

Cross-Border Trade and Local Entrepreneurship: Assessing the Impact of Angolan Traders on Small and Medium Enterprises in Nkurenkuru, Namibia

Daniel Kandjimi

Andreas Shifafure and Elise Hauholo
International University of Management (IUM), Namibia

ABSTRACT

Purpose: This study assesses the impact of Angolan cross-border traders on the sales and profitability of local small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in Nkurenkuru, Kavango West Region, Namibia, an emerging border town that has received far less empirical attention than the larger crossings at Rundu–Calai and Oshikango–Santa Clara. It also proposes measures to promote fair competition and support the sustainability of local SMEs.

Methodology: A qualitative case study design was adopted, with Porter’s (1985) theory of competitive advantage as the theoretical framework. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 20 purposively and snowball-sampled informal vendors around three retail sites in Nkurenkuru until data saturation was reached, supplemented by key informant interviews with immigration officials at the Nkurenkuru border post. Data were analysed thematically.

Findings: Angolan traders sell a near-identical product range to local vendors. Respondents reported reduced sales and profit margins and increased losses from spoiled, unsold perishable stock, which they linked to lower prices, greater mobility (house-to-house selling is not permitted for local vendors) and a much lower municipal trading fee (N\$23 compared with N\$460). Some vendors also reported benefits, including cheaper stock for resale. Immigration officials indicated that most Angolan traders enter Namibia on visitor’s permits rather than trading permits, and that enforcement is deliberately tempered to avoid pushing traders towards illegal entry points.

Implications for theory and practice: The findings qualify the cost-leadership logic of competitive advantage theory: the advantage of Angolan traders is shaped as much by regulatory and immigration-policy asymmetries as by trading efficiency. The study recommends harmonising municipal trading fees, enforcing the Competition Act 2 of 2003, creating a formal cross-border trading permit category, investing in market infrastructure, and training local SMEs in entrepreneurship and financial management.

Originality/value: The study provides site-specific evidence from an under-researched border town and combines vendors' accounts with the perspective of immigration officials, a combination that remains uncommon in research on the Namibia–Angola border.

Keywords: cross-border trade, informal traders, SMEs, competitive advantage, immigration policy, Nkurenkuru, Namibia, Angola

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background and Context

Cross-border trade between communities in Northern Namibia and Southern Angola along the Kavango River dates back to the pre-colonial era. Before the proclamation of colonial boundaries, communities living along the present-day Namibia–Angola border shared cultural, social, and economic relations through barter trade of livestock, agricultural products, and various commodities (Amutenya & Van der Linden, 1993; Kreike, 2004). These historical patterns of movement illustrate that trade between the two countries existed long before the establishment of formal border controls.

The transformation of these historical trade corridors into modern border economies is evident in various towns of Northern Namibia. The Oshikango–Santa Clara border in independent Namibia demonstrates how pre-colonial regional movement patterns developed into regulated economic border hubs between Namibia and Angola (Dobler, 2009). Additionally, recent studies by Ndumba et al. (2021) show that the Rundu–Calai border post is another historic route that transformed into a formal border crossing.

Within this broader context, Nkurenkuru has become an important local trading hub linking Namibia and Southern Angola. Compared to similar border corridors along the Kavango River, Nkurenkuru is characterised by the movement of agricultural products, household goods, and other goods through both formal and informal channels (Ndumba et al., 2021).

Nkurenkuru serves two purposes, among others: firstly, as a business hub for Angolan consumers seeking to purchase fast-moving consumer goods (FMCGs), and secondly, as an opportunity for Angolan sellers to market their agricultural goods. This has resulted in increased competition between local Namibian SMEs and Angolan traders, who often sell identical or near-identical products.

1.2 Problem Statement and Research Gap

Informal cross-border trade is a crucial coping mechanism for poor households, especially where unemployment is high. Informal cross-border trade (ICBT) constitutes a significant economic force in terms of the value of goods traded, and the majority of participants are women (Ahmodu-Tijani & Dosunmu, 2020).

The inflow of Angolan cross-border traders from the neighbouring Angolan town of Cuangar into Nkurenkuru has increased over the years. This increase has directly or indirectly impacted local SMEs, many of whose owners, faced with high levels of unemployment, have turned to self-employment to earn a decent living. These hopes of earning a decent living are, however, often short-lived, as profit margins from product sales are diminished by competition from Angolan cross-border traders, who sell similar products, often at lower prices.

Despite this, there is limited empirical evidence documenting the actual scale and nature of this impact on SMEs specifically in Nkurenkuru, as opposed to the larger, more-studied border towns of Rundu and Oshikango. This study addresses that gap.

1.3 Research Aim, Questions and Objectives

The aim of this study is to assess the impact of Angolan cross-border traders on SMEs in Nkurenkuru. The study further seeks to explore mechanisms to strengthen the competitiveness of local SMEs and to devise strategies that would strengthen trade between the two countries.

The study is guided by the following research questions:

- RQ1. What business activities are undertaken by Angolan cross-border traders in Nkurenkuru?
- RQ2. How has the presence of Angolan traders affected the sales and profitability of SMEs in Nkurenkuru?
- RQ3. What measures can be implemented to promote fair competition and support the growth of SMEs in Nkurenkuru?

In line with these questions, the study pursues the following objectives:

- RO1. To identify the business activities undertaken by Angolan cross-border traders in Nkurenkuru.
- RO2. To examine the effects of Angolan traders on the sales and profitability of SMEs in Nkurenkuru.
- RO3. To recommend measures that can enhance the sustainability and competitiveness of SMEs in Nkurenkuru.

1.4 Definition of Key Terms

The following key terms are used in this study as defined below.

Informal cross-border trade (ICBT) refers to trade in legitimately produced goods and services that escapes the regulatory framework set by government and thereby avoids certain tax and regulatory burdens (Lesser & Moïsé-Leeman, 2009; see Section 2.2.1).

Angolan cross-border traders are Angolan nationals who cross into Nkurenkuru, mainly from the neighbouring Angolan town of Cuangar, to sell goods. As Section 4.5 shows, most enter Namibia on visitor's permits rather than trading permits.

Local SMEs (local vendors) refers, in this study, to the small-scale and largely informal Namibian enterprises and vendors that trade around Shoprite Nkurenkuru, Woermann Brock Nkurenkuru, and Check-In Store Nkurenkuru. The terms local SMEs, local vendors and informal traders are used interchangeably.

Sales and profitability are understood as respondents' own reported perceptions of changes in sales and profit margins, rather than verified financial records (see Section 6.2).

1.5 Structure of the Paper

The remainder of this paper is organised as follows. Section 2 reviews the relevant literature and sets out the theoretical framework and the research gap. Section 3 describes the research methodology. Section 4 presents the results, organised around the three research objectives and the perspective of immigration officials. Section 5 discusses the findings in relation to the literature and theory and draws out their

implications for theory and practice. Section 6 concludes the paper, outlines its limitations, sets out recommendations and suggests directions for future research.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

Cross-border trade is not only a historic trend among many developing economies but a very important economic activity, especially for countries like Namibia and Angola. Cross-border trade carries cultural and historical significance, and also contributes to employment creation, reduces poverty, and serves as a vehicle through which households generate income.

Although formal trade conducted by registered companies receives considerable policy attention, informal and small-scale cross-border trade remains a major component of local economic systems, particularly among communities located near international borders (Afreximbank, 2020; Afrika & Ajumbo, 2012).

Namibia's geographical location and close proximity to Angola have created strong economic relationships between communities on both sides of the border. Northern Namibian towns, including Nkurenkuru, Katwitwi, Rundu, and Oshikango, have become important commercial centres where cross-border transactions take place.

According to Ndumba et al. (2021), the crossing of Angolan traders into Namibia is caused by several factors, including differences in commodity prices, currency fluctuations, availability of goods, and consumer demand. These traders engage in various economic activities, including retailing, wholesale trading, agricultural exchanges, transportation services, and informal distribution networks.

While cross-border trading can contribute to economic integration, as it increases product availability and leads to more competitive prices, the growing presence of cross-border traders raises concern among local traders due to increased competition.

The relationship between cross-border traders and local SMEs is therefore complex. On one hand, foreign traders may stimulate competition, encourage innovation, and improve consumer welfare through lower prices and increased product variety. On the other hand, excessive competition may reduce the market share and profitability of local entrepreneurs, particularly where SMEs lack the resources to compete effectively (Barney, 1991; Porter, 1985).

Porter's (1985) narrative is particularly relevant when contextualised to a border town like Nkurenkuru, where the majority of inhabitants earn below the minimum wage and, as a result, welcome cheaply priced Angolan products, while local traders, in the hope of maximising profits, prefer to have local markets to themselves.

Although several studies have been conducted on cross-border trade in Namibia, limited studies have placed emphasis on the impact of Angolan traders on SMEs in smaller Namibian border towns such as Nkurenkuru; past research has mainly examined major border towns such as Oshikango and Rundu. This study therefore addresses this gap by examining how business activities by Angolan traders affect SME sales and profitability in emerging commercial centres, particularly Nkurenkuru.

2.2 Conceptual Review

2.2.1 Cross-Border Trade

Cross-border trade refers to the exchange of goods and services between individuals, businesses, or communities located in different countries. It includes both formal commercial activities conducted through regulated trade systems and informal transactions undertaken by small-scale traders who often operate outside conventional regulatory frameworks (Afrika & Ajumbo, 2012).

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), drawing on Lesser and Moïsé-Leeman (2009), defines informal cross-border trade (ICBT) as “trade in legitimately produced goods and services, which escapes the regulatory framework set by the government, thereby avoiding certain tax and regulatory burdens” (Lesser & Moïsé-Leeman, 2009, p. 9).

Cross-border trade is particularly vital in regions where national borders divide communities with shared social and economic backgrounds. According to Brenton and Isik (2012), border economies often develop unique trading systems in which entrepreneurs exploit differences in prices, availability of goods, and market demand between neighbouring countries.

The Angola–Namibia border represents such an economic space. Historical relationships between communities, combined with differences in economic conditions between the two countries, have encouraged continuous movement of goods and traders. Angola’s periods of economic instability, currency fluctuations, and limited availability of certain consumer goods have encouraged Angolan consumers and traders to rely on Namibian markets (Rodrigues, 2010).

Ndumba et al. (2021) found that the Rundu–Calai corridor represents a significant cross-border trading route where traders exchange agricultural products, manufactured goods, household commodities, and other consumer items. These accounts provide factual evidence of the increased movement of traders and consumers between similar border towns such as Nkurenkuru and Cuangar.

2.3 Theoretical Framework

2.3.1 Competitive Advantage Theory

This study’s theoretical framework is based on Porter’s (1985) theory of competitive advantage, which explains how firms can outcompete rivals through cost leadership, product differentiation, and focus. Cost leadership involves pricing products lower than competitors; differentiation involves commanding a premium price by offering a unique, often higher-value product; and focus involves targeting a specific niche market segment.

This theory helps explain the relationship between SMEs in Nkurenkuru and Angolan cross-border traders, because both groups operate in a highly competitive market. Angolan traders may have a competitive edge due to reduced operational costs, which allow them to offer similar products at lower prices, thereby affecting the profitability of local SMEs.

According to Porter (1985), increased competition should not always be seen to result in negative outcomes for existing firms. Instead, competitive pressure can encourage businesses to improve efficiency,

innovate, strengthen customer relationships, and differentiate their products. The presence of Angolan traders can therefore act as a motivating factor for SMEs in Nkurenkuru to improve business practices, improve product quality, and develop strategies that strengthen their market position.

On the contrary, Barney (1991) argues that firms with limited resources may find it hard to keep up with competition. Local SMEs generally have fewer financial and technological resources than larger businesses or highly networked traders. As a result, increased competition may negatively affect smaller enterprises that lack the capacity to reduce prices, diversify products, or expand their operations.

When contextualised to Nkurenkuru, competitive advantage theory therefore provides a useful lens through which to analyse whether Angolan traders create an environment for healthy market competition or whether they place the sustainability of local SMEs under threat.

2.4 Empirical Literature Review

2.4.1 Business Activities Undertaken by Angolan Cross-Border Traders

Existing literature shows that cross-border traders sell assorted products depending on market conditions, consumer preferences, and the availability of goods. Unlike established commercial enterprises, small-scale cross-border traders usually rely on a network of informal suppliers, transport providers, family members, and community relationships (Afrika & Ajumbo, 2012).

Previous studies conducted in Southern Africa reveal that retail trade, agricultural exchange, clothing, food trading, and household goods are among the most-traded commodities among cross-border traders. These activities are often characterised by small-scale transactions but collectively contribute significantly to local economic activity (Peberdy & Rogerson, 2000).

Ndumba et al. (2021) demonstrate that border trade between Namibia and Angola involves multiple activities, including the movement of agricultural products, household goods, clothing, construction materials, and consumer commodities. Similarly, the Namibia Statistics Agency (NSA, 2023) identified food products, beverages, clothing, agricultural commodities, and household necessities as among the major categories involved in informal cross-border trade. These findings demonstrate that Angolan traders are not limited to a single business sector but participate across various market segments. Although past scholars placed emphasis on the towns of Rundu and Oshikango, Nkurenkuru's status as an emerging town within the northern commercial network suggests that similar trading patterns may exist there. Nkurenkuru's relatively developed retail infrastructure often attracts Angolan traders and consumers who are heavily dependent on imported consumer goods. The increasing movement of traders between the two countries means Nkurenkuru SMEs increasingly interact with foreign entrepreneurs operating in overlapping markets.

2.4.2 Impact of Angolan Traders on SME Sales and Profitability

The debate within entrepreneurship literature on the relationship between foreign traders and local SMEs remains ongoing. On one hand, some scholars argue that cross-border traders have positive effects on local economies, as they lead to increased competition, improved market efficiency, and greater consumer

choice. On the other hand, another school of thought holds that cross-border traders often have negative effects, as they capture market share and thereby reduce the profitability of local enterprises.

According to Afreximbank (2020), informal cross-border trade strengthens local economies by acting as a market-clearing mechanism, moving goods from areas where they are abundant and cheap to areas where they are scarce and expensive; in food-deficit regions, such trade has been shown to respond to local shocks faster than formal trade channels. Consumers often benefit from lower prices and greater product availability, particularly in rural and border communities. In addition, Porter (1985) suggests that competitive markets encourage firms to become more efficient and innovative; to remain competitive, local SMEs exposed to competition from cross-border traders may introduce new products, improve customer relationships, and create better marketing strategies. Consistent with this, Ayyagari et al. (2011) find that exposure to foreign competition is associated with greater firm innovation in developing economies.

On the contrary, competition from cross-border traders can create significant challenges for small enterprises. Ayyagari et al. (2011), studying more than 19,000 firms across 47 developing economies, find that access to external finance is associated with greater firm innovation, which suggests that financially constrained SMEs are less able to respond to competitive pressure. When cross-border traders enter local markets with stronger supplier networks or lower-cost products, local SMEs may experience a reduction in sales and profits.

Sunde (2025), examining SMEs in Windhoek, Namibia, identified limited access to finance, weak business management skills, inadequate infrastructure, and market access constraints as major obstacles affecting SME sustainability under competitive trade pressure. The absence of measures to address these factors increases the vulnerability of local SMEs to cross-border competition.

Nevertheless, the impact of Angolan traders may have some positive dimensions: increased competition may force local SMEs to differentiate their product offerings in ways that cannot easily be replicated. Therefore, the effect of Angolan traders on SMEs should not be understood as entirely harmful or entirely beneficial; it is rather largely dependent on how SMEs perceive the competition and how they adapt to evolving market conditions.

2.4.3 Measures to Promote Fair Competition and Support SME Sustainability

The rising trend of Angolan cross-border trading underscores the need for regulatory intervention to support the growth of domestic entrepreneurship.

One important policy measure that can be undertaken by local government at the regional level is to improve SME competitiveness through capacity-development initiatives. In the context of Nkurenkuru, it is quite evident that many SMEs find it difficult to compete due to weak financial management practices, limited marketing knowledge, underdeveloped entrepreneurial skills, and poor access to modern technology.

According to McKenzie and Woodruff (2014), whose review synthesises evidence from business training evaluations across the developing world, entrepreneurship training and business development services can

increase the survival rate and competitiveness of small enterprises by strengthening managerial capabilities, although effects are typically stronger for practice-oriented training than for classroom instruction alone.

Equipping local SMEs in Nkurenkuru with skills in financial management, digital marketing, and technological infrastructure could therefore assist local entrepreneurs in competing with cross-border traders more effectively.

Another area requiring strengthening is the regulatory framework, particularly the Competition Act 2 of 2003 (Republic of Namibia, 2003). Although the Act contains provisions addressing cross-border cartels and price-fixing intended to ensure fair competition and protect local SMEs, these provisions are often not enforced.

For Nkurenkuru specifically, collaboration between local government, SME support organisations, and trader associations may provide practical solutions. Establishing platforms where local and cross-border traders engage with authorities can help address conflicts, improve communication, and develop mutually beneficial trading arrangements. Such platforms, potentially involving bodies such as SME Compete and Team Namibia alongside local and central government, recognise that cross-border traders are part of the regional economy while ensuring that local SMEs are not disadvantaged.

2.4.4 Immigration Policy, Permit Status, and the Regulation of Cross-Border Trading

A further strand of literature is directly relevant to understanding why informal cross-border trade persists, and in what form, even where it sits outside formal permit or licensing systems. Peberdy (2000), writing on the South Africa–Mozambique corridor, argues that the label “informal” is often misleading, since small-scale cross-border trade is frequently entangled with formal immigration and customs systems rather than being wholly unregulated, and cautions that trade-corridor policy analyses which ignore immigration policy risk missing a key determinant of how such trade actually operates. This study’s approach of combining trader-side interviews with key informant interviews with immigration officials (see Section 3.4) responds directly to that caution, and remains an uncommon combination in Namibia-specific ICBT research.

A recurring finding across this literature is that strict or narrowly defined permit regimes do not eliminate cross-border trade; they tend instead to push it toward unofficial channels. Dzawanda and Matsa (2023) document that Zimbabwean cross-border traders facing restrictive permit and licensing requirements resort to illegal ports of entry and non-declaration of goods, and argue that making registration more accessible, rather than tightening enforcement, is more likely to reduce these illegalities. In a study of border corruption further afield, Suber (2024) shows that harsher border enforcement policies can generate corrupt, collusive adaptations between traders/smugglers and border officials rather than curtailing cross-border movement. Taken together, this literature suggests that immigration officials’ reluctance to strictly enforce permit conditions against Angolan traders in Nkurenkuru, discussed in the Findings (Section 4.5), reflects a pattern observed at other African borders, rather than being an isolated local policy choice.

A related body of work argues that, rather than eliminating informal cross-border trade, policy should move toward formalising and regulating it. Dzawanda et al. (2026) contend that ICBT should be

formalised, regulated, and safeguarded rather than suppressed, given its scale and its importance to economically marginalised participants, particularly women, who make up over 70% of ICBT participants across Africa. Brown et al. (2024) similarly find that informal traders often persist in informality even where formalisation schemes exist, because of trust and embeddedness in informal networks, and that “light-touch” regulation can have genuine poverty-reduction potential for border communities. Park et al. (2024) formally model several policy alternatives, including simplified trade regimes for informal traders, and find that policies improving traders’ access to formal channels can raise both government revenue and trader welfare simultaneously, while Afreximbank (2020) similarly frames ICBT as a phenomenon that regional trade frameworks such as the African Continental Free Trade Area should actively integrate rather than treat as a problem to be eliminated.

At the same time, Hansen-Addy et al. (2024) offer an important counterpoint from the perspective of local firms: using firm-level data across 27 African countries, they find that competition from foreign firms specifically worsens the negative effect of trade facilitation on domestic SME performance. This lends broader empirical weight to the concerns raised by Nkurenkuru’s local vendors in this study (Section 4.3) that the presence of Angolan traders imposes real, not merely perceived, competitive costs on local SMEs even as the wider literature cautions against addressing those costs through blanket restriction of cross-border traders.

2.5 Research Gap

While existing literature provides important understanding of cross-border trade, several areas require further research. Previous research placed emphasis on larger border crossings such as Rundu and Oshikango; as a result, there is limited existing empirical evidence on the effects of Angolan cross-border traders on local Namibian SMEs in smaller emerging border towns.

Furthermore, while past studies established that cross-border trading spillover effects can positively affect the local economy, little attention has been given to the tangible effects of cross-border trading on business indicators such as changes in profit margins.

This study therefore seeks to address this gap by examining three areas: the types of business activities undertaken by Angolan traders; how these business activities impact the sales and profitability of local SMEs around Nkurenkuru; and possible policy-driven solutions that can be implemented to improve local SME competitiveness.

A further gap concerns the regulatory and immigration-policy context within which Angolan trading actually takes place. As Peberdy (2000) notes, this dimension is frequently overlooked in trade-corridor research, and no reviewed study on the Namibia–Angola border combines local SME vendors’ accounts with the perspective of immigration officials responsible for regulating cross-border movement at the relevant border post. This study addresses that gap by supplementing local vendor interviews with key informant interviews with immigration officials at the Nkurenkuru border post.

As the study is qualitative and exploratory in design, it does not test formal hypotheses; instead, the research questions set out in Section 1.3 guide the inquiry.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Approach

This study adopts a qualitative research approach to examine the impact of Angolan cross-border traders on local SMEs in Nkurenkuru. A qualitative approach was chosen because the research questions are concerned with understanding traders' lived experiences, perceptions, and interpretations of competition, rather than measuring predetermined variables. Qualitative research typically emphasises words rather than quantification in the collection and analysis of data (Bell et al., 2022), and is well suited to exploring a topic (the localised, day-to-day impact of cross-border trade on a specific group of informal vendors) for which limited prior empirical evidence exists in Nkurenkuru.

3.2 Research Design

The study adopts a qualitative case study design, with Nkurenkuru treated as a bounded case through which the broader phenomenon of Angolan cross-border trading is examined. A case study design was considered appropriate because it allows for an in-depth, contextualised understanding of how cross-border trade affects a specific, geographically bounded community of local SMEs, which a broader, less-focused design would not permit.

3.3 Population

According to Bell et al. (2022), population is defined as the universe of units from which a sample is to be selected.

The general population of this study comprised two groups. The primary population comprised all local vendors selling assorted products, particularly vegetables, around Shoprite Nkurenkuru, Woermann Brock Nkurenkuru, and Check-In Store Nkurenkuru, which serve as the areas with the highest concentrations of local vendors in the town. A secondary population comprised immigration officials serving at the Nkurenkuru border post, whose professional accounts of permit categories and enforcement practice were used to contextualise vendors' experiences of competition from Angolan traders.

3.4 Sample and Sampling Procedure

In its simplest definition, a sample is a subset of a population (Lohr, 2021). Becker (1998, as cited in Saunders et al., 2023) states that when selecting a sample to study, it should represent the population from which it is taken in a way that is meaningful and can be justified in relation to answering the research questions and meeting the research objectives.

For this study, no fixed sample size was predetermined; instead, the researchers conducted interviews until a point of data saturation was reached. Saunders et al. (2023) describe data saturation as the stage at which additional data collection yields few, if any, new insights.

The study used purposive sampling to select local SMEs with first-hand experience of cross-border trade. To identify additional participants, particularly traders who could not be reached easily, the researchers also employed snowball sampling, in which initial respondents referred the researchers to other eligible participants. A total of twenty (20) respondents were interviewed before saturation was reached.

In addition, two immigration officials stationed at the Nkurenkuru border post were purposively selected as key informants, on the basis of their direct professional knowledge of the permit and enforcement regime governing Angolan traders' entry into Namibia. Combining trader interviews with key informant interviews with immigration officials responds to Peberdy's (2000) observation that immigration policy is often overlooked in trade-corridor research, and is used here specifically to capture both the trader-side experience of competition and the regulatory perspective on why particular trading patterns are permitted to continue.

3.5 Research Instrument

Data were collected using a semi-structured interview guide (see Appendix A), developed by the researchers around the study's three objectives. The instrument was organised into four sections: Section A collected demographic and business background information (gender, age, years in business and products sold); Section B addressed the business activities undertaken by Angolan cross-border traders, in line with Objective 1; Section C addressed the effects of Angolan traders on the sales and profitability of local SMEs, in line with Objective 2; and Section D addressed measures respondents believed could support fair competition and SME sustainability, in line with Objective 3. The semi-structured format allowed the researchers to ask a consistent core set of questions across respondents while retaining the flexibility to probe individual responses in greater depth, which is appropriate for a qualitative, exploratory study of this kind. A separate, shorter key informant discussion guide was used with immigration officials, covering the categories of permit held by Angolan traders, the rationale behind current enforcement practice, and the operating hours of the Nkurenkuru border crossing.

3.6 Data Collection Procedure

Interviews were conducted face-to-face with informal vendors at their trading points around Shoprite Nkurenkuru, Woermann Brock Nkurenkuru, and Check-In Store Nkurenkuru. Prior to each interview, respondents were briefed on the purpose of the study, and verbal informed consent was obtained. Responses were recorded in writing by the researchers during the interviews. Interviews continued until no substantially new themes emerged from additional respondents, at which point data saturation was considered to have been reached. Interviews took place on 17 July 2026, were conducted in English, and lasted approximately five minutes per vendor and one hour with the immigration officials.

3.7 Data Analysis

Interview responses were analysed using thematic analysis, following the six-phase approach outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006): familiarisation with the data; generation of initial codes; searching for themes; reviewing themes; defining and naming themes; and producing the final analysis. Responses were coded and grouped into themes aligned with the study's three research objectives, allowing patterns across respondents (for example, recurring references to price differences, municipal trading fees, and spoilage of unsold stock) to be identified and interpreted in relation to the study's theoretical framework.

3.8 Ethical Considerations

Participation in this study was entirely voluntary, and respondents were informed of their right to withdraw at any point. Verbal informed consent was obtained from each participant prior to the interview. No names or other identifying information were recorded; respondents are referred to as "Vendor" throughout this

study to preserve anonymity. The same protections were extended to immigration officials, who are referred to generically as “Immigration Official” without naming individuals, ranks, or identifying operational details, given the sensitivity of discussing enforcement practice. All data collected were treated as confidential and used strictly for academic purposes, in line with the assurances given to respondents at the outset of each interview. Formal ethical clearance was not required for this study, which was conducted locally in Nkurenkuru.

4. RESULTS

4.1 Demographic Profile of Respondents

All twenty (20) respondents interviewed were female; no male vendors were encountered at the study sites during data collection. In terms of age, four respondents (20%) were between 25 and 29 years old, three respondents (15%) were between 30 and 34 years old, and thirteen respondents (65%) were 40 years old or above; no respondents fell within the 18–24 or 35–39 age brackets. This distribution suggests that informal vending in this segment of Nkurenkuru’s market is undertaken predominantly by women, and particularly by women aged 40 or above. Table 1 summarises the demographic profile of the respondents.

Table 1

Demographic Profile of Respondents (N = 20)

Variable	Category	n	%
Gender	Female	20	100
	Male	0	0
Age group (years)	18–24	0	0
	25–29	4	20
	30–34	3	15
	35–39	0	0
	40 or above	13	65

Note. Based on respondent interviews.

Among respondents who reported their number of years in business, tenure ranged widely, from as little as 2 years to as long as 30 years (reported values included 2, 3, 5, 10, 13, 14, and 30 years), indicating that the vendor community includes both recently established and long-standing informal enterprises. Respondents reported selling a wide range of products, predominantly fresh produce, including tomatoes, onions, cabbage, spinach, and mutete (a local leafy vegetable), alongside household and food items such as mangetti nuts (nongongo), Bambara nuts, mahangu seeds, salt, spices, assorted sweets, fire matches, biscuits, fat cakes, tobacco, and non-food items such as sandals and clothing.

4.2 Business Activities Undertaken by Angolan Cross-Border Traders (Objective 1)

Respondents reported that Angolan cross-border traders sell largely the same categories of products as local vendors: tomatoes, onions, cabbage, fat cakes, sandals, mutete, spaghetti, beans, and sweet potatoes. In addition, Angolan traders were reported to bring some products less readily available from local vendors, including traditional bread (mungome), mahangu flour, peanuts, chillies, and sugar cane.

Respondents were consistent in stating that Angolan traders “basically sell the same products they [local vendors] sell.” This near-complete overlap in product range is a significant finding: it indicates that Angolan traders and local SMEs are, for the most part, direct competitors offering substitutable goods to the same customer base, rather than occupying complementary market niches. This is broadly consistent with prior literature documenting the range of goods moved across the Namibia–Angola border (NSA, 2023; Ndumba et al., 2021), while providing site-specific confirmation for Nkurenkuru.

4.3 Effects of Angolan Traders on the Sales and Profitability of SMEs (Objective 2)

Analysis of respondents’ accounts identified several recurring themes regarding how the presence of Angolan traders has affected local SMEs. Table 2 summarises the main contrasts respondents drew between local vendors and Angolan traders, and each theme is discussed in turn below.

Table 2

Reported Differences Between Local Vendors and Angolan Traders

Dimension	Local vendors	Angolan traders
Product range	Fresh produce, household and food items, and some non-food items (e.g., sandals, clothing)	Largely the same categories, plus some products less readily available locally (e.g., mungome, mahangu flour, peanuts, chillies, sugar cane)
Prices	Higher (in one respondent’s example, a cabbage at N\$10.00)	Lower (in the same example, a cabbage at N\$5.00, or more quantity at a lower price)
Municipal trading fee	N\$460	N\$23
House-to-house selling	Not permitted under town council regulations	Reported as practised

Note. Based on respondents’ accounts; amounts are those quoted by respondents.

Price-based competition and reduced profit margins. Respondents consistently reported that Angolan traders price their goods lower than local vendors for the same or similar products. As one vendor explained: “Angolan traders price their products lower, and they sell the same products.” Another described the scale of the price gap directly: “Angolans sell at a cheaper price, they will sell a cabbage at N\$5.00 while we sell at N\$10.00, or they offer more quantity at a lesser price.” Several respondents linked this pricing gap directly to falling profits: “Profits have reduced,” and “in the past we used to make profit, not anymore... since the introduction of Angolan traders, vendors are a lot, we don’t make profits.”

Mobility and regulatory asymmetry. A recurring and distinct theme was that Angolan traders are able to sell house-to-house, an approach not permitted for local traders under town council regulations. As one respondent put it: “Angolans are more competitive because they move from house to house selling products; local traders are not allowed to move from house to house as per council laws, this gives Angolan traders a competitive advantage.” This regulatory asymmetry, rather than product quality or pricing alone, was identified by respondents as a structural source of competitive disadvantage for local vendors.

Declining sales and spoilage of perishable stock. Beyond reduced profit margins, several respondents linked falling sales directly to reduced customer numbers, and to a specific and costly secondary effect, the spoilage of unsold perishable produce: “Profits and sales are down, our products are even going bad,” and “sales are no longer profitable, cabbages, tomatoes and onions are going bad.” Respondents also noted that “our customers have reduced as Angolan traders have increased in numbers.”

Unequal municipal trading fees. A prominent grievance raised by respondents was the disparity in trading fees charged by the local town council: “We pay N\$460 to town council to operate our businesses; Angolans doing the same business pay N\$23.00.” Respondents connected this fee disparity to the traders’ ability to sell profitably at lower prices, since a substantially lower cost base (“Angolans sell at cheap prices, they bundle lots of products for a cheap price”) allows Angolan traders greater room to undercut local vendors.

Infrastructure gaps compounding vulnerability. Respondents also linked their vulnerability to competition to the absence of basic market infrastructure. Vendors reported not having access to cooling facilities for perishable stock (“our vegetables go bad, town council must provide cooler rooms”) or to ablution facilities (“we don’t have any ablution facilities, e.g. toilets and taps for clean drinking water”), both of which were described as compounding the financial impact of falling sales.

Perceived benefits. Not all reported effects were negative. Some respondents described benefits arising from the presence of Angolan traders, particularly the ability to buy stock cheaply for resale (“we buy products like mutete and spaghetti at cheap prices to resell”) and access to products not otherwise readily available locally, such as garlic. This indicates that, for at least some local vendors, the relationship with Angolan traders also has a complementary, supply-chain dimension alongside its competitive dimension.

4.4 Measures to Promote Fair Competition and Support SME Sustainability (Objective 3)

When asked what could be done to promote fair competition, what support SMEs need, and what they would recommend to government and other stakeholders, respondents converged on a small number of closely related proposals, which were raised with a high degree of consistency across all three questions in this section of the interview guide. This consistency suggests that respondents view these measures as a single, integrated policy response rather than as separate or competing options.

The three principal measures proposed by respondents were:

1. Restricting the number of Angolan traders operating in Nkurenkuru and confining them to designated, fixed trading spots, preferably at the border/river, with local traders travelling to that point to purchase supplies, rather than Angolan traders operating freely within the town.
2. Limiting Angolan traders to wholesale transactions with local traders only, rather than allowing direct retail sales to end consumers, which respondents felt was the primary source of direct competition.
3. Requiring price parity, such that Angolan traders charge prices comparable to those charged by local traders for equivalent goods.

Taken together, these proposals reflect a preference among respondents for structural or spatial separation of the two trading groups, rather than for measures aimed solely at improving local SMEs' own competitiveness.

4.5 Regulatory and Permit Status of Angolan Traders: Immigration Officials' Perspective

To contextualise vendors' accounts, key informant interviews were conducted with immigration officials at the Nkurenkuru border post. Their accounts add a regulatory dimension not visible from the trader interviews alone, and in some respects complicate the measures proposed by local vendors in Section 4.4.

Permit status. Officials indicated that Angolan nationals crossing into Nkurenkuru are generally issued visitor's permits, intended to allow visits to family members and shopping, rather than any form of trading or commercial permit. On this account, the retail trading activity described by local vendors throughout Sections 4.2 and 4.3 falls outside what these permits formally authorise, meaning that, from a strict regulatory standpoint, most Angolan trading captured in this study is already occurring without a specific legal basis for commercial activity, rather than being trade conducted under an overlooked or unfairly generous permit category.

Rationale for tempered enforcement. Officials explained that strict enforcement of this permit restriction is deliberately balanced against two other concerns. First, a security and public-health concern: officials indicated that rigorously enforcing the visitor-permit restriction could push Angolan traders toward using unofficial or illegal entry points to continue trading, which in turn would make it harder to monitor and control the movement of illegal goods (officials specifically mentioned drugs) and of communicable disease risks such as yellow fever, which are more easily screened for at formal, monitored crossings than at unofficial ones. Second, a livelihood and humanitarian concern: officials noted that many Angolan traders rely on trading in Namibia to make a living, given the difficult economic conditions in Angola, and that strictly preventing them from selling in Nkurenkuru would likely worsen their economic circumstances rather than resolve the competition concerns raised by local SME owners.

Border operating hours. As additional operational context, officials noted that the formal Nkurenkuru border crossing operates daily from 08:00 to 18:00, which structures the hours during which cross-border movement, including the trading activity discussed throughout this study, legitimately takes place through the formal crossing point.

Taken together, these accounts indicate that the "regulatory asymmetry" documented from the vendor side in Section 4.3 (particularly the trading-fee disparity) sits on top of a more fundamental gap between the formal legal basis on which Angolan traders are present in Namibia and the commercial activity they actually undertake, a gap that immigration officials appear to tolerate deliberately, for reasons that are independent of, and not necessarily reconcilable with, local vendors' preference for tighter restriction.

5. DISCUSSION

5.1 Findings in Relation to Theory and Prior Research

The finding that Angolan traders sell a near-identical range of products to local vendors (Section 4.2) confirms the concern implicit in the literature review: the two groups are, in Porter's (1985) terms, largely

undifferentiated competitors targeting the same customers with substitutable goods. Under such conditions, competitive advantage theory predicts that competition will be won primarily on cost, and the findings bear this out, but with an important qualification. The price gap respondents describe (for example, N\$5.00 versus N\$10.00 for a cabbage) does not appear to arise solely from superior efficiency on the part of Angolan traders, as Porter's (1985) cost-leadership concept might suggest in a purely private-sector context. Instead, respondents point to a substantial regulatory cost asymmetry (an N\$23 municipal trading fee for Angolan traders compared with N\$460 for local vendors) as a significant contributor to the price gap. This nuances the theoretical framework applied in this study: the competitive edge documented here in Nkurenkuru appears to be materially shaped by local trading-fee policy and enforcement of movement restrictions, not solely by differences in trading efficiency or resource endowments between the two groups.

At the same time, the resource constraints emphasised by Barney (1991) are clearly visible in respondents' accounts. Local vendors lack the storage or cooling infrastructure to protect perishable stock when sales slow, converting a sales problem into a direct, additional loss through spoilage. This is consistent with Sunde (2025), who identifies inadequate infrastructure and limited access to finance among the main obstacles to SME sustainability in Namibia, and with Ayyagari et al. (2011), whose cross-country evidence links access to external finance to firms' capacity to innovate.

The study also found evidence consistent with the more favourable view of cross-border trade advanced by Afreximbank (2020) and reflected in Porter's (1985) account of competition as a potential stimulus for improvement: some respondents reported buying stock cheaply from Angolan traders for resale, and gaining access to products, such as garlic, that were not otherwise readily available locally. This supports the literature review's conclusion (Section 2.4.2) that the effect of Angolan traders on local SMEs should not be understood as uniformly harmful or uniformly beneficial, but as a mixed effect that depends on how individual traders are positioned relative to the competition.

The regulatory-asymmetry theme, particularly the trading-fee disparity and the uneven application of house-to-house selling restrictions, is a specific empirical contribution of this study, and directly addresses the research gap identified in Section 2.5. Prior studies on the Namibia–Angola border, including those focused on Rundu and Oshikango (Dobler, 2009; Ndumba et al., 2021), document the scale and composition of cross-border trade but do not report this kind of tangible, fee-level evidence of how local regulatory structures may be amplifying the competitive pressure faced by SMEs in a specific town.

The measures proposed by respondents (Section 4.4), namely designated trading points, wholesale-only restrictions on Angolan traders, and price parity, align with the policy direction discussed in the literature review (Section 2.4.3), including the need to enforce the Competition Act 2 of 2003 and to establish stakeholder platforms involving local government, trader associations, and cross-border traders. However, respondents' emphasis on spatial and structural separation of the two trading groups suggests a preference for containment-based solutions, which sits alongside, and is not necessarily aligned with, the capacity-building approach emphasised by McKenzie and Woodruff (2014) and in the theoretical literature on competition as a driver of SME improvement. Both approaches are reflected in the recommendations that follow, since they address different, complementary dimensions of the problem: one addresses the immediate regulatory asymmetry respondents identified as the most direct cause of their difficulties, and

the other addresses the longer-term competitiveness of local SMEs regardless of how the regulatory environment evolves.

5.2 Reconciling Vendor and Immigration Perspectives

The key informant findings presented in Section 4.5 add a dimension to this discussion that is largely absent from the SME-vendor data alone, and that meaningfully qualifies both the theoretical framing and the policy recommendations that follow from it. The finding that Angolan traders generally hold visitor's permits, not trading permits, is a direct empirical instance of Lesser and Moïsé-Leeman's (2009) definition of informal cross-border trade as activity that "escapes the regulatory framework set by the government" (2009, p. 9): in Nkurenkuru's case, the trade is not merely under-taxed relative to local vendors, as the fee disparity in Section 4.3 suggests, but is largely occurring outside the specific legal basis under which traders are permitted to be in the country at all. This is consistent with Peberdy's (2000) argument that immigration policy, not only customs or trade policy, is often the more fundamental determinant of how small-scale cross-border trade actually operates, a dimension not captured by this study's vendor interviews on their own.

The officials' stated reasons for tempering enforcement (the risk of displacing traders toward illegal entry points, with attendant security and disease-control concerns, and the risk of worsening traders' livelihoods given Angola's economic conditions) are not unique to Nkurenkuru. Similar dynamics have been documented at other African borders: Dzawanda and Matsa (2023) show that Zimbabwean traders facing restrictive permit regimes shift toward illegal entry points and non-declaration rather than exiting the trade, and Suber (2024) documents how harsher border enforcement elsewhere can generate corrupt, collusive workarounds rather than curbing cross-border movement. Read against this literature, Nkurenkuru's immigration officials' light-touch approach appears less like an isolated administrative gap and more like a locally rational response to a trade-off that recurs across the region.

This has a direct bearing on the policy preferences expressed by local SME vendors in Section 4.4. Restricting Angolan traders to designated points, confining them to wholesale transactions, or otherwise tightening enforcement, while understandable given the material harm vendors report, risks the same displacement effect documented elsewhere in the literature if pursued without addressing the underlying permit gap. The wider ICBT literature converges on a different emphasis: rather than eliminating or tightly restricting informal cross-border trade, it should be formalised and regulated (Afreximbank, 2020; Dzawanda et al., 2026; Park et al., 2024), an approach that can carry real poverty-reduction value for economically marginalised traders, including the many women who dominate ICBT participation across the continent (Brown et al., 2024; Dzawanda et al., 2026). At the same time, Hansen-Addy et al.'s (2024) cross-country evidence that foreign-firm competition specifically worsens the negative performance effects of trade facilitation on African SMEs is a reminder that formalisation cannot simply be read as costless for local vendors either; it must be paired with measures that also protect and strengthen local SMEs' competitive position, not only regularise cross-border traders' status.

The overall picture that emerges is one of genuine policy tension rather than a single correct answer: local SMEs in Nkurenkuru experience real, material harm from largely unregulated Angolan retail trading, while a purely restrictive response risks displacement toward illegal entry points, security and disease-control costs, and worsened livelihoods for already economically vulnerable Angolan traders. This

reframes the appropriate policy response toward a formalisation-based approach, most plausibly a distinct cross-border trading permit category coordinated between Namibian and Angolan authorities, rather than reliance on the current visitor-permit arrangement or on unilateral local restriction, a possibility examined further in the recommendations below.

5.3 Implications for Theory and Practice

Theoretically, the findings refine the application of Porter's (1985) theory of competitive advantage to informal border markets. Cost leadership alone does not explain the advantage that Angolan traders enjoy in Nkurenkuru: respondents attributed the price gap in large part to the trading-fee disparity and to the uneven application of house-to-house selling restrictions, which suggests that regulatory and immigration-policy asymmetries can create or amplify cost advantages that are independent of trading efficiency. The resource constraints emphasised by Barney (1991) help to explain why local vendors are less able to respond, since the absence of cooling and storage facilities turns a sales problem into a spoilage loss. The mixed effects reported by respondents also support the view that competition from cross-border traders can be both a threat and a source of benefit, and the officials' accounts show that the immigration-policy context, which is often overlooked in trade-corridor research (Peberdy, 2000), needs to be built into analyses of the competitive relationship between cross-border traders and local firms.

For practice, the findings imply that measures aimed at strengthening local SMEs will be more credible if they are accompanied by action on the regulatory asymmetries that vendors identify. The town council can address the fee disparity, the application of house-to-house selling rules and the lack of basic market infrastructure; national government and immigration authorities can address the gap between the visitor's permits on which most Angolan traders enter and the commercial activity they undertake; and SME support organisations can strengthen the managerial and marketing capabilities of local vendors. Because the officials' reasons for tempering enforcement rest on security, public-health and livelihood concerns, these measures are best developed jointly rather than through unilateral restriction. The specific recommendations are set out in Section 6.3.

6. CONCLUSION

6.1 Conclusion

This study set out to assess the impact of Angolan cross-border traders on SMEs in Nkurenkuru. In relation to Objective 1, the study found that Angolan traders sell a product range that overlaps almost entirely with that of local vendors, positioning the two groups as direct competitors rather than complementary trading partners. In relation to Objective 2, the study found that the presence of Angolan traders has reduced sales and profit margins for local SMEs, driven by lower prices, greater mobility (house-to-house selling), and a substantially lower municipal trading fee burden, and compounded by losses from spoiled, unsold perishable stock and a lack of basic market infrastructure; the study also found that some local vendors derive tangible benefits from the presence of Angolan traders, particularly access to cheap resale stock and to otherwise-unavailable products. In relation to Objective 3, respondents identified a consistent, narrow set of measures (designated trading points, wholesale-only restrictions on Angolan traders, and price parity) as their preferred means of promoting fairer competition. Key informant interviews with immigration officials, however, indicate that this preference for restriction sits in tension with the

regulatory reality: most Angolan traders operate on visitor's permits rather than trading permits, and officials deliberately temper enforcement of this gap because of the risk of displacing traders toward illegal entry points (with associated security and disease-control concerns) and the risk of worsening traders' livelihoods given Angola's economic conditions.

Overall, the study concludes that the impact of Angolan traders on Nkurenkuru's SMEs is real, material, and predominantly perceived as negative by local vendors, but is not uniform, and is shaped by regulatory, immigration-policy, and infrastructural asymmetries that lie within the control of local and national authorities, rather than by trading efficiency alone. Addressing these asymmetries credibly requires reconciling local vendors' fairness concerns with the security, public-health, and livelihood considerations raised by immigration officials, rather than treating either perspective in isolation.

6.2 Limitations of the Study

This study is subject to several limitations. First, the sample was drawn only from vendors operating around three specific retail points in Nkurenkuru and may not represent all informal traders operating elsewhere in the town or district. Second, all twenty respondents were female, which reflects the composition of vendors encountered at the study sites but means the study could not capture the perspectives of male traders operating in the same or adjacent sectors. Third, the study relies on respondents' self-reported perceptions of changes in sales and profitability rather than on verified financial or business records, which may introduce recall or social desirability bias. Fourth, the use of purposive and snowball sampling, while appropriate for reaching a relevant, information-rich population, limits the statistical generalisability of the findings beyond the studied population. Finally, the cross-sectional nature of the data collection means the study captures perceptions at a single point in time and cannot, on its own, establish a causal relationship between the presence of Angolan traders and changes in SME performance. The key informant component of the study is subject to an additional limitation: the account of permit categories, enforcement practice, and its rationale presented in Section 4.5 is based on interviews with two immigration officials, and was not independently verified against official permit statistics, written border-management policy, or interviews with a larger, more representative sample of immigration and customs personnel. It should therefore be read as a professional, practice-level account rather than as confirmed official statistics.

6.3 Recommendations and Implications for Practice

Based on these findings, the following recommendations are made:

To the Nkurenkuru Town Council: Review and harmonise trading fee structures so that local and cross-border traders operating within the town are subject to comparable municipal levies, addressing the fee disparity (N\$460 versus N\$23) identified as a central grievance in this study. Consistently enforce, or equally extend, rules governing house-to-house selling across both local and cross-border traders. Invest in basic market infrastructure including cold storage or cooling facilities and ablution facilities at the trading sites used by local vendors, to reduce losses from spoilage and improve working conditions.

To national government and regulatory/immigration bodies: Enforce the existing provisions of the Competition Act 2 of 2003 relating to cross-border cartels and unfair pricing, to ensure that competition between local and cross-border traders takes place on a fairer footing. In consultation with Angolan authorities, establish a distinct, formal cross-border trading permit category, separate from the visitor's

permit under which most Angolan traders currently enter, that would allow legitimate small-scale traders to operate visibly and be subject to comparable municipal fees and regulations as local vendors. Such a permit-based approach directly addresses local vendors' fairness concerns while avoiding the displacement toward illegal entry points, and the associated security and disease-control risks, that immigration officials identified as a consequence of stricter enforcement of the current permit regime; it would also avoid worsening the livelihoods of Angolan traders who depend on this trade. In parallel, explore the establishment of designated cross-border trading points, as proposed by respondents, structured around the border's existing 08:00–18:00 operating hours, to formalise supply linkages between the two groups while reducing direct retail competition within the town centre. Any such measures should be developed jointly by the town council, national immigration authorities, and their Angolan counterparts, rather than pursued unilaterally by any single party, given the security, public-health, and livelihood trade-offs immigration officials raised.

To SME support organisations (e.g., SME Compete, Team Namibia) and local government: Provide targeted entrepreneurship, financial management, and digital marketing training to local SMEs in Nkurenkuru, in line with the capacity-building approach documented by McKenzie and Woodruff (2014), to help vendors differentiate their offerings and strengthen their competitive position over the longer term. Establish a local, multi-stakeholder platform bringing together the town council, SME associations, and representatives of cross-border traders, to negotiate trading arrangements and address conflicts on an ongoing basis.

6.4 Suggestions for Further Research

Future research could usefully verify the self-reported sales and profit changes documented in this study using financial or transaction records, or a quantitative, longitudinal design capable of tracking SME performance over time. Future studies should also seek to incorporate the perspectives of Angolan traders themselves, to provide a fuller, two-sided account of the trading relationship documented here from the local-vendor perspective only. Given that this study's sample was limited to female vendors in a specific product segment, further research could extend the inquiry to male-operated informal enterprises and to other product sectors in Nkurenkuru. Finally, a comparative study examining multiple Namibia–Angola border towns would help establish whether the regulatory-asymmetry findings reported here for Nkurenkuru are a localised issue or a more general feature of informal cross-border trade along this border. Given the significance of the permit and enforcement findings reported in Section 4.5, future research should also seek to interview a larger, more representative sample of immigration and customs officials, and to review official permit statistics and border-management policy directly, to substantiate and extend the key informant accounts presented in this study.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The authors have no acknowledgements to declare.

REFERENCES

1. Afreximbank. (2020). African trade report 2020: Informal cross-border trade in Africa in the context of the AfCFTA. African Export-Import Bank.
2. Afrika, J., & Ajumbo, G. (2012). Informal cross border trade in Africa: Implications and policy recommendations. *Africa Economic Brief*, 3(10), 1–13.
3. Ahmodu-Tijani, I. S., & Dosunmu, K. O. (2020). Effects of the informal cross border trade in Western Africa: A study of Nigeria and Niger. *Jurnal Aplikasi Manajemen, Ekonomi dan Bisnis*, 4(2), 34–42. <https://doi.org/10.51263/jameb.v4i2.102>
4. Amutenya, P., & Van der Linden, E. (1993). The Namibia-Angola border fence and its socio-economic implications: Report of a fact-finding mission, 17–20 June 1992 (NEPRU Working Paper No. 34). Namibian Economic Policy Research Unit.
5. Ayyagari, M., Demirgüç-Kunt, A., & Maksimovic, V. (2011). Firm innovation in emerging markets: The role of finance, governance, and competition. *Journal of Financial and Quantitative Analysis*, 46(6), 1545–1580. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022109011000378>
6. Barney, J. (1991). Firm resources and sustained competitive advantage. *Journal of Management*, 17(1), 99–120. <https://doi.org/10.1177/014920639101700108>
7. Bell, E., Bryman, A., & Harley, B. (2022). *Business research methods* (6th ed.). Oxford University Press.
8. Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77–101. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>
9. Brenton, P., & Isik, G. (Eds.). (2012). *De-fragmenting Africa: Deepening regional trade integration in goods and services*. World Bank.
10. Brown, A., Chakrabarti, B., Mackie, P., Fuller, C., Bhattacharya, R., Bagchi, S., & Chakrabarti, D. (2024). Contested spaces of exchange: Informal cross-border trade on the India–Bangladesh border. *Forum for Development Studies*, 51(1), 121–143. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08039410.2023.2255211>
11. Dobler, G. (2009). Oshikango: The dynamics of growth and regulation in a Namibian boom town. *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 35(1), 115–131. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03057070802685601>
12. Dzawanda, B., & Matsa, M. M. (2023). Strategies for survival in an informal economy: Illegality of Zimbabwean informal cross-border traders at ports of entries in Southern Africa. *International Journal of Community Well-Being*, 6(3), 203–221. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s42413-023-00191-z>
13. Dzawanda, B., Matsa, M. M., Gumbo, E. B., Runokunda, J. C., & Nicolau, M. D. (2026). A systematic review of informal cross-border trade in African economies towards vision 2030. *Discover Sustainability*, 7, Article 84. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s43621-025-02443-8>
14. Hansen-Addy, A. E., Parrilli, D. M., & Tingbani, I. (2024). The impact of trade facilitation on African SMEs' performance. *Small Business Economics*, 62(1), 105–131. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11187-023-00756-4>
15. Kreike, E. (2004). *Re-creating Eden: Land use, environment, and society in southern Angola and northern Namibia*. Heinemann.
16. Lesser, C., & Moisé-Leeman, E. (2009). Informal cross-border trade and trade facilitation reform in Sub-Saharan Africa (OECD Trade Policy Working Paper No. 86). OECD.
17. Lohr, S. L. (2021). *Sampling: Design and analysis*. Chapman and Hall/CRC.

18. McKenzie, D., & Woodruff, C. (2014). What are we learning from business training and entrepreneurship evaluations around the developing world? *The World Bank Research Observer*, 29(1), 48–82. <https://doi.org/10.1093/wbro/lkt007>
19. Namibia Statistics Agency. (2023). Informal cross border trade report. <https://nsa.org.na/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/INFORMAL-CROSS-BORDER-TRADE-REPORT-NOV-2023-.pdf>
20. Ndumba, S., Shikangalah, R. N., & Becker, F. (2021). Towards understanding the role of informal cross-border trading at Rundu–Calai bridgehead, Namibia. *Journal of Namibian Studies*, 29, 7–25.
21. Park, J., Lim, M. K., & Murali, K. (2024). Informal cross-border trade in Africa: Operations, policy, and opportunities. *Management Science*, 70(10), 7142–7160. <https://doi.org/10.1287/mnsc.2022.02479>
22. Peberdy, S. (2000). Border crossings: Small entrepreneurs and cross-border trade between South Africa and Mozambique. *Tijdschrift voor Economische en Sociale Geografie*, 91(4), 361–378. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9663.00124>
23. Peberdy, S., & Rogerson, C. (2000). Transnationalism and non-South African entrepreneurs in South Africa's small, medium and micro-enterprise (SMME) economy. *Canadian Journal of African Studies*, 34(1), 20–40. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00083968.2000.10751183>
24. Porter, M. E. (1985). *Competitive advantage: Creating and sustaining superior performance*. Free Press.
25. Republic of Namibia. (2003). Competition Act 2 of 2003. *Government Gazette of the Republic of Namibia*.
26. Rodrigues, C. U. (2010). Angola's southern border: Entrepreneurship opportunities and the state in Cunene. *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 48(3), 461–484. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022278X10000339>
27. Saunders, M. N. K., Lewis, P., & Thornhill, A. (2023). *Research methods for business students* (9th ed.). Pearson.
28. Suber, D. L. (2024). Corruption and bribery at the border: Strategies of survival and adaptation between people smugglers and border enforcement. *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 709(1), 65–85. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00027162241245504>
29. Sunde, T. (2025). The impact of trade policies on SMEs in Windhoek, Namibia: Challenges and opportunities. *Development Southern Africa*, 42(3), 463–476. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0376835X.2025.2485931>

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

Daniel Kandjimi (corresponding author) is a lecturer at the International University of Management (IUM), Namibia, and holds an MBA. Research interest: entrepreneurship. ORCID iD: <https://orcid.org/0009-0002-0853-7438>. Email: kandjimidaniel@gmail.com.

Dr Andreas Shifafure is a lecturer at the International University of Management (IUM), Namibia, and holds a PhD in Education. Research interests: education and entrepreneurship. ORCID iD: <https://orcid.org/0009-0003-1266-0639>.

Elise Hauholo is a lecturer at the International University of Management (IUM), Namibia, and holds an MBA. Research interest: entrepreneurship. ORCID iD: <https://orcid.org/0009-0009-8965-8741>.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS STATEMENT

Daniel Kandjimi and Elise Hauholo carried out the research, analysed the data and wrote the manuscript. Andreas Shifafure reviewed the manuscript.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest.

APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW GUIDE

[The semi-structured interview guide used for data collection is reproduced from the original questionnaire document and should be inserted here in the final formatted version.]