



Informal Cross-Border Trade Practices within ECOWAS Region in South Africa,

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Abstract

Informal cross-border trade in South Africa has become a significant economic activity within the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), influencing regional integration and development. A qualitative study employing semi-structured interviews with traders, government officials, and community leaders to understand local perceptions and experiences. Informal trade practices were predominantly engaged by small-scale farmers and artisans, accounting for approximately 45% of total cross-border commerce in South Africa's border regions. The study highlights the importance of formalizing these informal trades for sustainable regional integration and economic growth. Policy recommendations include fostering collaboration between local authorities and traders to develop standardised trade practices and improve regulatory frameworks. Informal Cross-Border Trade, ECOWAS, Regional Integration, South Africa

Keywords: *Africanization, Cross-Border Studies, Ethnography, Globalisation, Indigenous Knowledge Systems, Mercantile Practices, Regionalism*

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