



Cross-Border Informal Trade Networks within ECOWAS: An Ethnographic Exploration in Morocco,

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Abstract

This study examines informal cross-border trade networks within the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), focusing on Morocco as a case study. Fieldwork was conducted through participant observation, semi-structured interviews with traders and regulatory officials, and document analysis of border crossing records. Data were collected from to in three Moroccan regions bordering ECOWAS countries. Traders reported a significant increase (30%) in cross-border trade volumes during the study period, driven by cheaper transport costs and favorable market conditions in Morocco compared to neighboring ECOWAS nations. Regulatory challenges such as customs procedures and corruption were common barriers. The findings highlight the resilience of informal trade networks despite regulatory obstacles, underscoring their importance for regional economic integration within ECOWAS. Policy recommendations include streamlining border crossing processes to reduce transaction costs, enhancing law enforcement efforts against corruption at borders, and promoting dialogue between Moroccan authorities and ECOWAS partners on cross-border regulations.

Keywords: *Sub-Saharan, geographies, ethnography, regionalism, informality, borderlands, commerce*

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