

**AFRICAN BEHAVIORAL FINANCE (BUSINESS/ECONOMICS/PSYCHOLOGY CROSSOVER)**

Vol. 1 | No. 1 | 2010

**ACTION RESEARCH**

**Navigating Structural Constraints and Entrepreneurial Agency**

*An Action Research Framework for Business Development in Eswatini*

**Nomsa Mamba<sup>1</sup>|Thabo Simelane<sup>2</sup>|Lindiwe Nkambule<sup>1</sup>  
Sipho Dlamini<sup>1,3</sup>**

<sup>1</sup> University of Eswatini (UNESWA)

<sup>2</sup> Department of Research, University of Eswatini (UNESWA)

<sup>3</sup> Department of Advanced Studies, University of Eswatini (UNESWA)

**Correspondence:** [nmamba@aol.com](mailto:nmamba@aol.com)

Received: 16 October 2009 | Accepted: 15 November 2009 | Published: 06 January 2010 | DOI:

[10.5281/zenodo.18946330](https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.18946330)

**ABSTRACT**

Entrepreneurship in sub-Saharan Africa operates within a complex interplay of institutional voids, resource scarcity, and entrenched socio-economic structures. This context creates unique challenges for business development, where individual agency is often constrained by systemic factors. This study aimed to develop and test a participatory action research framework designed to enhance entrepreneurial agency within structural constraints. Its objective was to co-create practical business development strategies with local entrepreneurs. An iterative action research cycle was employed, involving 18 small and medium enterprise owners over multiple phases of diagnosis, planning, intervention, and evaluation. Data were collected through participatory workshops, reflective journals, and in-depth interviews, and analysed using thematic analysis. A dominant theme was the strategic repurposing of social kinship networks to circumvent formal institutional gaps. Specifically, approximately 70% of participants successfully leveraged these networks for critical resource mobilisation, leading to measurable improvements in supply chain resilience. The research demonstrates that fostering reflexive entrepreneurial practices can mediate structural limitations. The co-created framework provides a viable model for business development support in similar constrained environments. Business support programmes should integrate mechanisms for structured peer learning and network facilitation. Policymakers are advised to recognise and formally engage with indigenous entrepreneurial ecosystems. action research, entrepreneurial agency, structural constraints, business development, SMEs, sub-Saharan Africa This paper presents a novel participatory framework that synthesises structuration theory with practical business mentoring, offering a replicable methodology for enhancing enterprise agency within constrained economies.

**Keywords:** *Action Research, Entrepreneurial Agency, Sub-Saharan Africa, Institutional Voids, Business Development, Structural Constraints*

**Article Highlights**

- Co-creates a participatory framework merging structuration theory with business mentoring.
- Identifies strategic repurposing of social networks to circumvent institutional voids.
- Demonstrates how reflexive practices can mediate structural

**Methodological Insight**

Iterative action research cycle with 18 SME owners, using participatory workshops, reflective journals, and thematic analysis.

*This study offers a practical framework for enhancing*

<p>limitations for SMEs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Provides a replicable model for business development in constrained environments.</li></ul>	<p><i>entrepreneurial agency within systemic constraints.</i></p>
------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-------------------------------------------------------------------

## **ABSTRACT-ONLY PUBLICATION**

This is an abstract-only publication. The complete research paper with full methodology, results, discussion, and references is available upon request.

## **REQUEST FULL PAPER**

 **Email:** [info@parj.africa](mailto:info@parj.africa)

Request your copy of the full paper today!

## **SUBMIT YOUR RESEARCH**

**Are you a researcher in Africa? We welcome your submissions!**

Join our community of African scholars and share your groundbreaking work.

 **Submit at:** [app.parj.africa](http://app.parj.africa)



Scan to visit [app.parj.africa](http://app.parj.africa)

### **Open Access Scholarship from PARJ**

Empowering African Research | Advancing Global Knowledge