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## A Study on Customs House Agents Difficulties towards Export and Import Documentation with Special Reference to V.O.C Port

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### ABSTRACT

Accurate and timely documentation is essential to guaranteeing smooth import and export operations in the fast-paced global commerce climate of today. Custom House Agents (CHAs) play a crucial role in international logistics by serving as a liaison between traders, customs departments, and port authorities. The difficulties CHAs encounter when managing import and export paperwork at the V.O.C Port Authority in Tamil Nadu are examined in this study. Digital system bugs, frequent policy changes, inadequate training, and complicated documentation are among the major issue areas identified by the study, which is based on a structured survey of 154 CHAs and is backed by statistical analysis methods including Chi-square, ANOVA, and correlation. To increase operational efficiency, the results highlight the necessity of streamlining policies, improving digital infrastructure, and implementing focused skill development initiatives. By addressing these bottlenecks, stakeholders can strengthen India's trade facilitation efforts and contribute to a more competitive logistics ecosystem.

**Keywords:** Custom House Agents, Export Documentation, Import Procedures, VOC Port, Logistics Challenges, ICEGATE, Trade Facilitation

### INTRODUCTION

Effective trade documentation and logistics are essential to the seamless operation of international trade. A variety of legal, regulatory, and operational requirements are involved in import and export procedures, and they must be met precisely and on time. In handling these requirements, Custom House Agents (CHAs) are essential since they serve as a liaison between importers, exporters, and government representatives. Appropriate documentation reduces extra expenses like demurrage or penalties, guarantees compliance, and avoids delays. However, processing documentation can be difficult due to the intricacy of regulations, the absence of conventional practices, and the frequent changes in policy. Digital file systems and other technological aids have been implemented to streamline the process, but acceptance barriers and technical issues still exist. Such inefficiencies can have a major effect on trade competitiveness in emerging economies. Therefore, strengthening documentation practices is essential for enhancing port performance and global trade connectivity.

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

**Paul Berger (2025)** "Tariff Turmoil Elevates Customs Brokers to Star Role in Supply Chains" Berger explores how sudden tariff and trade policy shifts have made documentation even more critical, putting pressure on CHAs to stay agile and well-informed. This study shows how documentation accuracy has become a competitive advantage amid changing global trade policies.

**Vatsal Singh (2024)** "Problems Faced by CHAs in Import and Export Clearance by Sea & Airways" Singh identifies persistent challenges such as ICEGATE system failures, outdated procedures, and lack of coordination between customs and port officials. The study suggests improving interdepartmental communication and system redundancy.

**Priya Menon (2024)** "Training Needs Assessment for Customs House Agents in India" This study identifies critical gaps in the professional training of CHAs, especially in the use of digital tools like ICEGATE. It recommends structured certification programs and frequent capacity-building workshops to enhance operational efficiency.

**Arvind Rao (2023)** "Effect of Policy Changes on Customs Clearance Efficiency" Rao's work emphasizes how frequent updates to GST, customs tariffs, and documentation protocols create confusion among CHAs. The study recommends a centralized notification platform for better compliance and understanding.

**Sanjay Patel (2023)** "Regulatory Challenges for Customs Brokers in South Asia" This paper discusses inconsistencies in customs documentation procedures across ports in India, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka. It highlights the need for harmonized regulatory frameworks to support smoother cross-border logistics operations.

**Anita Desai (2023)** "Impact of Digitalization on Customs House Agents' Efficiency" Desai evaluates the dual nature of digital systems—while e-documentation helps speed up filing, partial automation and poor training often negate the benefits. She advocates for full integration of platforms and hands-on digital literacy programs.

**Nirmala C. & Dhileep M. (2023)** "Client Difficulties Towards Export and Import Documentation at VOC Port" This regional study focuses on documentation delays and errors at VOC Port. It highlights the lack of trained CHA staff and the need for support systems to reduce shipment hold-ups and improve client satisfaction.

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## SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

International trade relies heavily on the effectiveness of import and export documentation, and any mistakes or delays in these procedures can have detrimental effects on operations, finances, and reputation. Entrusted with managing customs procedures, Custom House Agents (CHAs) are essential to timely and accurate documentation. However, challenges such as digital system Their work is frequently hampered by mistakes, frequent regulatory changes, inadequate training, and ambiguous procedural instructions. This study is important because it clarifies the practical challenges that CHAs encounter, particularly at busy ports like V.O.C Port Authority. Policymakers, port authorities, and logistics companies must comprehend these issues in order to put focused solutions into place. The study contributes to the improvement of overall trade facilitation by identifying weaknesses in digital infrastructure and documentation processes. Additionally, the results can help create better training materials, streamline rules, and improve CHAs' digital tools. In the end, this will result in quicker cargo clearance, lower expenses, and heightened competitiveness for India's logistics industry on the international stage.

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## SCOPE OF THE STUDY

This study's purpose is to identify and analyze the difficulties Custom House Agents (CHAs) encounter when managing import and export paperwork at the V.O. Chidambaranar (VOC) Port, one of Tamil Nadu's main maritime gateways. The usage of systems like ICEGATE, the creation of shipping bills, bills of entry, and associated customs forms are among the procedural, operational, and technological challenges that are explicitly examined throughout documentation processes. Only CHAs working at VOC Port are included in the study, which uses standardized questionnaires to gather their experiences and input. It addresses things like adequate training, policy understanding, the effectiveness of digital infrastructure, and the clarity of documents. The effect of these difficulties on cargo clearance schedules and operational effectiveness is evaluated using both qualitative and quantitative methods. While the findings are localized to VOC Port, the insights can be extended to similar port environments across India facing comparable issues in customs documentation and CHA operations.

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## STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Efficient cross-border movement of products depends on timely and accurate documentation in the quickly changing world of international trade. As essential middlemen, Custom House Agents (CHAs) are in charge of making sure that the necessary shipping and customs paperwork is properly prepared and submitted. But CHAs frequently encounter a variety of difficulties that make it difficult for them to carry out their responsibilities effectively. Inadequate training in digital tools, unclear procedural requirements, complicated and constantly evolving legislation, and technological problems with digital platforms like ICEGATE are a few of them. High cargo volumes and operational bottlenecks at V.O. Chidambaranar Port (VOC Port), one of India's largest marine hubs, exacerbate these paperwork issues. Such issues not only delay cargo clearance but also lead to increased costs, penalties, and inefficiencies for exporters, importers, and the broader logistics ecosystem. Therefore, it is essential to explore the specific difficulties faced by CHAs in handling import and export documentation at VOC Port and to identify practical solutions to enhance the overall efficiency of the customs clearance process.

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## LIMITATION OF THE STUDY

- Because the study only includes Custom House Agents working at V.O. Chidambaranar Port (VOC Port), it might not accurately represent the difficulties encountered at other ports in India or around the world.
- Some respondents might have hidden critical comments or given socially acceptable replies, which would have affected the authenticity of the data; the research is based on responses from 154 CHAs, which, while sufficient for analysis, might not fully represent the range of experiences across the industry.
- The study was unable to include follow-up interviews or longitudinal data because of the internship's short duration.
- Without parallel confirmation from customs or port authority databases, the conclusions mostly rely on primary data.

## RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

- To find out the various problem involved in import and export documentation.
- To find out the various problems involved in filing documents.
- To know the various document used for shipment.
- To identify the difficulties relating to export of goods.
- To suggest recommendations for improving the documentation process by reducing

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The documentation issues that Custom House Agents (CHAs) at V.O.C Port encounter are identified and examined in this study using a descriptive research design. 154 CHAs who were chosen by convenience sampling were given standardized questionnaires to complete in order to gather primary data. To gather information about respondents' experiences with documentation procedures, the questionnaire had both multiple-choice and Likert-scale items. Journals, official portals like ICEGATE and DGFT, and government papers were the sources of secondary data. To evaluate the data and investigate the connections among CHA experience, documentation clarity, and operational efficiency, statistical procedures such as percentage analysis, the Chi-square test, correlation analysis, and ANOVA were utilized.

## ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

**Relationship between filing general manifest document is easy and filing the bill of lading document is easy in the documentation process – Correlation analysis.**

H0: There is no significant relationship between filing the general manifest document is easy and filing the bill of lading document is easy.

H1: There is a significant relationship between filing the general manifest document is easy and filing the bill of lading document is easy.

Table 1

Variables	Pearson correlation(r)	Sig.(2-tailed)	N
General manifest and bill of lading	0.322**	0.001	154

correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2tailed)

**Interpretation:** The above table shows that coefficient correlation between relationship between filing the general manifest document is easy and filing the bill of lading document is easy in the documentation process after obtain is 0.322. it is below 1, so there is positive relationship between filing the general manifest document is easy and the filing the bill of lading document is easy in the documentation process.

**Relationship between year of experience and import general manifest document is must for import- chi-square test**

H0: There is no significant relationship between year of experience and import general manifest document is must for import

H1: There is no significant relationship between year of experience and import general manifest document is must for import

Chi-square tests			
	Value	Df	Asymptotic significance (2sided)
Pearson chi-square	6.682	4	0.154
Likelihood ratio	6.492	4	0.165
Linear – by- linear association	3.007	1	0.083
N of valid cases	154		
0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 12.56			

**Interpretation:**

From this test, the minimum expected count is 12.56, but low cells have expected count less than 5.50. Null hypothesis is rejected, and the alternative hypothesis is accepted. There is a significant Relationship between Year of experience and Import General Manifest document is Must for Import.

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## FINDINGS

### CORRELATION ANALYSIS:

The correlation is moderately positive. This suggests a related ability or familiarity in handling significant export paperwork procedures, indicating that CHAs who find one document to be straightforward to submit are likely to find the second document easy as well.

### CHI-SQUARE

Experience level has no bearing on the necessity of the bill of entrance. Even though CHAs had different levels of expertise, their answers about the importance of important documents like the Bill of Entry were largely consistent, indicating that these requirements are widely known regardless of experience.

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## SUGGESTION

- Conduct regular training programs to enhance CHAs' knowledge of documentation and digital systems.
- Establish a dedicated help desk at the port for real-time support on documentation queries.
- Simplify customs documentation procedures to reduce confusion and paperwork.
- Upgrade digital platforms like ICEGATE to minimize technical glitches and improve user experience.
- Ensure timely and consistent communication of policy updates to all stakeholders.

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## CONCLUSION

The report emphasizes how difficult it is for Custom House Agents (CHAs) to handle import and export paperwork at V.O.C Port. Despite the introduction of digital technologies like ICEGATE, difficulties such as system faults, confusing documentation rules, and lack of frequent training continue to limit operational efficiency. Even if documentation abilities get better with practice, statistical research showed that support systems and policy simplification are still clearly needed. The overall efficacy of the customs clearance procedure will be increased, and easier international commerce operations will result from filling these gaps through infrastructure improvements, focused training, and better stakeholder cooperation.

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