



# Informal Cross-Border Trade Dynamics within ECOWAS: A Mixed-Methods Study in São Tomé and Príncipe

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## Abstract

Informal cross-border trade plays a significant role in regional integration within Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). São Tomé and Príncipe is an important case study for understanding these dynamics, given its geographical position at the heart of ECOWAS. This research employs a combination of quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews. Data were collected from to , covering both local and international traders operating within the region. Market activities in São Tomé and Príncipe revealed that informal trade accounted for approximately 40% of total cross-border commerce, with fish products being the most traded item. The study underscores the importance of formalizing these markets to ensure equitable economic development within ECOWAS. Recommendations include improving regulatory frameworks and enhancing market infrastructure. Enhance collaboration between national authorities and regional bodies to implement comprehensive trade regulations, improve road networks for cross-border commerce, and promote sustainable business practices.

**Keywords:** *Geography, West Africa, Community Studies, Ethnography, Quantitative Research, Qualitative Research, Integration Theory*

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