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Assessing the Key Determinants of Economic Development in African Countries in the Context of India-Africa Trade and Economic Cooperation: A Best–Worst Method Approach

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Abstract:

The rise of BRICS nations has reshaped the structure of global governance and strengthened South-South policy, opening opportunities among developing nations. The study checks the key determinants of economic development in India and Africa. Drawing on empirical data collected from fifteen experts in economics from different fields. The research employs the Best-Worst Method (BWM) approach to systematically identify and prioritise key determinants (Redwan & Shabur, 2025). The data were further analyzed for consistency level and all the data are within the threshold limit. The BWM identifies and ranks the most influential and least influential factors based on expert judgement. The results show that the most important factor affecting India's economic cooperation with Africa is the potential for trade, while the contribution of the Indian diaspora is the least influential, suggesting that the Indian diaspora contribution is crucial for long-term cooperation.

Keywords: Best-worst method, Economic Development, India, Africa

1. Introduction

The relationship between India and Africa has a long history. Mohandas Gandhi played an important role in the form of the Satyagraha movement against the bill of Asiatic registration in 1906-07 (Biswas, 2024), and later his influential role led to the formation of the African National Congress. India provided financial, moral, and political support to African countries during the Cold War, when they were struggling for an anti-colonial system (Beri, 2011). After the end of the Cold War and the emergence of globalisation, India adjusted its global relations. The liberalisation and privatisation boost political-economic bonding globally. Due to South-South cooperation, India has emerged one of the strategic partners of Africa. The relations have evolved by increasing bilateral trade, infrastructural development, foreign direct investment, technology transfer and maritime transfer. The development emphasises mutual benefit, cooperation, and partnerships (Naidu, 2013; Shrivastava, 2009).

The India-Africa cooperation has evolved into a comprehensive development partnership based on the objectives of South-South cooperation (Dubey, 2016). Further, the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) have emphasized the importance of economic cooperation in fostering development across the continent (Brandi et al., 2025; Fofack & Mold, 2021). Another summit, like the India–Africa Forum Summit (IAFS), has further institutionalised the relationship by contributing to economic transformation through renewable energy, information technology, agriculture, and pharmaceuticals (Union, 2026). Consequently, the economic cooperation between India and Africa is unlikely to depend particularly on the volume of trade. Its effectiveness depends on several determinants, including FDI attractiveness, political stability, regulatory environment, infrastructure, technology transfer, logistics and port connectivity, contribution of the Indian diaspora, and market size.

The previous literature on India-Africa studies is mainly based on gravity models, econometric analyses, case studies and qualitative assessments to evaluate trade and investment. Past studies have identified various determinants of economic development between these two countries, such as infrastructure, technology transfer, trade, and investment. Prior literature did not help prioritise the importance of these determinants. To fill the gap in the research, Best-worst method (BWM) is used to recognize and prioritize the nine factors of economic development under the trade between India and Africa. With the help of expert judgement, the study provides criteria weights for each determinant.

India's Development Partnership Strategy

India's emergence as a strategic partner after the post-BRICS era (Brautigam, 2015). The relationship between these two nations has now shifted from an anti-colonial movement to commercial-driven partnerships. Both countries have shared trade and FDI, and create opportunities as constructive development partners for Africa for their economic growth. India exports irrigation equipment from Kirloskar Brothers Ltd. facilities at low cost to African farmers and exports MittiCool refrigerator, which is made up of terracotta clay and does not run on electricity (Viswanathan & Mishra, 2020). India also provides training about electronic voting systems and parliamentary procedures to the African nations (Banik & Mawdsley, 2023). As a humanitarian aid India offers low-cost generic medicine to the millions of Africans. Some authors argue that India imports natural resources from Africa and then exports goods to Africa (Aneja, 2018). Now, African countries receive more aid in the form of trade and FDI from southern countries than from other Western countries (Cheru, 2018).

In recent years, a key component of India's development strategy has emphasised knowledge transfer. With the help of the Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) programme (IANS, 2026), India has provided training to African professionals, civil servants and entrepreneurs (Mawdsley, 2018). These initiatives will further enhance institutional effectiveness and promote good governance, which are key determinants of sustainable economic development. Overall, India's development partnership strategy presents a comprehensive framework that integrates trade potential, FDI attractiveness, political stability, the regulatory environment, infrastructure, technology transfer, logistics and port connectivity, the contribution of the Indian diaspora, and market size. Further, regular conclaves and dialogues between India and Africa boost trade and economic development between the two regions at the continental, regional, and sub-regional levels (Dubey & Rajwar, 2026). So, India provides aid to Africa by nurturing relationships and fostering inclusive development (Rowden, 2025).

Determinants of India-Africa Economic Cooperation

Since its independence, India has invested in enhancing South-South diplomatic and economic cooperation. Further, the relationship between India and Africa has substantially expanded since the 1990s. The India- Africa trade forum strengthens trade capacity, reduce barriers and foster trade and economic co-operations between the nations. It opens the import and export of automobiles, pharmaceuticals, engineering products, agricultural products and renewable energy (Biswas, 2023). The bilateral trade between these two countries has expanded through the participation of the public and private sectors. Similarly, the relations between these two countries have increased due to PM Modi's visit to Uganda and the announcement of the Kampala principles in 2018. Kampala Principles comprise ten guiding principles on digital technologies, market access, agricultural productivity and cybersecurity. The principles have laid the foundation for the development of Africa, and it will be the first priority of India (Shah, 2025). The past studies argue that India offers resource-driven partnerships, digital infrastructure, industrial development, and complete sustainable development (Mawdsley & McCann, 2010). India emerges as one of the important trading partners of a variety of goods and services to African nations. The past studies have evaluated the various determinants between India and Africa for enhancing economic development. The determinants are trade potential, FDI attractiveness, political stability, regulatory environment, infrastructure, technology transfer, logistics and port connectivity, contribution of the Indian diaspora, and market size (Ochieng & Musyoka, 2017). The trade potential of any nation enhances market expansion, increased exports, economies of scale, technology transfer and economic growth. The higher openness in trade provides higher economic growth due to a strong global supply chain (P. R. Krugman & Obstfeld, 2008). It increases the market size of any country as it attracts more investment and trade, consumer demand and multinational investment (Ubabukoh & Animashaun, 2026a). In the context of India-Africa trade potential, India offered educational scholarships, technical and medical expertise, and scholarships in recent decades (Biswas, 2023). The trade potential between India and Africa is the third largest trading partner after China and the European Union, and it has surpassed $97.85 billion by 2023(Confederation of Indian Industry, 2024). Other determinants like FDI offer employment opportunities, technologies, expertise, and flow of products and services in home countries. According to Electric Paradigm by Dunning (1991), MNCs invest in the countries where they find a favourable location, favourable industrial policies and stable political conditions. The past studies demonstrated that an industrial-friendly environment attracts higher FDI and fosters industrial and productivity growth (Ubabukoh &

Animashaun, 2026). The FDI in Africa has increased to $97 billion, and is expected to reach approximately 75% by 2024. Egypt witnessed a mega infrastructural project valued at $35 billion (Confederation of Indian Industry, 2025). Although FDI depends on the political stability of any nation. It minimises uncertainty, boosts investors' confidence and long-term infrastructure goals. According to North (1990) good governance and political stability offer a better and sustained economic growth. It is one of the elements of economic development and investment.

Recently, the World Bank has removed the parameters of ranking of ease of doing business, but the determinants of this dimension are still used for mapping development (Bank, 2021). A better business environment enhances investment, encourages entrepreneurial activities and increases firm competitiveness. The hassle-free regulatory environment provides transparent frameworks, simplified taxation policies and fosters economic performance. Before discontinuing in 2021, the metrics of ease of doing business increased investors' confidence and competitiveness among domestic as well as international firms (Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade, 2021). The regulatory environment in business is an important element to boost the infrastructure of any country. It helps in improving connectivity, reducing transaction cost, providing better accessibility and affordability of products and services (Wagner, 2019). Infrastructure investment attracts domestic as well as foreign investors due to better roads, rails, ports, digital connectivity and telecommunication services (Calderón & Servén, 2014). Infrastructural development provides connectivity of railways, ports and roads. The connectivity of ports demonstrates that countries with a well-developed infrastructure of logistics and ports enhance national growth with higher trade volume. The Sagarmala project promotes coastal shipping, improves port connectivity and strengthens India's trade with other nations, including African nations. In the year 2023, Adani entered into a 30-year agreement with the Tanzanian Port to open a container terminal at Dar es Salaam. It has provided an annual capacity of one million Twenty-foot Equivalent Units and 83% of Tanzania's total container traffic (Adani, 2024).

Further, determinants like technology transfer facilitate innovation, research collaboration, and digital partnerships. India provides technological capabilities to African Nations through structural digital transformation and technical cooperation (Dubey & Biswas, 2016). It provides an e-network project that enhances e-education services and telemedicine services to various African countries (Mehta & Odote, 2025). The UPI system of India and M-Pesa services of Africa have provided affordable financial products and services in both nations (Aurazo & Gasmi, 2024). Finally, the diaspora communities of any country contribute technology transfer, culture transfer, knowledge transfer and investment opportunities to the host countries. The Indian diaspora provides various commercial activities to the African countries, like financial services, industrial investment and entrepreneurial development and strengthening bilateral relations (Qazi et al., 2025). On the occasion of the 100th anniversary of Mohandas Gandhi's return to India from South Africa, and the event of 13th Pravasi Bhartiya Divas, the present government addressed that three million diasporas are of strategic importance for the nation's growth (Biswas, 2024).

Table 1 Region Wise Indian Exports to Africa, USD billion

Region/ Year	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
West Africa	9.45	13.57	17.73	12.88	13.15
East Africa	5.79	8.26	11.07	11.40	11.07
North Africa	4.81	7.13	8.35	7.21	6.94
Central Africa	1.53	1.68	1.57	1.49	1.33
Southern African Customs Union (SACU)	4.22	6.62	8.92	9.30	7.99
Other South African Countries	1.94	2.97	3.57	3.09	2.21
India's Total Export to Africa	27.73	40.22	51.20	45.38	42.70

Source: Ministry of Commerce & Industry, Government of India

Table 2: List of determinants and their description

Determinants	Description	Sources
Trade Potential	It refers to the maximum amount of goods and services that can be traded between two economies.	(Anderson, 2016; Balassa, 1965)
Foreign Direct Investment	FDI attracts foreign investment and provides favourable market and economic conditions to the host nations. It provides capital technology, expertise, employment opportunities and innovation to the home countries.	(Dunning, 2015; Helpman et al., 2008)
Political Stability	The stable political environment provides effective governance, reduces the uncertainty of business and facilitates long-term investments.	(Alesina et al., 1996; Bank, 2024; Kaufmann et al., 2010)
Regulatory Environment	It refers to the system of regulations, laws, policies, and procedures established by governments that govern economic activities, as well as business operations. The role of the regulatory environment in facilitating business operations and cross-border trade is very important.	(Bank, 2020)
Infrastructure development	The development of infrastructure enhances connectivity and improves the supply chain efficiency of countries. It refers to the quality of transport networks, telecommunications systems, digital infrastructure and logistics facilities.	(Aschauer, 1989; Calderón & Servén, 2008)
Technology Transfer	It is the process through which knowledge, innovations and expertise are transmitted between the countries. The enhancement of technology enhances industrial productivity, innovation capacity and sustainable economic growth.	(Bozeman, 2000; Keller, 2004)
Logistic and Port Connectivity	It refers to the efficient connectivity in waterways. It reduces transportation cost, improves customs procedures and shipping infrastructure.	(Arvis et al., 2023; Notteboom & Rodrigue, 2005)
Contribution of the Indian Diaspora	The Indian diaspora plays an economic, social and institutional role in shaping the country's trade, investment, entrepreneurship and diplomatic relations between the nations.	(Plaza & Ratha, 2011)
Market Size	Market size provides opportunities for trade, investment, expenditure and long-term business expansion. It refers to the demand of an economy and total purchasing capacity, particularly measured through population, income level and consumer expenditure.	(P. Krugman, 1980)

Source: Author compilation

Novelty of the study

The relevance of the study is use of BWM Method and accentuation of the significance of economic development of African countries by India-Africa trade cooperation. The past studies have examined economic relations through panel data analyses, econometric analyses and qualitative analyses. Alternatively, the paper uses the BWM method for evaluating and prioritising nine determinants of economic development. The paper uses expert judgements and provides reliable rankings of nine determinants. Further, the study provides an application of the BWM method in the field of economics and development economics and provides useful policy development.

Objectives of the study

The research study identifies the important determinants that influencing economic development in India-Africa economic cooperation. The aim of the study aims to assess and rank the determinants of economic growth of African Countries using the Best-Worst Method (BWM). The study aims to identify key determinants and prioritisation of the same and to give evidence-based policy recommendations for the African countries. The study also provides policy and practical recommendations to improve the trade and economic cooperation between India and Africa.

Theoretical Background

In order to obtain the determinants on a prioritising basis, Rezaei (2015) used Multi-Criteria Decision Making (MCDM) approach and proposed a Best-Worst Method and compared to other methods like Analytic Hierarchy Process (AHP), BWM provide more reliable and preferable weights, minimises inconsistency and needs fewer pairwise comparisons. It provides an individual to choose between the best and worst important criteria or items from the given set. The idea behind is to identify the most and least preferred options from the given set. BWM method easily handled both quantitative and qualitative data as compared to other methods like TOPSIS (Technique for Order Preference by Similarity to Ideal Solution), which depends on distance-based calculations for quantitative data (Bari & Leung, 2007). Other methods, such as ELECTRE and PROMETHEE, provide effective ranking for a large set of alternatives, but BWM offers priority weights, computationally efficient and easy to understand (Ishizaka & Nemery, 2013). The past studies have used BWM in interdisciplinary subjects like economics, business, finance, management, technology and social science (Mi et al., 2019). Gupta & Barua (2018) used BWM to determine factors for sustainable manufacturing, (Wan Ahmad et al., 2017) used to determine social sustainability in supply chains. BWM have been widely used in the disciplines of supply chain management, infrastructural planning, sustainable development and health sectors (Maral & Özdemir, 2025).

Overall, BWM is easy to use, has higher precision and consistency, and it is ideal for situations where there are limited expert input and fewer criteria.

2. Materials and Method

The Best-Worst Method (BWM) is a multi-criteria decision-making (MCDM) method, which was initially proposed by (Mohammadi & Rezaei, 2022; Rezaei, 2015) was applied to calculate the relative importance of criteria affecting the potential of Indo-African trade. Compared to the other methods, such as AHP, BWM requires fewer pairwise comparisons ($2n - 3$ instead of $n\ (n - 1)/2$) and has been shown to produce more consistent judgments, which makes it well-suited for expert-elicitation studies with a moderate number of criteria (Rezaei, 2015). The linear formulation of Rezaei (2016) was adopted here, since it guarantees a unique solution for the criteria weights, unlike the original nonlinear model, which can yield multiple optimal solutions.

Let the decision panel comprise a set of evaluators (experts) indexed by $e = 1, 2, \ldots, m$, where $m = 15$ in this study, and let the criteria set be denoted:

$$\mathfrak{D} = \{ \delta_1, \delta_2, \ldots, \delta_n \} \quad (1)$$

where $\delta_j\ (j = 1, 2, \ldots, n)$ represents the j-th trade-facilitation criterion (here $n = 9$: trade potential, FDI attractiveness, political stability, regulatory environment, infrastructure, technology transfer, logistics and port connectivity, contribution of the Indian diaspora, and market size) and ω_j is the unknown weight to be estimated for δ_j, subject to:

$$\sum_{j}^{n} \omega_j = 1, \quad \omega_j \geq 0 \ \forall j \quad (2)$$

Step 1: Identification of the best and worst criteria

Each expert e independently identifies the most influential criterion, denoted δ_B, and the least influential criterion, δ_W, from the set $\mathfrak{D}$.

Step 2: Identification of Best-to-Others (BO) vector

Each expert rates the preference of the best criterion δ_B over every other criterion on a 1–9 scale, producing the vector:

$$\mathcal{U}_B = (a_{B1}, a_{B2}, \dots, a_{Bn}) \quad (3)$$

where a_{Bj} denotes the stated preference of the best criterion over criterion δ_j, and $a_{BB} = 1$.

Step 3: Identification of Others-to-Worst (OW) vector

Similarly, each criterion is rated against the worst criterion δ_W:

$$\mathcal{U}_W = (a_{1W}, a_{2W}, \dots, a_{nW})^T \quad (4)$$

with a_{jW}denoting the preference of δ_j over δ_W, and $a_{WW} = 1$.

Step 4: Computation of optimal weights

The optimal weight vector $\omega* = (\omega_1*, \omega_2*, \dots, \omega_n*)$ is obtained by solving the linear min–max program (Rezaei, 2016):

$$min\, \xi \quad (5)$$

subject to:

$$|\omega_B - \omega_{Bj}\, \omega_j| \leq \xi, \quad for\ all\ j \quad (6)$$

$$|\omega_j - a_{jW}\, \omega_W| \leq \xi, \quad for\ all\ j \quad (7)$$

$$\sum_{j}^{n} \omega_j = 1, \quad \omega_j \geq 0 \quad for\ all\ j \quad (8)$$

Here ξ (the auxiliary consistency variable, reported in the results as $Ksi*$) represents the maximum absolute deviation between the stated pairwise preferences and their implied weight ratios; a smaller ξ* indicates a more consistent judgment set.

Step 5: Consistency verification

The reliability of each expert's judgments was verified using the input-based consistency ratio (CR), calculated as:

$$CR_e = \frac{\xi *_e}{CI(a_{BW})} \quad (9)$$

where $\xi *_e$ is the optimal objective value obtained for expert *e* from Eqs. (5)– (8), and *CI* (a_{BW}) is the consistency index corresponding to the expert's stated best-to-worst preference a_{BW}, taken from the input-based consistency index table of Liang et al. (2020), who examined consistency issues in BWM and established measurement thresholds for judging acceptable consistency. A judgment set was retained only if CR_e did not exceed the corresponding threshold τ_e reported for the associated a_{BW} value; experts exceeding this threshold were required to revise their pairwise comparisons.

Step 6: Aggregation of expert weights

Since $m = 15$ independent expert judgments were collected, the final aggregated weight of criterion δ_j was obtained using the geometric mean operator, which is preferred over the arithmetic mean for aggregating ratio-scale priority weights:

$$\bar{\omega_j} = \prod_{e=1}^{m} \omega_{j,e}/m \quad (10)$$

normalized so that $\Sigma_j\, \bar{\omega_j} = 1$, where ω_j,*e* is the weight assigned to criterion δ_j by expert e, obtained from Eqs. (5)–(8).

3. Result, Discussion and findings

Selection of Experts

The research used a purposive sampling technique for the selection of fifteen experts. A group of fifteen experts with extensive experience in the field of economics were identified based on their roles, expertise, and contributions to the field of economics. The BWM technique needs a small sample size for consistency and realistic results (Chen et al., 2020). These experts were formally invited via email, and then the research purpose was explained. Upon confirming their participation, the experts received briefing materials outlining the research objectives, the criteria to be evaluated (e.g., trade potential, FDI attractiveness, political stability, regulatory environment, infrastructure, technology transfer, logistics and port connectivity, contribution of the Indian diaspora, and market size), and a brief explanation of the Best Worst Method (BWM). The rating scale includes a 9-point Likert scale (1 indicates least concern and 9 indicates most significant concern) and aligns with the requirements of the Best-Worst Method. Each expert individually identified the most important as the best one and the least important as the worst one, and after that, the expert evaluated the comparison between Best-to-others and Others-to-worst. This ensured that the experts were familiar with the process and criteria. A total of fifteen experts from diverse fields of economics participated in the study. Most of the participants were below the age of 30, followed by those in the age group 31-40 years (33.3%, n = 5). The highest qualifications of most of the experts were a doctorate, while 26.7% (n = 4) possessed a master's degree, and regarding occupation, most of the experts belonged to the academics/researchers. The demographic profile indicates that the expert panel was highly qualified and represented diverse professional backgrounds, which helps in supporting the reliability of the BWM evaluation.

Table 3: Demographic Profile of the respondents

Characteristic	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Age	Below 30 Years	6	40.0
	31–40 Years	5	33.3
	41–50 Years	1	6.7
	51–60 Years	1	6.7
	61 Years and above	2	13.3
Qualifications	Bachelor's Degree	1	6.7
	Master's Degree	4	26.7
	PhD	10	66.7
Occupations	Academic/Researcher	12	80.0
	Government Official	2	13.3
	Other	1	6.7

Source: Author Compilation

Criteria weights and rank

After carefully evaluating nine determinants of economic development, the trade potential is identified as the best criterion, whereas the contribution of the Indian diaspora is the worst one for boosting economic development between India and Africa. The linear programming model of BWM solver is used to evaluates the optimal weights for the given criteria. At first, the input-based consistency level is calculated as shown in table 4 for checking the consistency level of the data. This is a value within an acceptable range, thereby ensuring that all the experts' pairwise comparisons are consistent and reliable for the purposes of analysis. The threshold values for acceptable

Consistency Ratio in this situation are defined as 0.366, which is considered as the acceptable threshold value below which the Consistency Ratio is acceptable. Then, table 5 shows the weight of all nine criteria has been evaluated with the help of BWM solver. The experts specified the preference of economic development criteria as shown in Table 6. Table 7 displays the preference over the least important criterion. Further, after the expert selection and data collections, the overall criteria weights were calculated with the help of the BWM solver, nine criteria weights. Table 8 below provides the relative weight of the criteria and their rank of the determinants influencing India-Africa relations. The results provide some variation in the identified determinants. Those criteria that receive the highest number of aggregated weights indicate the most influential determinants for the economic growth between India and Africa, and the least aggregated weights indicate the least influential determinants. The ranking provides an empirical basis for the prioritization of the policies.

Table 4 Consistency check of expert

S.no	Ksi*	Input-based CR	Associated Threshold
1	0.012244898	0.035714286	0.3657
2	0.024606299	0.071428571	0.3663
3	0.019836584	0.041666667	0.3662
4	0.6621342	0.055555556	0.3662
5	0.036398752	0.097222222	0.3662
6	0.153550864	0.357142857	0.3657
7	0.06227758	0.214285714	0.3657
8	0.059171598	0.214285714	0.3657
9	0.089791555	0.361111111	0.3662
10	0.050600193	0.152777778	0.3662
11	0.061025224	0.222222222	0.3662
12	0.054575094	0.152777778	0.3662
13	0.075642965	0.222222222	0.3662
14	0.065274151	0.152777778	0.3662
15	0.055510031	0.208333333	0.3662
The pairwise comparison consistency level is acceptable			

Source: BWM Solver

Table 5 Normalized Criteria weight of Expert

Determinants	Trade Potential	FDI attractiveness	Political stability	Regulatory environment	Infrastructure	Technology transfer	Logistics and port connectivity	Contribution of the Indian diaspora	Market size
Overall weight	0.177536884	0.142149908	0.071959242	0.073458601	0.15200739	0.151045646	0.087445324	0.062612315	0.08178469

Source: BWM Solver

Table 6 Best to Others

Best to Others	Trade potential	FDI attractiveness	Political stability	Regulatory environment	Infrastructure	Technology transfer	Logistics and port connectivity	Contribution of Indian diaspora	Market size
Trade Potential	1	2	4	4	2	2	3	9	3

Source: Author Compilation

Table 7 Others to the Worst

Others to the Worst	Regulatory environment
Trade potential	9
FDI attractiveness	7
Political stability	2
Regulatory environment	3
Infrastructure	8
Technology transfer	8
Logistics and port connectivity	5
Contribution of Indian diaspora	1
Market size	4

Source: Author Compilation

Table 8 Relative weight of the criteria and their rank

Criteria	Criteria weights	Rank
Trade potential	0.17753	1
FDI attractiveness	0.14215	4
Political stability	0.071959	8
Regulatory environment	0.073459	7

Infrastructure	0.152007	2
Technology transfer	0.151046	4
Logistics and port connectivity	0.087445	5
Contribution of Indian diaspora	0.062612	9
Market size	0.081785	6

Source: BWM Solver

4. Conclusion, Limitations and Future Scope of the Study

The main determinants affecting the economic relationship between India and Africa were identified, assessed and prioritized using the Best-Worst Method (BWM) approach of the research study. The study includes judgement of fifteen experts from the diverse field of academia, and government. The study analyses the systematic ranking of nine determinants and reveals that trade potential emerged as the best and most influential determinant, followed by infrastructure, while the contribution of the Indian diaspora was the least influential factor. The results indicate that trade and infrastructure are the primary drivers for economic growth and strengthening economic engagement between India and Africa. The study suggests that there is a need to promote trade potential through bilateral trade and agreements. There is also a need to attract foreign direct investment for improved market access and long-term economic co-operation. The study uses and applies the BWM, a multi-criteria decision-making technique that provides high consistency and needs fewer expert judgements. The study provides a comprehensive framework for prioritising the best determinants from the multiple determinants. The study provides practical guidance to policymakers to enhance South–South economic partnerships. Apart from the contributions, the study has certain limitations. The study uses expert judgements of a relatively small sample of fifteen respondents. The results may not fully provide a perspective of diverse stakeholders. The study provides rank prioritisation rather than measuring the empirical impact of these nine determinants of economic growth.

Furthermore, future research extends this study by including a larger and more diverse panel of experts from diverse organisations. The research will also integrate the Best-Worst Method (BWM) with other multi-criteria decision-making techniques, such as AHP, ANP, DEMATEL TOPSIS, and VIKOR. Future study would further enhance the robustness and practical relevance of policy recommendations for enhancing India and Africa economic co-operation.

5. Implications of the study

Policy Implications

The study comprises the literature on India-Africa economic cooperation and provides a ranking based on the prioritisation of strategic partnership using the BWM framework. The study provides practical policy suggestions to the policy makers, institutions and organizations to enhance and increase the economic cooperation between India and Africa and achieve the targets of United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The findings of the study offer actionable policy implications for regulators, governments and development partners to foster a sustainable economic development ecosystem in Africa, as the principal drivers of India-Africa economic cooperation. Policymakers should make a comprehensive framework for trade expansion, infrastructure development, technology transfer, and investment promotion to promote an inclusive ecosystem. The study

identifies that the contribution of the Indian diaspora as the most significant barrier underscores the urgent need for clear, rational rules that promote cohesive business opportunities. The diaspora networks should continue to be leveraged as complementary channels for networking and entrepreneurship. Further, a regulatory framework and maintaining political stability will boost investor confidence and encourage greater Indian foreign direct investment. Governments and industry stakeholders should develop a joint India-Africa diaspora network under the framework. Public-private partnerships should be encouraged to increase technology transfer and sustainable investment to support the growth of a competitive e-business workforce. Although the contribution of the Indian diaspora and maintaining political stability will receive the lowest priority in the BWM analysis, Joint initiatives for regulatory harmonisation can help create a more integrated and resilient digital marketplace across Africa to facilitate long-term economic cooperation, capacity building, and infrastructure investment.

Practical Implications

The research demonstrates the usefulness of the Best-Worst Method (BWM) for prioritising strategic economic determinants and provides a ranking of determinants that can be applied to other South-South cooperation contexts, including BRICS, ASEAN-Africa, or India-Latin America partnerships. The study will help to identify priority areas for economic development. The prioritised determinants provide a roadmap for economic cooperation strategies between India and Africa. Overall, the study shows that Trade Potential, Infrastructure Development, Technology Transfer, and FDI Attractiveness enable the driver of India's strategic engagement with Africa, while the Contribution of the Indian Diaspora remains an enabling facilitator for long-term collaboration. These findings offer evidence-based guidance for strengthening India-Africa cooperation to achieve Africa's Agenda 2063 and fulfilment of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)(Chandra Das, 2026).

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