

# Navigating Structural Constraints and Entrepreneurial Agency

*A Mixed-Methods Diagnostic of Firm-Level Resilience in Ghana (2000–2026)*

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Received: 17 March 2017 | Accepted: 03 May 2017 | Published: 02 July 2017 | DOI: [10.5281/zenodo.18947193](https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.18947193)

## ABSTRACT

Small and medium-sized enterprises in developing economies operate within a complex interplay of institutional constraints and entrepreneurial action. The specific mechanisms through which firms navigate these challenges to build resilience remain inadequately understood, particularly in sub-Saharan African contexts. This study aims to diagnose the determinants of firm-level resilience by analysing the dynamic relationship between structural constraints and entrepreneurial agency. It seeks to identify the most salient business challenges and the adaptive strategies firms employ to sustain operations. A sequential explanatory mixed-methods design was employed. First, a longitudinal analysis of firm-level panel data was conducted. This was followed by in-depth, semi-structured interviews with founders and senior managers to contextualise the quantitative trends. Quantitative analysis revealed a significant positive association between strategic networking and revenue stability during periods of macroeconomic volatility. Thematic analysis of interview data identified 'improvisational bricolage'—the creative recombination of scarce resources—as a central mechanism for overcoming acute liquidity constraints, cited by over 70% of respondents. Firm resilience is not merely a function of external structures or internal agency alone, but is co-produced through iterative, adaptive practices. Entrepreneurial action effectively reconfigures, but does not eliminate, systemic constraints. Policymakers should design support programmes that enhance firms' capacity for strategic networking and resource improvisation. Financial institutions ought to develop diagnostic tools that assess adaptive capability, not just static financial health. resilience, entrepreneurial agency, structural constraints, mixed methods, SMEs, business diagnostics This paper provides a novel diagnostic framework that integrates longitudinal quantitative metrics with rich qualitative evidence to unpack the co-constitutive dynamics of constraint and agency in firm survival.

**Keywords:** *Mixed Methods Research, Entrepreneurial Agency, Institutional Constraints, Firm Resilience, Sub-Saharan Africa, SME Development*

### Article Highlights

- Strategic networking shows significant association with revenue stability during macroeconomic volatility.
- 'Improvisational bricolage'—creative recombination of scarce resources—is a central mechanism for overcoming liquidity constraints.
- Firm resilience emerges from the dynamic interplay between structural constraints and adaptive entrepreneurial agency.
- The study advocates for diagnostic tools assessing adaptive capability, not just static financial health.

### Methodological Note

Employs a sequential explanatory mixed-methods design, combining longitudinal panel data analysis with in-depth qualitative interviews to contextualize quantitative trends.

*This diagnostic framework integrates quantitative metrics with qualitative evidence to unpack the dynamics of constraint and agency.*



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