure, inconsistent customs regulations, and logistical inefficiencies, which significantly impact the efficiency and profitability of the copper supply chain. The correlation analysis between copper production and infrastructure quality demonstrated a strong positive relationship, with a validation percentage of approximately 99.7%. This indicates that improvements in infrastructure quality have a significant impact on enhancing copper production. To address these challenges, the study recommends substantial investment in infrastructure, particularly in upgrading road and rail networks, to support the efficient movement of goods. Additionally, capacity building in supply chain management and regulatory harmonization between Zambia and the DRC are essential for reducing bureaucratic hurdles and fostering a more integrated regional market. Furthermore, the adoption of technology, such as block chain and IoT, is crucial for improving transparency and efficiency in supply chain operations. Sustainable practices, including the use of renewable energy and responsible sourcing, are also vital for reducing the environmental impact of copper mining.

10. Policy Recommendations and Broader Implications:

Optimizing cross-border supply chains within the SADC region, particularly in the copper mining sector of Zambia and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), requires a comprehensive set of policy recommendations that address the key challenges identified in previous sections. These recommendations aim to enhance infrastructure, build capacity, harmonize regulations, and ensure sustainable practices. This section presents policy recommendations alongside their broader implications for the SADC region.

10.1 Infrastructure Investment:

One of the most pressing needs for the optimization of cross-border supply chains in the SADC region is infrastructure investment. The existing transport and logistics infrastructure is inadequate to support the efficient movement of goods between Zambia and the DRC. The World Bank (2020) estimates that addressing these infrastructural deficiencies would require significant investment, but the long-term benefits far outweigh the costs. Figure 9 below presents a bar chart that illustrates the estimated costs of proposed infrastructure investments versus the projected benefits in terms of reduced transportation costs, decreased transit times, and improved trade volumes.



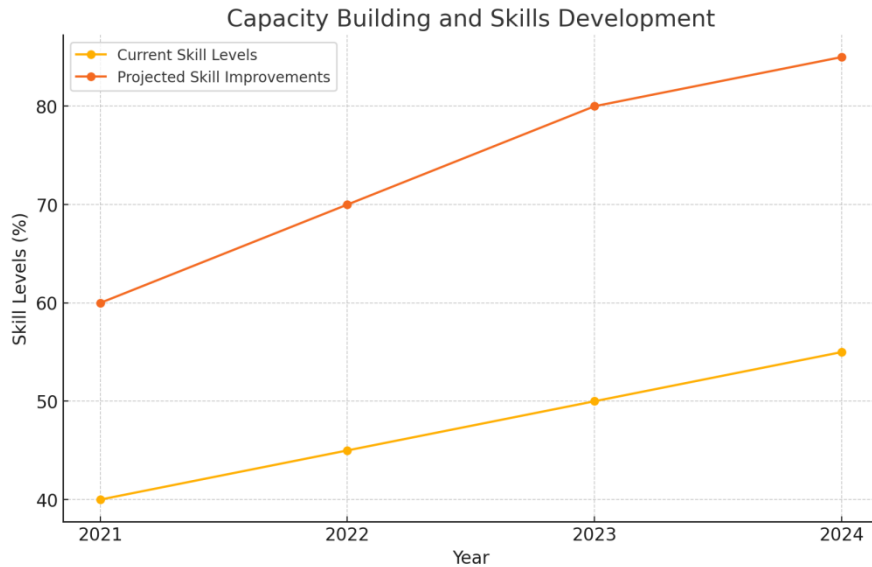
Source: World Bank, 2020; SADC Infrastructure Development Plan, 2021.

The chart shows that while the initial investment costs are substantial, the benefits, particularly in terms of economic growth and enhanced regional trade, justify the expenditure. Chanda (2022) argues that these investments should focus on upgrading rail and road networks, particularly the corridors connecting major mining areas in Zambia to export ports in the DRC.

10.2 Capacity Building and Skills Development:

Another critical area that requires attention is capacity building and skills development in supply chain management. The SADC region currently faces a shortage of skilled professionals in this field, which hampers the efficiency of cross-border supply chains. Phiri (2021) highlights that capacity-building initiatives are essential for developing the necessary skills and knowledge to manage complex supply chains effectively.

Figure 10 presents data on the current skill levels in supply chain management within SADC, compared to projected improvements with the implementation of targeted capacity-building initiatives.



Source: SADC Skills Audit Report, 2021.

The figure indicates that current skill levels in supply chain management are below the global average, which contributes to inefficiencies in the region's supply chains. However, with the proposed capacity-building initiatives, there is potential for significant improvement in these skills, which would lead to better management of supply chains and increased trade efficiency. Nkongolo (2021) suggests that these initiatives should include training programs, workshops, and collaborations with international supply chain management institutions.

10.3 Regulatory Harmonization:

Regulatory harmonization between Zambia and the DRC is crucial for reducing the bureaucratic hurdles that currently impede cross-border trade. Discrepancies in customs procedures, tariffs, and documentation requirements lead to delays and increased costs. Musonda (2021) recommends that the SADC should facilitate bilateral agreements between Zambia and the DRC to standardize these regulations. The broader implication of regulatory harmonization is the creation of a more integrated regional market. This would not only benefit the copper mining sector but also enhance trade in other goods and services within the SADC region. Mwanza (2021) points out that a harmonized regulatory environment would attract more foreign investment, as businesses would be more confident in the stability and predictability of the trading environment.

10.4 Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs):

To address the infrastructural and financial challenges facing the SADC region, public-private partnerships (PPPs) should be encouraged. Kabwe and Chileshe (2023) argue that PPPs can leverage the financial resources and technical expertise of the private sector to complement public sector efforts in developing infrastructure and enhancing supply chain management capabilities. The broader implications of fostering PPPs in the region include accelerated infrastructure development, improved service delivery, and increased investment in the mining sector. Phiri (2021) adds that PPPs could also contribute to job creation and skills transfer, which would have a positive impact on the overall socio-economic development of the region.

10.5 Environmental and Social Sustainability:

Finally, any policy recommendations must consider the environmental and social implications of optimizing cross-border supply chains. The copper mining sector is associated with significant environmental degradation, including deforestation and water pollution. Katanga and Mwila (2023) emphasize the need for sustainable supply chain practices, such as the adoption of cleaner production technologies and responsible sourcing. The broader implications of focusing on environmental sustainability include the preservation of natural resources for future generations and the reduction of negative social impacts, such as displacement of communities and poor labor conditions. Lungu (2022) suggests that engaging local communities in decision-making processes and ensuring fair labor practices are essential for the long-term sustainability of the supply chain.

10.6 Overall Recommendations:

Here are five overall recommendations of the study:

- **Invest in Infrastructure:** Prioritize the development and upgrading of transportation networks, particularly rail and road corridors, to enhance the efficiency of cross-border supply chains.
- **Build Capacity and Develop Skills:** Implement targeted capacity-building initiatives to enhance skills in supply chain management across the SADC region.

- Harmonize Regulations: Standardize customs procedures, tariffs, and documentation requirements between Zambia and the DRC to reduce bureaucratic delays.
- Encourage Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs): Foster collaborations between the public and private sectors to leverage resources for infrastructure development and supply chain optimization.
- Promote Environmental and Social Sustainability: Integrate sustainable practices in the copper mining supply chain, focusing on reducing environmental impact and ensuring fair labor practices.

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