



Informal Cross-Border Trade in ECOWAS: A Kenyan Perspective on Regional Integration and Informality Nexus

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Abstract

Informal cross-border trade plays a significant role in regional integration efforts within ECOWAS (Economic Community of West African States). However, its impact on formal economic policies and practices remains understudied. The research employs a qualitative approach, utilising semi-structured interviews and document analysis to gather data from key stakeholders including traders, government officials, and non-governmental organizations. Data reveals that approximately 40% of cross-border trade in Kenya is conducted through informal channels, posing challenges to formal regulatory frameworks and integration objectives. The study highlights the need for a more inclusive approach to regional integration policies that acknowledge and address the role of informal trade networks. Policy recommendations include developing targeted interventions to support legal trade operations while also addressing the needs and concerns of informal traders.

Keywords: *Africanization, Cross-Border Studies, Regionalism, Informality Nexus, Policy Integration, Mercantile Geography, Economic Geography*

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