

# Navigating the Business Environment

*A Qualitative Analysis of Strategic Challenges and Governance in Kenya (2000–2024)*

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## ABSTRACT

The business environment in Kenya has undergone significant transformation, marked by regulatory shifts, technological adoption, and evolving market structures. While quantitative studies capture macroeconomic trends, a nuanced understanding of how firms strategically navigate persistent governance and operational challenges remains under-explored. This study aims to qualitatively analyse the strategic challenges and governance issues faced by businesses, exploring the lived experiences of senior managers in formulating and implementing adaptive strategies within this complex context. A qualitative, multi-case study design was employed. Data were collected via in-depth, semi-structured interviews with 24 chief executive officers and senior directors from a purposively sampled range of medium and large enterprises. A thematic analysis was conducted using NVivo software. A predominant theme was the strategic burden of 'regulatory multiplicity', where conflicting directives from different agencies created operational paralysis. Approximately two-thirds of participants described devoting over 30% of senior management time to compliance navigation rather than core business strategy. Firms demonstrated adaptive resilience through informal networks and strategic ambiguity in reporting. Strategic management in this environment is characterised less by formal planning and more by continuous adaptation to governance complexities. The findings challenge assumptions that regulatory frameworks are uniformly interpreted and implemented, highlighting a significant gap between policy intent and business experience. Policymakers should pursue regulatory harmonisation and establish formal, transparent dialogue platforms with private sector representatives. Firms are advised to institutionalise governance mapping and invest in regulatory intelligence capabilities as a core strategic function. strategic management, business environment, corporate governance, regulatory compliance, qualitative case study, Kenya This paper provides a novel, empirically grounded framework of 'strategic navigation' that captures the non-linear, adaptive processes firms employ to manage governance complexities, moving beyond static analyses of the business climate.

**Keywords:** *Qualitative analysis, Strategic management, Corporate governance, Sub-Saharan Africa, Business environment, Case study research, Emerging markets*

### Article Highlights

- Identifies 'regulatory multiplicity' as a primary strategic burden causing operational paralysis.
- Reveals adaptive resilience through informal networks and strategic ambiguity in reporting.
- Challenges assumptions of uniform interpretation and implementation of regulatory frameworks.
- Proposes institutionalizing governance mapping as a core strategic function for firms.

### Methodological Note

Multi-case study based on in-depth interviews with 24 CEOs and senior directors from medium and large Kenyan enterprises, analysed thematically using NVivo.

*This analysis moves beyond static business climate assessments to capture adaptive, non-linear strategic processes.*



## ABSTRACT-ONLY PUBLICATION

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

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