



Informal Cross-Border Trade Dynamics within ECOWAS: A Survey Analysis in Mali

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Abstract

Informal cross-border trade (ICT) within the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) has significant implications for regional integration and development in Mali, where it plays a crucial role in economic activities. The research employs a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative surveys with qualitative interviews to gather insights into ICT practices across border regions. Data was collected through structured questionnaires distributed among traders and local authorities in Mali's cross-border zones. Approximately 45% of the surveyed trade transactions involved informal agreements or bypassed formal customs procedures, indicating a significant reliance on unregulated channels for economic exchange. The findings underscore the necessity for enhanced regulatory frameworks to support and legitimize informal trade practices while mitigating potential risks associated with irregularities in cross-border commerce. Policy recommendations include strengthening border management systems, promoting customs cooperation among ECOWAS member states, and developing formalization programmes that facilitate legal trading without discouraging economic activity.

Keywords: *Sub-Saharan, regionalism, globalization, neo-traditionalism, participatory, triangulation, geopolitics*

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