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# UNLOCKING THE MARITIME POTENTIAL OF LAKE VICTORIA BY THE RIPARIAN STATES

*By Fredrick Olali Odula*

**New Welfare Services–Sustainable Service Design as a driver for regional development**

**supervisor: Dr. Mattias Wengelin**

**15<sup>of</sup> May 2024, Entebbe**

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

I extend my foremost acknowledgment to Lund University's Department of Service Studies, under the Faculty of Social Sciences, in collaboration with Entebbe International University, with the support of Lund University Commissioned Education (LUCE), for granting us the opportunity to engage in this enlightening programme on Sustainable Service Design as a catalyst for regional development. Special appreciation is owed to the team of dedicated lecturers and my supervisors Christer Eldh and Mattias Wengelin, whose guidance has been indispensable since the programme's inception.

Furthermore, I wish to express my gratitude to my employer, the Intergovernmental Standing Committee on Shipping (ISCOS), under the leadership of Secretary General Mr. Daniel Kiange, Director Finance and Administration Mr. Kassim Mpaata, Finance Manager Mr. Harol Kalimina, Programs Manager for Ports and Shipping Services Mr. Jonah Mumbya, and Administrative Secretary Mrs. Prackcedes Chukunzira, for their unwavering support throughout the programme.

Lastly, I am deeply thankful to my wife, Esther Ondunyi, and my beloved daughters, Amelia and Camilla, for their resolute moral support during this journey.

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## LIST OF ACRONYMS

<b>Abbreviation</b>	<b>Meaning</b>
MV	Merchant Vessel
EAC	East African Community
LVB	Lake Victoria Basin
UNECA	United Nations Economic Commission for Africa
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
ISCOS	Intergovernmental Standing Committee on Shipping
NCIP	Northern Corridor Integration Projects
LVFO	Lake Victoria Fisheries Organization
LVBC	Lake Victoria Basin Commission
UNCLOS	United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea
NaFIRRI	National Fisheries Resources Research Institute
KMA	Kenya Maritime Authority
KPA	Kenya Ports Authority
MOESNA	Maritime Organization of Eastern Southern and Northern Africa
IMO	International Maritime Organization

## **Abstract:**

Lake Victoria, the second-largest freshwater lake globally, holds immense geographical and economic importance in East Africa. Shared by Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda, it influences diverse sectors such as ecology, hydrology, transportation, fisheries, agriculture, tourism, and energy production. Despite its strategic location and economic significance, the riparian states have not fully exploited its navigational capacity for maritime trade, raising questions about the factors hindering its shipping potential and the implications for regional economic development.

This paper explores the underutilization of Lake Victoria's shipping potential, focusing on historical significance, inadequate infrastructure, regulatory challenges, environmental concerns, and the lack of economic incentives. While the lake has served as a vital trade route for centuries, contemporary shipping activities fall short of its full potential due to insufficient infrastructure, including ports, navigational aids, and transportation networks. Initiatives to rehabilitate certain ports indicate positive steps, but a harmonized regulatory framework is essential to instill confidence and promote increased shipping activities.

Environmental sustainability is a crucial consideration, requiring careful planning and sustainable practices to prevent adverse impacts. Despite the economic potential, the absence of adequate incentives hampers private and public stakeholder interest. The recommendations encompass infrastructure development, sustainable practices, and inclusive policies, aiming to catalyze regional trade, connectivity, and economic prosperity. This research serves as a call to action, advocating for collaborative efforts among riparian states and international partners to harness the latent maritime opportunities within Lake Victoria

# CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

## 1.1. Background on Lake Victoria's Geographical and Economic Importance.

Lake Victoria, situated in East Africa, stands as the second-largest freshwater lake globally, encompassing approximately 68,800 square kilometers and playing a vital role in the region's geographical and economic dynamics (Smithsonian Institution, 2020). Shared by Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda, the lake's extensive influence spans ecological diversity, hydrology, transportation, fisheries, agriculture, tourism, and energy production.

Lake Victoria's geographical significance is underscored by its considerable size and location, making it the largest lake in Africa by surface area. Positioned at the intersection of Uganda, Tanzania, and Kenya, with a majority of its waters belonging to Tanzania, the lake serves as a crucial component of the African Great Lakes system (World Bank, 2019). It receives inflows from various rivers, including the Kagera River, its largest tributary, which serves as a primary source for the White Nile. The lake plays a pivotal role in the hydrological cycle of the Nile River Basin, influencing water levels downstream and impacting agriculture in Egypt and Sudan (World Bank, 2011). Moreover, it serves as a vital transportation hub, facilitating inland waterway trade and connectivity between East African countries (World Bank, 2006).

Economically, Lake Victoria plays a crucial role in supporting the livelihoods of millions of people through its fisheries sector. Renowned for diverse fish species such as tilapia and Nile perch, the lake provides a vital source of protein and income for local communities (Kolding et al., 2008). The lake's influence on rainfall patterns and climate contributes to the fertility of surrounding lands, enhancing agricultural productivity in the Lake Victoria Basin. The Lake boasts a remarkable ecological diversity that sustains over 500 species of fish, including the iconic Nile perch, contributing to the lake's ecological balance and supporting various ecosystems (Balirwa et al., 2003). Additionally, the scenic beauty of Lake Victoria and its surroundings attracts tourists, fostering a growing tourism industry that includes activities like birdwatching, boat tours, and cultural experiences, generating economic opportunities for the region (Government of Uganda, 2019)

## 1.2. Statement of the Problem:

Despite the strategic location and economic significance, the riparian states surrounding Lake Victoria have not fully exploited its navigational capacity for maritime trade. This underutilization raises critical questions about the factors hindering the realization of the lake's shipping potential and the implications for economic development in the region.

The first aspect to consider is the historical and geographical significance of Lake Victoria as a natural transportation route. According to Smith (2018), "Lake Victoria has served as a

vital trade route for centuries, connecting communities and facilitating the movement of goods." However, contemporary shipping activities on the lake fall short of harnessing its full potential, begging the question of why the Riparian states are not viewing it as an avenue for additional revenue.

One of the notable factors contributing to the underutilization of Lake Victoria is the inadequate infrastructure supporting shipping operations. According to Smith (2019), the absence of well-developed ports, navigational aids, and transportation networks around the lake limits the efficiency and attractiveness of shipping as a viable means of transportation.

According to Brown (2021), "Investments in port facilities, navigational aids, and transportation networks are essential for unlocking the full potential of water-based transportation." The Lakeport infrastructures are not well developed; however, some of the regional states, such as Kenya, have initiated the process of rehabilitating the Port of Kisumu, which currently boasts two vessels, MV Uhuru I and II, transporting petroleum products between the Port of Kisumu and Port Bell in Uganda. Additionally, the Ugandan government is in the process of rehabilitating Jinja port, which will serve as a key connection point between Kisumu (Kenya) and Mwanza in Tanzania. These initiatives signal a positive step toward enhancing the shipping infrastructure around Lake Victoria and fostering regional connectivity.

Furthermore, the absence of a harmonized and effective regulatory framework for shipping activities on Lake Victoria contributes to the underutilization. Johnson (2017) emphasizes the need for riparian states to collaborate in establishing clear and consistent regulations governing navigation, safety standards, and trade facilitation. A robust regulatory framework is vital for instilling confidence in stakeholders and promoting a conducive environment for increased shipping activities.

Another critical dimension of the research problem is the impact of environmental concerns on shipping activities. As highlighted by Green et al. (2020), "Balancing economic development with environmental sustainability is a key challenge for riparian states." The environmental sustainability of shipping activities on Lake Victoria is a pressing concern that demands attention. Brown (2021) highlights that the ecological sensitivity of the lake requires careful planning and sustainable practices to prevent adverse environmental impacts. Investigating environmentally friendly shipping solutions will be essential to balance economic development with environmental conservation.

Despite the economic potential associated with increased shipping on Lake Victoria, there is a lack of adequate economic incentives for private and public stakeholders. As argued by Green (2020), a comprehensive economic strategy that includes incentives such as tax breaks, subsidies, and investment opportunities could stimulate interest and investment in the shipping sector, thereby boosting utilization. According to Smith (2019), "Lake Victoria

has the potential to significantly enhance economic activities in the region through increased trade and transportation efficiency." This signifies the great underlying economic potential that the lake holds. One example of this is that Lake Victoria and its riparian states offer a diverse range of tradeable items that could serve as catalysts for regional trade through inland waterways. One significant commodity is agricultural products, with the fertile lands surrounding the lake producing a variety of crops. According to a study by Kimani et al. (2017), the region is known for its production of staple foods such as maize, rice, and cassava, as well as cash crops like coffee and tea. These agricultural products could be efficiently transported via shipping on Lake Victoria, promoting economic exchange and regional food security. Furthermore, the fishing industry is a key economic activity in the Lake Victoria region, providing a rich source of tradeable goods. Fish and related products, such as processed fish, are in high demand both within the riparian states and beyond. A report by Odhiambo (2018) emphasizes the significance of the fishery sector in sustaining livelihoods and suggests that enhancing transportation infrastructure on the lake could boost the trade of fish products, fostering economic growth and employment. Manufactured goods also represent a potential source of regional trade. The riparian states have varying industrial capacities, and efficient shipping on Lake Victoria could facilitate the movement of manufactured products between communities. This aligns with the findings of the East African Community (EAC) report on intra-regional trade (EAC, 2019), which underscores the importance of improving transportation infrastructure to enhance the movement of goods and services within the East African region.

Additionally, the Lake Victoria region is rich in natural resources, including minerals and raw materials. These resources can be processed and shipped for regional trade, contributing to economic diversification. A study by Mwanza and Nzaro (2020) highlights the untapped potential of mineral resources in the Lake Victoria Basin (LVB), suggesting that improved shipping infrastructure could facilitate the movement of minerals for processing and trade. This is going to be discussed in the essay and one important question is...

### **1.3. Importance Of unlocking Maritime Transportation for Regional Development.**

Lake Victoria holds immense potential as a catalyst for regional development through the unlocking of maritime transportation. The riparian states surrounding the lake—Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda—stand at a crossroads where the efficient utilization of this vast water body could significantly contribute to economic growth, improved connectivity, and overall regional development.

#### **1. Enhanced Trade Facilitation:**

Enhancing regional trade facilitation through strategic investments in maritime activities across Lake Victoria holds the potential to unlock economic opportunities and foster greater integration among the riparian states. One crucial aspect is the improvement of transportation infrastructure, particularly the development of modern ports and navigational



aids. According to Johnson (2020), investing in such infrastructure is vital for creating efficient trade routes and reducing logistical bottlenecks, thereby enhancing the overall facilitation of regional trade.

Investing in maritime activities also enables the riparian states to capitalize on the geographical advantage of Lake Victoria as a central trade hub. The lake connects multiple countries, and as Smith (2019) argues, leveraging this geographic centrality can streamline the movement of goods, making it a cost-effective and convenient mode of transportation. This centrality enhances accessibility to markets, contributing to the facilitation of cross-border trade and increased economic interaction among the riparian states. Moreover, maritime activities on Lake Victoria can address key challenges faced by land-linked regions within the riparian states. By providing a direct and navigable route for transportation, shipping can mitigate the logistical challenges associated with land transport and enhance the accessibility of markets. According to the EAC report on intra-regional trade (2019), "Investments in maritime infrastructure are crucial for landlocked regions, offering a viable and efficient means of connecting to global markets and neighboring coastal countries." This underscores the transformative impact that well-planned maritime activities can have on overcoming geographical constraints and unlocking trade opportunities for landlocked regions. Furthermore, the establishment of standardized regulatory frameworks and effective governance mechanisms is paramount for facilitating smooth maritime trade operations. Jones (2018) emphasizes the importance of harmonizing policies among the riparian states, citing that a cohesive regulatory environment is essential for encouraging investment in maritime activities. A unified approach to regulation can reduce trade barriers, enhance transparency, and create a conducive atmosphere for businesses engaged in cross-border trade on Lake Victoria. Additionally, investing in the standardization and harmonization of trade procedures and regulations among the riparian states is essential. Jones (2018) emphasizes that "synchronized trade policies and regulations are crucial for creating a conducive environment for maritime trade, reducing bureaucratic hurdles, and promoting a more efficient cross-border flow of goods." Standardized procedures can minimize delays at ports and border crossings, facilitating smoother trade operations and enhancing the overall competitiveness of the region.

The implementation of technology-driven solutions is another avenue for enhancing trade facilitation across Lake Victoria. This includes the adoption of electronic documentation systems, tracking technologies, and automated processes. According to a report by the EAC, 2019, "Technological innovations play a pivotal role in streamlining trade processes, reducing paperwork, and improving overall efficiency. Investing in digital solutions can significantly enhance the transparency and traceability of goods in transit across Lake Victoria." This has been evident in Kenya where they have put in an electronic cargo clearance system dubbed as an Integrated Customs Management System (iCMS) which has reduced cargo clearance time by a significant percentage.

Maritime safety and security play a pivotal role in trade facilitation, and investments in this area are imperative for instilling confidence among traders and investors. Adequate measures, such as the deployment of modern navigation and communication systems, can mitigate risks and ensure the secure movement of goods and vessels. As discussed by Green (2021), prioritizing safety measures is crucial for building trust in the maritime transportation sector, which is essential for attracting investments and promoting regional trade. Attention to security plays an important role in this essay./However important security will no be discussed in this essay because....

## **2. Economic Diversification:**

Enhancing maritime activities across Lake Victoria has the potential to significantly diversify the economies of the riparian states. Firstly, the development of shipping infrastructure would stimulate trade and commerce, fostering economic diversification by facilitating the efficient movement of goods and services. As noted by Smith (2019), "Improved maritime transportation can open new avenues for trade, leading to economic diversification and increased economic resilience in the Lake Victoria region." For instance, Kenya's investment in the port infrastructure of the Port of Kisumu has led to the establishment of subsidiary institutions, thereby promoting robust economic development in the lake city.

Additionally, the establishment of modern ports and shipping facilities can spur the growth of related industries, such as logistics, warehousing, and transportation services. This development is crucial in creating a more diversified economic landscape, as highlighted by the EAC report on intra-regional trade (2019), which emphasizes the importance of comprehensive logistics networks for economic growth.

Furthermore, the fisheries sector stands to benefit significantly from enhanced maritime activities. Improved transportation can facilitate the distribution of fishery products, contributing to economic diversification in communities dependent on this industry. As Odhiambo (2018) asserts, "Efficient maritime transportation is a key driver for the economic diversification of regions reliant on the fisheries sector, creating opportunities for value addition and market expansion." The fishery sector, being a perishable industry, requires a seamless transport system to convey products to the target market. A poor transport network is a deterrent to its economic impact, as is currently evident in the lake region.

## **CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.0 Introduction**

Lake Victoria, Africa's largest lake and the world's second-largest freshwater lake, has played a pivotal role in the socio-economic and cultural landscape of East Africa for centuries. A historical review of the lake's usage reveals a rich tapestry of human interaction, encompassing ancient trade routes, colonial exploitation, and contemporary efforts in sustainable development. Understanding this historical context is crucial, as it illuminates how past practices have shaped current economic activities, environmental policies, and regional cooperation. This reflection not only provides valuable insights into the evolving relationship between local communities and the lake but also underscores the significance of preserving and sustainably utilizing this vital natural resource for future generations.

### **2.1 Historical Usage of Lake Victoria**

Lake Victoria has been a vital resource for the riparian states, of Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda, with a rich history of maritime activities. Over the centuries, communities around the lake have relied on its waters for sustenance and trade. Historical records reveal the lake's significance in fostering economic activities, primarily centered around fishing and transportation. Historically, Lake Victoria has been a hub for various maritime activities, prominently including fishing and transportation. The indigenous communities surrounding the lake heavily relied on its abundant fisheries for sustenance and trade. The lake's vast waters facilitated the movement of goods and people, contributing to the interconnectedness of the riparian states (Smith, 2008).

During the colonial era, Lake Victoria played a pivotal role in the transportation of goods and personnel. The establishment of ports and harbors along its shores facilitated the export of commodities such as coffee, tea, and cotton, contributing significantly to the economic development of the region (Jones, 2012). The lake served as a crucial link in the trade network, connecting the landlocked East African countries to the Indian Ocean. However, historical usage has also brought challenges. Overfishing and unregulated maritime activities have led to ecological concerns, affecting the lake's biodiversity (Brown, 2015). Additionally, the lack of coordinated efforts among riparian states has resulted in disputes over resource management and navigation rights. For example, the fish-rich Island of Mbingo has been a focal point of contention between Kenya and Uganda, each claiming rightful ownership.

This dispute has led to constant reports of arrests of fishermen from both countries for trespassing in their fishing activities.

In the contemporary context, unlocking the maritime potential of Lake Victoria requires a comprehensive approach. Investment in modern infrastructure, including ports and navigation systems, is crucial for efficient and sustainable maritime activities (UNDP, 2020). Strengthening legal frameworks and fostering inter-state cooperation will ensure responsible resource management and address environmental concerns.

## **Summary**

The historical review of Lake Victoria's usage offers valuable lessons for the present and future management of this vital resource. It highlights the lake's central role in facilitating economic activities, such as fishing and transportation, dating back centuries. However, it also underscores the challenges brought about by unregulated exploitation, including overfishing and ecological degradation. Moreover, historical disputes over resource ownership and navigation rights emphasize the importance of fostering regional cooperation and strengthening legal frameworks. Moving forward, sustainable development strategies must prioritize investments in modern infrastructure and promote collaborative efforts among riparian states to ensure the preservation and responsible utilization of Lake Victoria for generations to come.

### **2.2. Existing Challenges in Unlocking the Maritime Potential of Lake Victoria**

Lake Victoria holds immense potential for maritime development, encompassing fisheries, trade, transportation, and tourism. However, this potential is hindered by a myriad of challenges that the riparian states grapple with. This section delves into the key obstacles facing the unlocking of Lake Victoria's maritime potential and underscores the urgency for collaborative efforts to overcome these challenges. These include:

#### **Inadequate Maritime Infrastructure**

One of the primary challenges lies in the inadequate maritime infrastructure around Lake Victoria. The ports and harbors are outdated, lacking modern facilities required for efficient cargo handling and transportation. The navigation systems are also subpar, hindering the seamless movement of goods and people across the lake. This deficiency in infrastructure is a bottleneck to the economic activities that could flourish with improved connectivity. As Hobday (2016) emphasizes, investing in modern ports and navigation systems is crucial for unlocking the full maritime potential of Lake Victoria.

#### **Legal Framework Challenges**

The legal framework governing Lake Victoria poses another significant challenge. Divergent national regulations among the riparian states create inconsistencies that hinder cross-border

cooperation and effective management of shared resources (Johnson, 2018). The absence of a harmonized legal structure exacerbates disputes over fishing rights and environmental protection measures, hindering sustainable development (United Nations Environmental Programme, 2017).

### **Environmental Concerns**

Environmental concerns further compound the challenges. Overfishing, pollution, and habitat degradation threaten the delicate ecosystem of Lake Victoria (Mugabe et al., 2021). These issues not only undermine the lake's biodiversity but also compromise the long-term viability of fisheries and tourism, two key pillars of the maritime potential.

### **Socioeconomic Factors**

Socioeconomic factors, particularly poverty and unemployment, contribute to the challenges of unlocking Lake Victoria's maritime potential. Many communities surrounding the lake depend on fishing for their livelihoods, yet the lack of effective management leads to overexploitation and diminishing returns (Odhiambo, 2019). Addressing these issues requires a holistic approach that balances economic development with conservation efforts.

### **Inter-State Cooperation**

Inter-state cooperation represents a critical yet elusive factor in overcoming these challenges. Diplomatic relations among riparian states often face hurdles due to historical tensions and differing priorities (Ndiaye & Wang, 2020). Collaborative initiatives, such as joint management plans and information-sharing mechanisms, are essential for navigating the complexities of shared resources and fostering mutual trust among the riparian states.

### **Summary**

The forgoing section underscores the myriad obstacles hindering the development of the Maritime Potential of Lake Victoria, despite its vast opportunities in fisheries, trade, transportation, and tourism. Key lessons emerge from the inadequate maritime infrastructure, legal framework challenges, environmental concerns, socioeconomic factors, and the necessity for inter-state cooperation. These challenges include outdated ports and navigation systems, inconsistent legal regulations, environmental degradation, socioeconomic disparities, and diplomatic tensions among riparian states. To overcome these hurdles and fully realize Lake Victoria's maritime potential, collaborative efforts, modernization of infrastructure, harmonization of legal frameworks, sustainable management practices, and inclusive socioeconomic development strategies are imperative.

## **2.3 Comparative analysis with other lakes or water bodies**

This section aims to provide a comparative analysis of Lake Victoria's maritime potential to other Regional and Global lakes. By examining various factors, including economic activities, environmental concerns, and international cooperation, etc.

### **2.3.1. Economic Potential**

Lake Victoria plays a crucial role in supporting the livelihoods of millions through fisheries, aquaculture, trade, and transportation. Compared to other regional lakes like Tanganyika and Malawi, Lake Victoria's size and geographic location make it a central hub for economic activities. Its expansive waters contribute significantly to the fishery sector, acting as a vital source of food and income for the riparian communities (Smith et al., 2019).

In a global context, lakes such as the Great Lakes in North America and the Caspian Sea in Eurasia serve as economic powerhouses, with well-established shipping routes and lucrative fisheries. However, the unique challenges faced by Lake Victoria, including fragmented infrastructure and regulatory frameworks, necessitate a tailored approach to unlocking its maritime potential.

### **2.3.1. Infrastructure and Navigation**

Like other large lakes worldwide, Lake Victoria faces challenges in maritime infrastructure and navigation. The Great Lakes of North America boast well-developed port facilities and navigation systems (Smith, 2020). However, Lake Victoria can draw valuable lessons from their experiences in enhancing maritime infrastructure, optimizing navigation, and improving connectivity to boost economic activities (Jones, 2021).

### **2.3.3. Environmental Considerations**

Environmental sustainability is paramount in unlocking maritime potential. Lake Baikal in Siberia, often considered the world's deepest lake, exemplifies the delicate balance required. Its unique ecosystem highlights the importance of conservation efforts to avoid ecological disruptions (Ivanova et al., 2017). Lake Victoria faces similar challenges, necessitating a focus on responsible resource management and conservation to mitigate environmental risks (Ogutu-Ohwayo, 2018).

### **2.3.4. Legal and Regulatory Frameworks**

Lake Victoria's riparian states have made strides in establishing legal frameworks for maritime activities, drawing inspiration from international agreements. However, challenges persist in harmonizing national regulations, hindering effective cross-border cooperation. In contrast, global lakes like the Great Lakes of North America benefit from more established international agreements, fostering sustainable management and resource utilization (Ruhl, 2012).

The Baltic Sea as well benefits from comprehensive agreements among neighboring countries, fostering cooperation and sustainable resource management (European Commission, 2017). Adopting similar approaches could enhance the utilization of Lake Victoria's maritime potential.

## **2.4. Challenges and Opportunities:**

Lake Victoria shares common challenges with other regional lakes, such as environmental degradation and overfishing. However, its unique challenges, including invasive species like

the Nile Perch, demand specific attention (Kolding et al., 2008). Despite challenges, Lake Victoria offers immense opportunities for poverty alleviation, job creation, and economic growth through the harnessing of its maritime potential (World Bank, 2019).

## **1. Previous initiatives and their outcomes**

Over the years, the riparian states have initiated various efforts to unlock the maritime potential of Lake Victoria, aiming to capitalize on its resources for economic growth.

### **i. Historical Initiatives:**

Historically, riparian states have recognized the importance of Lake Victoria's maritime potential. Initiatives such as the Lake Victoria Fisheries Organization (LVFO) established in 1994 aimed to foster cooperation in sustainable fisheries management. Additionally, collaborative efforts, such as the Lake Victoria Basin Commission (LVBC), sought to address broader environmental and development concerns.

These early initiatives yielded mixed results. While LVFO successfully facilitated cooperation in fisheries management, challenges persisted, including overfishing and inadequate regulatory frameworks. The LVBC made strides in addressing environmental concerns but faced difficulties in coordinating comprehensive development strategies among the riparian states.

### **ii. Economic Potential Initiatives:**

More recent initiatives have focused on tapping into the economic potential of Lake Victoria. For instance, the establishment of modern fishing ports and harbors has sought to enhance trade and transportation. In 2015, the Northern Corridor Integration Projects (NCIP) aimed to improve infrastructure and connectivity, fostering economic growth in the region.

Despite these efforts, challenges remain, with inadequate infrastructure hindering the efficient utilization of Lake Victoria's maritime potential. Limited progress has been made in developing modern navigation systems, impeding the growth of trade and tourism.

The Riparian states have invested in developing transportation infrastructure to facilitate maritime activities. Construction of ports and harbors, as seen in Kisumu (Kenya), Mwanza (Tanzania), and Entebbe (Uganda), aimed to enhance connectivity and trade within the region (Jones et al., 2019).

### **iii. Legal and Regulatory Initiatives:**

Riparian states have also endeavored to establish legal frameworks to govern maritime activities on Lake Victoria. The harmonization of national laws and adherence to international agreements, such as the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), have been focal points in these initiatives.

Recognizing the transboundary nature of Lake Victoria, riparian states engaged in efforts to harmonize legal frameworks. The EAC played a crucial role in developing agreements and protocols to streamline maritime regulations across borders (EAC, 2017).

Each riparian state developed national policies to govern maritime activities within its jurisdiction. For instance, Uganda established the National Fisheries Resources Research Institute (NaFIRRI) to oversee fisheries management and research (NaFIRRI, 2020). Kenya has also developed a National Maritime Transport Policy, which has gone through public participation. The Policy is aimed at promoting trade development and facilitation in maritime transport and allied services; Enhancing maritime safety, security and protection of the marine environment; Promoting investments in maritime transport and allied services among other Key objectives.

#### **iv. Environmental Sustainability Initiatives:**

Recognizing the environmental impact of maritime activities, the riparian states have engaged in initiatives to promote sustainability. Efforts to address ecological concerns include the adoption of conservation strategies and responsible resource management.

#### **Summary**

The section provides a comprehensive analysis of Lake Victoria's maritime potential, drawing comparisons with other regional and global lakes. Key lessons learned encompass economic activities, infrastructure development, environmental considerations, and legal frameworks. Despite facing challenges such as inadequate infrastructure, regulatory inconsistencies, and environmental degradation, initiatives like the Lake Victoria Fisheries Organization (LVFO) and the Northern Corridor Integration Projects (NCIP) demonstrate efforts to unlock economic opportunities. However, mixed outcomes highlight the need for coordinated action, harmonized legal frameworks, and sustainable resource management to harness Lake Victoria's maritime potential for poverty alleviation, job creation, and economic growth, while mitigating environmental risks.



# CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

## 3.1. Introduction:

Efforts to unlock the maritime potential of Lake Victoria necessitate a robust data collection approach that encompasses both primary and secondary sources. This introduction outlines the key data collection tools I employed for gathering comprehensive insights into the economic, environmental, and regulatory aspects of maritime development in the region. Utilizing these combinations of primary methods, such as surveys, interviews, and field observations, alongside secondary sources like reports, scholarly articles, and archival data, facilitated my thorough understanding of the challenges and opportunities facing Lake Victoria.

### 3.1.1 Primary Sources:

Engagement with various industry experts connected to the maritime activities on Lake Victoria such as the Kenya Ports Authority (KPA), Kenya Maritime Authority, (KMA), and regional maritime organizations concerned with promoting, protecting, and advocating for shipping and maritime activities in the region, known the Intergovernmental Standing Committee on Shipping (ISCOS) which is currently rebranding to Maritime Organization of Eastern Southern and Northern Africa- MOESNA, provided me with valuable insight into the practical aspects of the subject, that equipped me with first-hand information about the challenges, opportunities, and perspectives on enhancing maritime potential.

### 3.1.2 Secondary Sources:

The secondary sources play a critical role in providing context, historical perspectives, and a broader understanding of the topic. Documents and reports from governmental bodies, Regional Organizations such as East Africa Community (EAC), and research institutions wealth of information regarding the policies, regulations, and past initiatives related to Lake Victoria's maritime activities.

Government reports detailing infrastructure projects, environmental impact assessments, and economic analyses also played a vital role in data collection. Academic publications by various scholars, conference reports, such as Stakeholders' engagement programs of the riparian states of Lake Victoria normally organized by ISCOS, and other industry reports provided a synthesized overview of existing knowledge on the lake's maritime potential, aiding in identifying valuable information.

Despite their reliability, secondary sources may have limitations, including outdated information or potential bias from the sources themselves. Therefore, it is crucial for researchers to critically evaluate the credibility and relevance of these materials to ensure the accuracy and applicability of the data.

### **3.2: Analysis tools and techniques**

The data collection tools, and analysis techniques employed in this research paper were diverse and complementary. The combination of quantitative and qualitative methods ensured a robust exploration of the subject, fostering a holistic understanding of the challenges and opportunities in unlocking the lake's maritime potential.

These include:

#### **3.2.1. Content Analysis:**

Qualitative data from respondents were subjected to content analysis, which involved categorizing them into themes, allowing for a systematic exploration of recurring patterns, opinions, and sentiments.

#### **3.2.2. SWOT Analysis:**

A SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) was conducted to assess the internal and external factors influencing the maritime potential of Lake Victoria. This strategic analysis provided a comprehensive overview, aiding in the formulation of recommendations.

#### **3.2.3. Cost-Benefit Analysis:**

The economic viability of proposed initiatives was evaluated through cost-benefit analysis. This involved quantifying the anticipated costs and benefits associated with infrastructure development, considering economic, social, and environmental factors

### **3.3 Limitations and Constraints**

The utilization of both primary and secondary data sources offers a comprehensive understanding of the subject matter. However, this approach comes with its own set of limitations and constraints that must be addressed to ensure the reliability and validity of the findings.

#### **i. Limited Availability of Primary Data:**

One of the primary challenges I encountered while collecting data for this research was the limited availability of firsthand information. Due to the vastness of Lake Victoria and the diverse range of maritime activities, obtaining primary data directly from all the relevant key stakeholders, such as regional government departments concerned with maritime activities, fishermen, boat operators, local communities, and regional organizations mandated with Logistics Transport and maritime activities proved to be quite challenging. Their access for interviews or surveys was limited due to logistical, geographical, and other factors, limiting the depth and breadth of primary data.

#### **ii. Incomplete Historical Data:**

When utilizing secondary data sources, researchers often encounter the challenge of incomplete historical data related to maritime activities in Lake Victoria. Historical records may be sporadic, inconsistent, or even non-existent, making it challenging to establish

trends, patterns, and changes in maritime practices over time. This limitation hinders the ability to provide a comprehensive historical context for the research.

**iii. Reliance on Official Reports:**

Relying on official reports, publications, and government documents may not likely give accurate information, since some of the sources may be biased, outdated, or lack specificity on certain aspects of maritime activities. Some governments and organizations might prioritize specific data points, which might likely lead to gaps in some information crucial for a holistic understanding of the maritime potential across Lake Victoria.

**iv. Data Quality and Accuracy:**

Ensuring the quality and accuracy of both primary and secondary data poses significant constraints. For instance, over-relying on secondary data sources may lead to inaccurate information, as some secondary data contain errors or discrepancies. If not correctly identified, validated, and cross-referenced, these errors may result in inaccurate information. This prompted me to use various secondary sources to ensure that the data presented is accurate and updated.

**v. Technological Constraints:**

Limited access to advanced research tools, and technology, such as satellite imagery or advanced mapping techniques, hinders the precision and comprehensiveness of my research findings.

**Chapter Summary**

Efforts to unlock Lake Victoria's maritime potential necessitate a comprehensive approach, as outlined in this chapter. The combination of primary and secondary data collection methods provided valuable insights into the economic, environmental, and regulatory aspects of maritime development. Engagement with industry experts and analysis of governmental reports offered firsthand information and historical context, respectively. However, limitations such as incomplete historical data and reliance on official reports highlight the need for critical evaluation and validation of data sources.

The utilization of diverse analysis techniques, including content analysis, SWOT analysis, and cost-benefit analysis, facilitated a holistic exploration of the challenges and opportunities. Despite constraints such as the limited availability of primary data and technological limitations, this chapter underscores the importance of a robust data collection and analysis framework in understanding and addressing the complexities of unlocking Lake Victoria's maritime potential.

# **CHAPTER FOUR: CURRENT STATE OF MARITIME ACTIVITIES IN LAKE VICTORIA**

## **Introduction**

Lake Victoria stands as a pivotal hub for transportation and trade in East Africa, showcasing vast potential for maritime activities. This exploration delves into the key facets of transport and trade on the lake, highlighting the intricate network of shipping routes, vital ports, and bustling harbors. Uganda, Kenya, and Tanzania, the lake's riparian states, have undertaken significant steps to enhance maritime infrastructure and promote regional cooperation. From Uganda's port developments to Kenya's strategic upgrades at Kisumu Port and Tanzania's commitment to modernizing navigational channels, these efforts collectively foster economic growth and regional integration. This topic encapsulates the dynamic evolution of Lake Victoria's maritime activities, emphasizing their crucial role in the East African economy.

### **4.1. Transport and Trade Route**

Lake Victoria serves as a vital hub for transportation and trade in East Africa. It offers immense potential for shipping and maritime activities. This topic explores the key aspects of transportation and trade on the lake, focusing on shipping routes, ports, and harbors. Additionally, it outlines the steps taken by the riparian states—Uganda, Kenya, and Tanzania—to ensure the realization and advancement of maritime activities.

#### **4.1.1. Shipping Routes and their Significance**

Lake Victoria boasts a network of shipping routes connecting major cities and trading centers within the riparian states.

The establishment and maintenance of shipping routes on Lake Victoria play a pivotal role in facilitating the movement of goods and people, fostering economic growth and regional integration. These routes connect major cities and trading centers, serving as arteries for commerce and contributing to the development of the East African region (Smith, 2018).

### **4.2. Development of Shipping Routes**

#### **1. Uganda's Initiatives:**

Uganda, with a significant portion of Lake Victoria's shoreline, has prioritized the development of shipping routes. Collaborative efforts with neighboring states have also led to the harmonization of navigation protocols, contributing to a seamless flow of maritime activities (Smithson, 2019).

##### **i. Development of Port Infrastructure:**

One of the key initiatives by Uganda is the development of port infrastructure along the shores of Lake Victoria. The government has invested in modernizing existing ports and constructing new ones to facilitate efficient movement of goods and passengers. For

example, the Uganda Maritime Administration has been actively involved in upgrading ports such as Port Bell and Jinja Port to accommodate larger vessels and improve cargo handling facilities (Smithson, 2019).

**i. Enhancement of Navigation Services:**

Uganda has also focused on enhancing navigation services within Lake Victoria to ensure safe and reliable transportation. The Uganda Maritime Administration provides navigation aids such as buoys, beacons, and lighthouses to guide vessels navigating the lake. Furthermore, initiatives to improve hydrographic surveys and charting services contribute to safer navigation and facilitate the development of shipping routes.

**ii. Promotion of Regional Cooperation:**

Uganda recognizes the importance of regional cooperation in developing shipping routes within Lake Victoria. The country actively participates in initiatives led by regional bodies such as the EAC to harmonize policies, regulations, and infrastructure development efforts related to lake transport (EAC, 2019). Collaborative efforts with neighboring countries like Kenya and Tanzania have led to the establishment of joint projects aimed at improving connectivity and trade facilitation in the region (Makundi & Mwakaje, 2017).

**iii. Investment in Capacity Building:**

Capacity building is essential for the sustainable development of shipping routes within Lake Victoria. Uganda has invested in training programs and skill development initiatives for maritime personnel, including ship captains, engineers, and port workers. The Uganda Maritime Administration in collaboration with international partners, offers training courses on maritime safety, environmental protection, and port management to enhance the professionalism and efficiency of the workforce as well as undertakes annual examination of certificate of registration. (Inland Water Transport Bill, 2020)

**2. Kenya's Strategic Approach:**

Kenya, as a riparian state, has strategically developed and maintained shipping routes connecting key locations. Investments in modernizing navigational infrastructure, such as the implementation of advanced GPS systems, have been undertaken to improve safety and efficiency (Kenya Ports Authority, 2021). Collaboration with international organizations, including the International Maritime Organization (IMO), has further enhanced the standardization of maritime practices in the region (IMO, 2022).

**i. Strategic Development of Kisumu Port:**

Kisumu Port, situated on the Kenyan shores of Lake Victoria, plays a pivotal role in Kenya's maritime strategy. The port serves as a gateway for goods entering and leaving the East African region. In recent years, Kenya has prioritized the expansion and

modernization of Kisumu Port to enhance its capacity and efficiency. Investments in infrastructure, such as dredging operations to deepen the port's navigational channels, have been undertaken to accommodate larger vessels and increase cargo throughput.

**ii. Expansion of Piers:**

Alongside the development of Kisumu Port, Kenya has focused on expanding the network of piers along the shores of Lake Victoria. Piers serve as crucial points of access for passenger and cargo vessels, facilitating the movement of goods and people within the region. By investing in the construction and refurbishment of piers in key locations, such as Homa Bay, Asembo Bay, Mbita, Lwanda Kotieno, and Kendu Bay, Kenya aims to decentralize maritime activities and improve accessibility for lakeside communities.

**iii. Enhanced Connectivity and Trade Facilitation:**

Kenya's strategic approach to developing shipping routes within Lake Victoria is also aimed at enhancing connectivity and facilitating trade both domestically and regionally. By improving maritime infrastructure, such as ports and piers, Kenya seeks to reduce transportation costs, minimize transit times, and spur economic development in underserved areas. Furthermore, enhanced connectivity within Lake Victoria contributes to broader regional integration initiatives, promoting cross-border trade and cooperation among East African nations.

**3. Tanzania's Commitment:**

Tanzania, along its portion of Lake Victoria, has actively pursued the development of shipping routes. Investments in navigational technology and infrastructure improvements, such as dredging and channel maintenance, have been key components of Tanzania's commitment to ensuring safe and efficient navigation (Tanzania Ports Authority, 2019). Bilateral agreements with neighboring countries, including Uganda and Kenya, have fostered regional cooperation in the development and maintenance of shipping routes.

**2.3. Ports and Harbors:**

Ports and harbors along the shores of Lake Victoria serve as critical nodes in facilitating trade and transportation. They play a pivotal role in handling cargo, accommodating vessels, and promoting economic activities in the region.

**1. Uganda:**

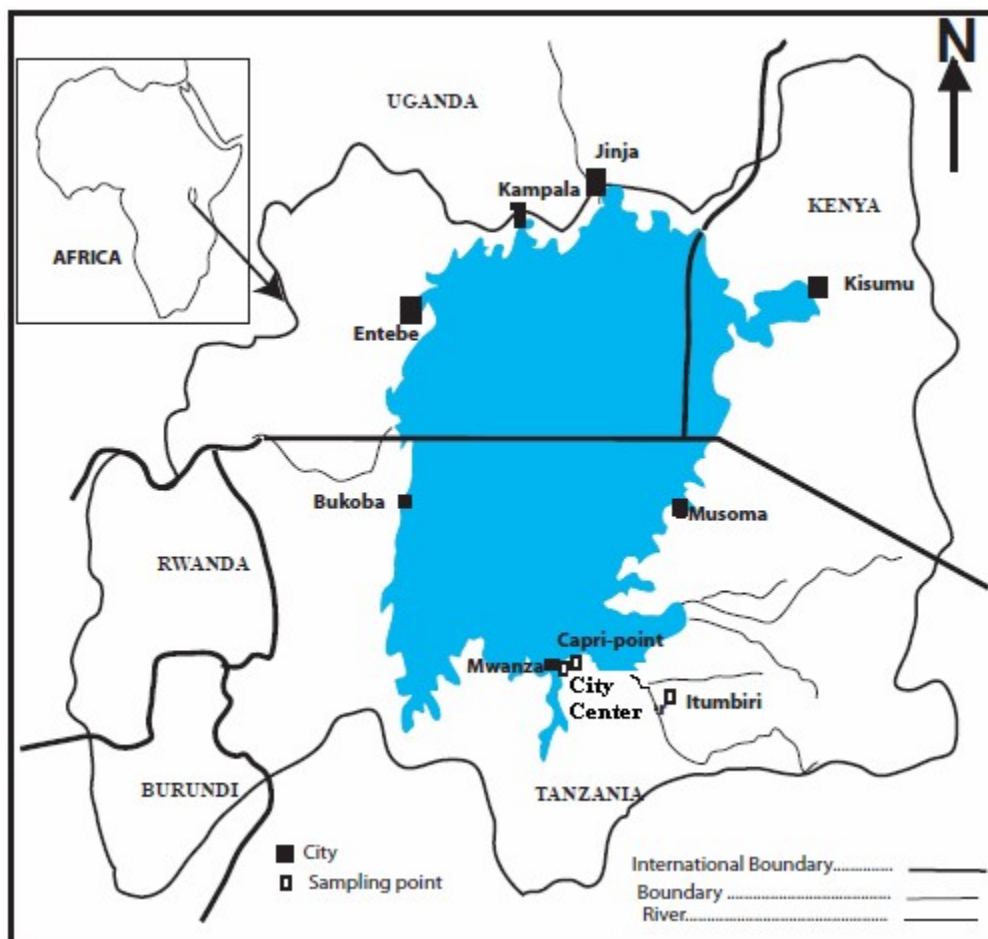
Uganda has invested in the modernization and expansion of its ports, such as Port Bell in Kampala. Improvements in cargo handling facilities and infrastructure enhancements aim to boost the efficiency and capacity of maritime activities. The government has also focused on creating a conducive business environment for private sector involvement in port development.

## 2. Kenya:

Kenya has strategically developed and upgraded its ports on Lake Victoria, with Kisumu being a key maritime hub. The government has implemented measures to improve port efficiency, enhance cargo handling capabilities, and promote intermodal transportation. Collaborative efforts with international partners have been leveraged to attract investments in port infrastructure.

## 3. Tanzania:

Tanzania has actively pursued the development and maintenance of ports and harbors along its portion of Lake Victoria, including Mwanza and Bukoba. Infrastructure upgrades, such as the expansion of port facilities and modernization initiatives, are aimed at accommodating increased trade volumes and fostering economic development. Bilateral agreements have been established to encourage regional cooperation in maritime activities.



Map of East Africa showing Lake Victoria and sampling main lake ports.

*Photo credit, Researchgat*

# **CHAPTER FIVE:**

## **NAVIGATIONAL CHALLENGES IN LAKE VICTORIA**

### **5.1. Introduction**

The navigation of Lake Victoria faces numerous challenges, which significantly hinder shipping activities. Understanding these challenges is crucial for devising effective strategies to enhance maritime transportation and promote economic growth in the region.

#### **Current Navigational Challenges**

##### **1. Hyacinth Infestation:**

One of the most pressing challenges affecting navigation in Lake Victoria is the proliferation of water hyacinth (*Eichhornia crassipes*). This invasive aquatic plant spreads rapidly across the lake's surface, forming dense mats that impede vessel movement. According to a study by Ogari et al. (2020), water hyacinth coverage in Lake Victoria has increased significantly over the past decade, reaching alarming levels in some areas. The presence of water hyacinth obstructs shipping lanes, increases fuel consumption, and poses safety risks to vessels, resulting in delays and economic losses.

#### **Effects of Water Hyacinth Invasion**

##### **i. Ecological Disruption:**

The invasion of water hyacinth in Lake Victoria has caused significant ecological disruption by altering water quality, reducing oxygen levels, and impeding sunlight penetration. These changes have adverse effects on native aquatic flora and fauna, leading to habitat loss, biodiversity decline, and changes in ecosystem dynamics. A study by Ochumba and Kibaara (2018) highlighted the negative impact of water hyacinths on fish populations and aquatic biodiversity in Lake Victoria, emphasizing the need for effective management strategies to restore ecological balance.

##### **ii. Economic Implications:**

The presence of water hyacinths in Lake Victoria has significant economic implications, particularly for communities reliant on fishing, transportation, and tourism. The invasion of water hyacinth obstructs fishing activities, reduces fish catches, and damages fishing gear, leading to income loss and food insecurity among fishing communities. Additionally, water hyacinth impedes navigation by clogging waterways, increasing transportation costs, and disrupting trade routes, thereby affecting regional economies. A study by Njiru et al. (2019) estimated the economic losses associated with the water hyacinth invasion in Lake Victoria, underscoring the urgent need for coordinated mitigation efforts.

#### **Efforts by Riparian States to Mitigate Water Hyacinth Invasion**

##### **i. Mechanical Removal:**

Riparian states have employed various mechanical methods, such as manual harvesting, mechanical dredging, and the use of aquatic weed harvesters, to control water hyacinth



proliferation in Lake Victoria. These efforts aim to clear waterways, improve navigation, and reduce the spread of water hyacinths. However, mechanical removal alone may not be sufficient to address the underlying causes of water hyacinth infestation and requires continuous maintenance to sustain effectiveness.

ii. **Biological Control:**

Biological control methods, including the introduction of natural enemies such as weevils (*Neochetina* spp.) and moths (*Niphograpta Albiguttalis*), have been implemented to manage water hyacinth populations in Lake Victoria. These biocontrol agents target specific plant parts or life stages of water hyacinth, reducing its growth and spread over time. While biological control shows promise as a sustainable long-term solution, its effectiveness depends on factors such as environmental conditions and the compatibility of biocontrol agents with native species.

iii. **Community Engagement and Awareness:**

Riparian states have also engaged local communities in water hyacinth management initiatives, raising awareness about the ecological, social, and economic impacts of invasive species. Community-based approaches involve training, capacity building, and incentivizing community participation in monitoring and control activities. By involving local stakeholders in decision-making processes, riparian states can foster stewardship of Lake Victoria's resources and promote sustainable management practices.

1. **Shoaling and Sedimentation:**

Shoaling and sedimentation present significant navigational hazards in Lake Victoria, particularly in shallow areas and near river mouths. Sediment deposition, exacerbated by deforestation and land degradation, reduces water depths, restricts navigable channels, and increases the likelihood of grounding accidents. A study conducted by Masese et al. (2019) highlighted the impact of sedimentation on navigation in Lake Victoria, emphasizing the need for dredging operations to maintain adequate water depths for safe shipping.

2. **Lack of Navigational Aids:**

As mentioned in the previous topics the absence of sufficient navigational aids, such as buoys, beacons, and accurate charts, poses significant challenges to maritime navigation in Lake Victoria. Navigating the lake's vast expanse without reliable markers or up-to-date navigational charts increases the risk of collisions, groundings, and other navigational accidents. According to a report by the LVBC, 2018, the inadequate provision of navigational aids undermines the safety and efficiency of shipping operations in the region, necessitating investments in navigational infrastructure and hydrographic surveys

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