

## Book Review

Horodnic, I., Rodgers, P., Williams, C., & Momtazian, L. (Eds.) (2018). *The Informal Economy: Exploring Drivers and Practices*. Routledge, Imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group an informal business, 711 Third Avenue, New York, 10017, Pages 265, P-ISBN: 978-1-138-06837-7; E-ISBN: 978-1-315-15801-3, **Price** (Paperback): U.S.\$ 54.99, **Price** (Hardcover): U.S. \$ 180.00.

The review aims to provide a significant importance of the extensive book in the field of unofficial economic activities and informal economy. The book defines informal economy as the activities outside formal regulations like unregistered businesses, informal employment, and casual labor. The book contents thirteen chapters dividing into two major parts. The first part includes six chapters that analyze the factors affecting formal and informal institutions, their relationship, tax morale, norms, traditions, social trust, labour market institutions, and corruption etc. Similarly, the second part includes seven chapters that examines the nature and characteristics of informal economic activities by illustrating its various forms across various global economic environments.

The opening chapter of first part of the book is '*Tax Morale and Informality in Post-Socialist Context*' by Diana Traikova that examines the linkage between informal economic activities and tax observance in post-socialist nations. The author contends that the low tax morale is a result of the culture of informality brought by the legacy of communist government including centralized state control and mistrust. The chapter also highlights the necessity of better governance, openness, and civic involvement for reconstruct tax systems and promote compliance in post-socialist states. The second chapter is '*Many Shades of the Grey Economy in Romania*', by Ianole et al., that explores the grey economy, which is the combination of both regulated and unregulated operations in Romania. They emphasize how persistent the grey economy in Romania due to economic upheavals, political unpredictability, and regulatory changes. They draw attention to how the grey economy helps people for living with impedes economic expansion and lowers government income.

The third chapter by Horodnic et al. is '*Perceptions and Realities of Envelope Wages among Students in Moldova and Romania*.' They found that students view these informal wage arrangements as a pragmatic solution to low-paying jobs and high unemployment. They advocate for policy reforms to reduce informality and improve labor market conditions. The fourth chapter is '*Book-Launching Informalities on the Right Side of a Nineteenth-Century Walnut Table*' by Marcello Mollica that examines customs using a cultural and historical perspective. The author highlights the hazy distinctions between formal and informal contacts by using the metaphor of a 'Walnut Table.' The author argues that informality may be adaptive, subversive, and essential for negotiating power and control are challenging the traditional views of it as a bad thing.

The fifth chapter, *Assessing the Frequency of Informal Payments for Health Services in Lithuania* by Horodnic et al., looks at how often informal payments are in the healthcare system of the nation. The forced or voluntary payments are a coping strategy for structural flaws and support inequality. They advocate legislative changes to increase transparency, improve healthcare funding, and raise wages for underlying reasons of informal payments. The sixth chapter is *Labour Market Institutions and Undeclared Work: A Multilevel Analysis of Central and Eastern European Countries* by Adriana Anamaria Davidescu, that examines the relationship between labor market institutions and the prevalence of undeclared work in Central and Eastern European countries. The author argues that economic factors like unemployment and poverty contribute to undeclared work. At the same time, labor market institutions like labor laws, social security systems, and taxation policies shape the extent of informality.

The second part is connected with the seventh chapter, *The Role of Informal Work in the Livelihood Strategies of U.S. Households*, by Wornell et al., which investigates the expanding role of informal work like gig economy labor, freelancing, and under-the-table jobs, that are essential coping strategy especially in rural and economically underprivileged areas. It also exposes exploitation of workers that made inequality. The eighth chapter, *From Goods to Emotions: The Transformation of Informal Practices in the Republic of Georgia* by Costanza Curro, examines how informal practices have changed in Georgia by emphasizing the move away from material exchanges and toward emotionally charged ones. The author examines how informal networks were affected by the post-Soviet transition. The value of interpersonal connections and emotional labor in overcoming financial difficulties in a market economy is prone to instability.

The ninth chapter, *Looking for Freedom in Grey Areas: Approaches to Informality as a Space for Negotiating Goals of Neo-liberalism in Developing the Cooperation Sector* by Liga Rudzite, examines how neo-liberal ideologies and informal practices systems can be used to explore socio-economic goals and power dynamics. While pursuing economic objectives, players can subvert bureaucratic and regulatory systems through informality. It presents chances for independence and possible exploitation with an important insight for rethinking resistance and economic collaboration in neo-liberal settings. The tenth chapter is *Gifting Practices in Informal Trade in Response to Elites, Rules and State Regulations on the Myanmar-Thailand Border* by Busarin Lertchavalitsakul, which explores how gifting practices shape informal trade on the border side. These practices help traders bypass restrictions, build relationships with state officials, and secure transactions. The author provides insights into the cultural and political dimensions of informal trade in border sides.

In chapter eleven, *Pakistan's Batkhela Bazaar* Muhammad S. Khan analyzed relating to the features of informal economic activities and the challenges of

integrating it into the formal economy. The author argues that while these activities are essential for survival, people contribute to issues like tax evasion and unregulated labor. Khan highlighted the need to balance economic growth, political control, and local community sovereignty. Akeem A. Akinwale, in chapter twelve, *'Intrapreneurship and Capital Accumulation Knowledge Among Trainees in the Nigerian Informal Economy'* investigates how capital accumulation tactics of trainees are affected by entrepreneurship in the informal sector of Nigeria. Although the author operates outside the official financial institutions, it focuses on developing entrepreneurial skills and expertise in small-scale firms, services, and crafts. The author also says that apprenticeships, mentorship, and informal training are crucial for giving workers the skills to survive and prosper economically. However, the unorganized sector of Nigeria promotes upward mobility, local development, and capital accumulation.

The final chapter, *'Informal Competition, Firm Productivity, and Policy Reforms in Egypt'* by Nesma Ali and Boris Najman, examines the impact of informal competition on the formal productivity of business firms in Egypt. They argue that informal businesses can enhance competition by offering lower prices and benefiting consumers as well as undermine formal firms by avoiding taxes and social security contributions. This creates an uneven playing field, forcing firms to reduce costs and productivity. The authors suggested a few policy reforms like improved regulation enforcement, tax reforms, reduction of negative impacts of informality, and thereby enhance encourage growth.

The review concludes that it highlights the multifaceted nature of informal economy as a survival mechanism for marginalized groups, a complex economic sector with its own rules and practices, intricacy, and vital role of the informal economy in the global economy particularly in developing countries. It also critically examines the dynamics, drivers, and practices of the informal economy, arguing that it needs to be more understood within traditional economic frameworks. It also advocates for policies that recognize the complexities and potential of informality rather than focusing solely on its eradication. It challenges oversimplified viewpoints by portraying informality as a survival tactic and a dynamic sector impacted by socio-economic, cultural, and political issues. The book also promotes sophisticated policy approaches that provide scholars and policy makers who want to comprehend and negotiate the realities of informal work with insightful information. Finally, the worldwide application of the book may be limited due to its concentration only on case studies of particular areas as it did not consider the variety of informal behaviors that found in different industries like the gig economy and digital platforms. Moreover, it did not critically interact with current policies or address the changing characters of informal economies.