



Informal Cross-Border Trade in ECOWAS: Ghana as a Case Study of Regional Integration Dynamics

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Abstract

Informal cross-border trade plays a significant role in regional integration within ECOWAS (Economic Community of West African States). Ghana exemplifies this phenomenon as a key player and case study for understanding dynamics related to regional economic collaboration. The study employs a qualitative research approach, utilising semi-structured interviews with traders, policymakers, and academic experts as primary sources of data. Focus groups were also conducted to gather insights from various stakeholders in the informal cross-border trade sector. Findings indicate that informal cross-border trade contributes significantly to Ghana's economy, accounting for approximately 20% of total exports and imports within ECOWAS. Key themes emerging from interviews include challenges posed by regulatory gaps and opportunities arising from regional market expansion. The study underscores the importance of addressing regulatory inconsistencies and fostering dialogue among member states to enhance the effectiveness of informal cross-border trade in promoting broader integration goals. Recommendations for policymakers include strengthening harmonized regulations, facilitating information sharing platforms, and encouraging joint research initiatives that can inform more comprehensive regional economic policies. Informal Cross-Border Trade, Regional Integration, ECOWAS, Ghana, Economic Collaboration

Keywords: *Ghana, West Africa, Sub-Saharan, Mercantile, Ethnography, Development, Decentralization*

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