

Action Research for Enhancing Enterprise Resilience

A Diagnostic Framework for Ghanaian SMEs (2000–2026)

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ABSTRACT

Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Ghana face persistent threats from economic volatility, infrastructural deficits, and global shocks. Existing resilience models often lack contextual specificity and practical diagnostic tools for owner-managers in this setting. This study aimed to develop and iteratively test a diagnostic framework to enhance enterprise resilience. The objective was to co-create a practical tool enabling SMEs to self-assess vulnerabilities and implement targeted resilience-building actions. An action research methodology was employed, involving four iterative cycles of planning, action, observation, and reflection with a cohort of 24 owner-managers from diverse sectors. Data were collected via participatory workshops, reflective journals, and structured diagnostic assessments over multiple engagements. The developed framework identified four core resilience domains: financial agility, operational adaptability, relational capital, and strategic foresight. A predominant theme was the critical, yet underdeveloped, role of strategic foresight, with over 70% of participants initially lacking formalised mechanisms for environmental scanning. The action research process successfully yielded a contextually grounded diagnostic framework. Its iterative development ensured practical relevance and enhanced owner-managers' capacity for proactive resilience planning. SME support agencies should integrate the diagnostic framework into advisory services. Owner-managers are recommended to adopt the tool for regular organisational health checks and to prioritise developing strategic foresight capabilities. enterprise resilience, diagnostic framework, action research, small and medium-sized enterprises, strategic foresight, Ghana This paper provides a novel, co-created diagnostic framework that uniquely integrates behavioural factors, such as managerial risk perception, with conventional business economics to assess and build resilience in an African SME context.

Keywords: *Action Research, Enterprise Resilience, Diagnostic Framework, Ghanaian SMEs, Sub-Saharan Africa*

Article Highlights

- Presents a diagnostic framework co-created with 24 Ghanaian SME owner-managers.
- Identifies four core resilience domains: financial, operational, relational, and strategic.
- Action research methodology enabled iterative, contextually grounded tool development.
- Framework integrates behavioural factors with conventional business economics.

Framework Application

SME support agencies are advised to integrate this diagnostic tool into advisory services to facilitate regular organisational health checks and proactive resilience planning.

This article offers a practical, co-created tool for resilience assessment in Sub-Saharan African business contexts.

ABSTRACT-ONLY PUBLICATION

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