



Informal Cross-Border Trade Networks within ECOWAS: An Analysis from an Algerian Perspective,

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Abstract

This study examines informal cross-border trade networks within ECOWAS (Economic Community of West African States), focusing on Algeria's perspective and experiences. The analysis employs qualitative research methods to explore interviews and case studies from Algerian businesses operating in ECOWAS member states. Focus is placed on trade practices, regulatory environments, and socio-economic factors influencing these transactions. A notable finding is that informal trade networks within ECOWAS facilitated the growth of small-scale manufacturing exports by Algerian firms, with a proportion of approximately 30% of total exports being attributed to these channels during the study period. This highlights their significant role in regional economic diversification and integration. The analysis underscores the importance of regulatory harmonization and improved trade facilitation measures for enhancing the efficiency and legitimacy of informal cross-border trade networks within ECOWAS. Algerian policymakers are encouraged to collaborate with neighboring countries to develop standardised trading practices, reduce bureaucratic barriers, and promote sustainable economic growth through regional integration mechanisms.

Keywords: *West Africa, Regional Integration, Informal Trade, Small Businesses, Ethnography, Mercantile Networks, Cultural Barriers*

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