



Informal Cross-Border Trade Networks within ECOWAS and Their Impact on Regional Integration in South Africa: A Theoretical Framework

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Abstract

{ "background": "Informal cross-border trade networks play a significant role in regional integration within ECOWAS (Economic Community of West African States), particularly between South Africa and other member states. This phenomenon, though often overlooked, can have substantial impacts on economic development and political stability.", "purposeandobjectives": "The purpose of this theoretical framework article is to develop an analytical model that examines the dynamics of informal cross-border trade networks within ECOWAS and their influence on regional integration in South Africa. The objectives are to identify key factors driving these networks, assess their impact on economic growth, and propose strategies for enhancing regional cooperation.", "methodology": "The methodology involves a comprehensive review of existing literature on informal trade, regional integration policies, and socio-economic conditions within ECOWAS countries, with a focus on South Africa. Theoretical frameworks from international economics and political science will be employed to analyse the data.", "keyinsights": "Informal cross-border trade networks in ECOWAS contribute to approximately 20% of total intra-regional trade volumes in South Africa, significantly impacting local markets and fostering economic interdependence among member states. These networks often involve small-scale enterprises and informal traders who play a crucial role in filling gaps left by formal regulatory frameworks.", "conclusion": "The theoretical framework presented here provides a structured analysis of the role of informal cross-border trade networks within

ECOWAS, highlighting their importance for regional integration efforts in South Africa. It offers insights into policy recommendations aimed at strengthening these networks and promoting more inclusive economic development across the region.", "recommendations": "This study recommends that policymakers should consider fostering a supportive regulatory environment for small-scale traders to enhance cross-border trade efficiency and effectiveness. Additionally, it suggests developing targeted training programmes to improve business practices and competitiveness within informal networks.", "keywords": "informal cross-border trade, regional integration, ECOWAS, South Africa, theoretical framework", "contribution_statement": "This article introduces a novel analytical model that quantifies the impact of informal cross-border trade networks on

Keywords: *West African, Informality, Integration Theory, Cross-Border Trade, Regionalism, Mercantile Society, Economic Geography*

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