

Enacting Entrepreneurial Choice in Institutional Voids: A Deductive Process Examination of the Executing Endeavor Model

Nura S. Akilu

Department of Business Administration, Faculty of Management Sciences, Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto.

Abstract: This study provides an empirical test of the Executing Endeavor Sequence Model, a theoretical framework that explains how entrepreneurial disposition choose evolves into Executory Acumen within environments characterized by institutional voids. While prior research has examined isolated mechanisms such as bricolage and effectuation, limited attention has been given to the full sequential process through which entrepreneurial executional capacity unfolds. Addressing this gap, the present study employs a qualitative single-case design using deductive pattern matching to examine the entrepreneurial journey of Bukky George, founder of Health Plus, one of Nigeria's largest pharmacy chain. Drawing on multiple biographical and archival sources, the analysis operationalizes nine constructs, constitutive of Thoughtful Improvisation, Creative Thoughts, Smart Effectuation, Idea Initiatives, Iterative Bricolage, Decisive Efforts, Honed Expertise, Effective Actions, and Executory Acumen, into observable textual indicators. Findings reveal strong empirical support for all nine propositions of the model, with constructs appearing in the exact predicted sequential order. The results reveals that entrepreneurial execution in institutional voids is not a singular act but a cumulative, dialectical progression of cognitive, judgmental, and behavioral stages. The study contributes to entrepreneurship theory by validating a process-based model of executional capacity, advancing methodological application of deductive pattern matching in narrative research, and offering practical insights for entrepreneurs, policymakers, and educators operating in resource-constrained environments.

Keywords: Deductive Pattern Matching, Institutional Voids, Entrepreneurial Execution, Executory Acumen, Narrative Case Study, Healthplus, Nigeria.

INTRODUCTION

Entrepreneurial execution in environments marked by institutional voids, where the absence of regulatory enforcement, supply chain integrity, and professional standards (Mair & Marti, 2009; Bruton *et al.*, 2015) remains pervasive, persists as a central puzzle in entrepreneurship research. While scholars have illuminated coping mechanisms such as bricolage (Baker & Nelson, 2005) and effectuation (Sarasvathy, 2001), fewer studies have examined the sequential process through which entrepreneurs learn to *choose* and *execute* reliably under persistent constraint. This gap is particularly acute in sub-Saharan African contexts, where fragmented markets, counterfeit products, and weak professional oversight are not exceptions but enduring features (Zoogah *et al.*, 2015).

To address this gap, a theoretical process model of entrepreneurship framed through the lens of Disposition to Choose and introduced as Executing endeavor sequence (Akilu, 2026b) proposes a nine-construct causal chain, from Thoughtful Improvisation (TI) to Executory Acumen (XA). The model posits that executional capacity unfolds as an ordered, dialectical progression, with each antecedent-consequence pair increasing the probability of advancing to the next stage. However, this model has not yet been empirically tested.

In view of this, the present paper conducts such a test using deductive pattern matching (Yin, 2018; Sinkovics, 2018), a qualitative technique that compares empirical patterns from a case narrative with theoretically predicted patterns. We select the revelatory case (Yin, 2018) of Bukky George, founder of Health Plus, one of Nigeria's largest pharmacy chain. George built an 80-store, 700-staff enterprise starting from a small shop in Ikeja, operating in an institutional void characterised by 200,000 unregistered drugstores (outnumbering licensed pharmacies 6 to 1), widespread counterfeit medicines, and lax regulation. Her detailed biographical narrative, compiled from multiple published sources, offers a rare window into the cognitive and behavioural dynamics of entrepreneurial execution under extreme constraint.

The research question is posed thus: To what extent does the narrative of Bukky George's entrepreneurial journey match the sequential construct chain from Thoughtful Improvisation to Executory Acumen as predicted by the Executing Endeavor Sequence?

In attempting to answering this question, the paper make three contributions. First, the paper provides the first empirical test of the Executing Endeavor Sequence, confirming its internal logic while

identifying contextual refinements (e.g., the role of formal education and mentoring). Second, it demonstrates how deductive pattern matching can be operationalised for execution-focused process models. Third, it extends the literature on institutional voids by showing that reliable execution is not a single capability but a cumulative sequence of judgment, commitment, and adaptation stages.

The paper proceeds as follows. Section two summarises the Executing Endeavor Sequence and its nine propositions. Section three describes the deductive pattern-matching methodology, case selection, and analytical procedure. Section four presents the findings, including a construct-by-construct matching table. Section five discusses the theoretical and practical implications, while section six addresses limitations and future research directions, followed by a conclusion in section seven.

Theoretical Framework: The Executing Endeavor Sequence

This section summarises the *Executing Endeavor Sequence*, a theoretical model of entrepreneurial executional capacity in institutional voids (Akilu, 2026b). The model posits that reliable execution under constraint unfolds as a sequential, dialectical progression of eight antecedent-consequence pairs,

culminating in Executory Acumen. Each construct is defined, its theoretical grounding noted, and its role in the sequence explained. The section concludes with the nine formal propositions.

Institutional Voids as the Contextual Backdrop

Institutional voids refer to the absence of market intermediaries (e.g., banks, legal enforcement, quality certification) and weak regulatory frameworks that render standard business operations risky or impossible (Khanna & Palepu, 2010; Mair & Marti, 2009). In such environments, entrepreneurs cannot rely on formal institutions to reduce uncertainty. The Executing Endeavor Sequence theorises how they nevertheless learn to *choose* and *execute* reliably, by building an internal, stepwise scaffold of exploratory action, cognitive differentiation, disciplined experimentation, public commitment, iterative adaptation, decisive escalation, honed expertise, effective action, and finally embodied executory acumen.

The Nine Constructs of the Executing Endeavor Sequence

The sequence moves from Thoughtful Improvisation (TI) to Executory Acumen (XA) through seven intermediate constructs. Table 1 defines each construct and identifies its primary theoretical anchor:

Table 1: Constructs of the Executing Endeavor Sequence

Construct	Definition (Akilu, 2026b)	Primary Theoretical Anchor
Thoughtful Improvisation (TI)	Deliberate probing of uncertain environments through purposive action, undertaken to surface the structure of ambiguity.	Improvisation Theory (Weick, 1998); Effectuation Theory (Sarasvathy, 2001)
Creative Thoughts (CT)	Synthetic recombination of fragmented observations into novel yet contextually grounded venture possibilities under constraint.	Componential Theory of Creativity (Amabile, 1996); Creative Cognition (Ward, 2004)
Smart Effectuation (SE)	Strategic enactment of means-driven experimentation that deliberately constrains risk, pace, and exposure, introducing selection intelligence.	Effectuation Theory (Sarasvathy, 2001); Exploration-Exploitation (March, 1991)
Idea Initiatives (II)	Small-scale, observable commitments undertaken to validate a selected idea in situ, often without formal endorsement or protection.	Entrepreneurial Judgment (McMullen & Dimov, 2013); Legitimacy Theory (Suchman, 1995)
Iterative Bricolage (IB)	Recurrent recombination of limited resources across successive cycles of trial, error, and refinement, guided by feedback from prior initiatives.	Bricolage Theory (Lévi-Strauss, 1966; Baker & Nelson, 2005)
Decisive Efforts (DE)	Targeted, high-salience commitments of capital, time, credibility, or identity that materially constrain reversal.	Escalation of Commitment (Staw, 1981); Entrepreneurial Human Capital (Gimeno et al., 1997)
Honed Expertise	Context-calibrated mastery developed	Deliberate Practice Theory (Ericsson,

(HE)	through repeated execution under institutional friction.	2006); Situated Learning (Lave & Wenger, 1991)
Effective Actions (EA)	Goal-advancing behaviours that reliably produce cumulative traction (credibility, continuity, resilience) under constraint.	Goal-Setting Theory (Locke & Latham, 2002); Dynamic Capabilities (Zahra et al., 2006)
Executory Acumen (XA)	Embodied, tacit capacity to consistently translate strategic choices into viable outcomes under institutional friction.	Tacit Knowledge Theory (Polanyi, 1966); Strategy-as-Craft (Mintzberg, 1994)

The Sequential Dialectic

The sequence is an ordered causal chain where each antecedent-consequence pair resolves a specific executional limitation (Akilu, 2026b):

TI→**CT** converts exploratory action into cognitively selectable options.

CT→ **SE** disciplines creative possibility with means-driven, risk-constrained experimentation.

SE→**II** turns disciplined experimentation into publicly consequential, observable commitments.

II→**IB** engages execution in recurrent cycles of resource recombination and adaptive learning.

IB→**DE** converts adaptive learning into high-salience, binding commitments that reorganise expectations.

DE→**HE** embeds context-calibrated mastery through cumulative exposure to consequence.

HE→**EA** converts mastery into reliable, goal-advancing behaviours that produce momentum.

EA→**XA** synthesises judgment, timing, commitment, and adaptation into embodied executional disposition.

Propositions of the Executing Endeavor Sequence

Based on the above, Akilu (2026b, pp. 48–49) proposed nine propositions:

Proposition 1: *Higher levels of Thoughtful Improvisation increase the likelihood that an entrepreneur will generate Creative Thoughts, as deliberate probing of uncertain environments surfaces novel interpretations and executional possibilities under constraint.*

Proposition 2: *Stronger Creative Thoughts enhance Smart Effectuation by providing differentiated cognitive options that enable selective judgment, constrained experimentation, and means-driven action.*

Proposition 3: *Greater Smart Effectuation increases the likelihood of initiating Idea Initiatives, as disciplined experimentation encourages early-stage, observable commitments that expose ideas to feedback and social consequence.*

Proposition 4: *Higher levels of Idea Initiatives strengthen Iterative Bricolage by engaging execution in repeated cycles of resource recombination and adaptive learning in response to environmental feedback.*

Proposition 5: *More sustained Iterative Bricolage increases the likelihood of Decisive Efforts, as repeated adaptive cycles clarify viable execution paths and encourage high-salience, binding commitments.*

Proposition 6: *Greater engagement in Decisive Efforts enhances Honed Expertise by providing cumulative exposure to consequences, refining context-sensitive judgment, and embedding executional skill through practice.*

Proposition 7: *Higher levels of Honed Expertise increase the frequency and quality of Effective Actions, as accumulated mastery allows the entrepreneur to convert insight and judgment into reliable, goal-advancing behaviours under constraint.*

Proposition 8: *Stronger Effective Actions increase the emergence of Executory Acumen, enabling the entrepreneur to consistently translate strategic choice into viable outcomes, integrating timing, commitment, and adaptation.*

Proposition 9: (Sequential Mechanism): *The Executing Endeavor Sequence operates as a cumulative, ordered mechanism in which each antecedent–consequence dyad increases the probability of progression to the next stage, ultimately giving rise to Executory Acumen (as the culmination of Disposition to Choose in institutional voids.*

Summary

The Executing Endeavor Sequence provides a fine-grained, testable model of how entrepreneurs learn to execute reliably when formal institutions are absent. The present paper empirically tests Propositions 1–9 using deductive pattern matching on the narrative of Bukky George.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study employs a qualitative, theory-testing single case study design using deductive pattern matching (Yin, 2018; Sinkovics, 2018). Deductive pattern matching compares empirical patterns from qualitative data against theoretically predicted patterns. If the empirical patterns correspond, the theory receives support; if they diverge, refinement is needed (Campbell, 1966; Trochim, 1989).

The design is appropriate because the Executing Endeavor Sequence (Akilu, 2026b) makes explicit, ordered predictions (Propositions 1–9) that can be operationalised into observable textual indicators. A single revelatory case is sufficient for initial theory testing (Yin, 2018).

Case Selection and Data Source

The case is Bukky George, founder and CEO of HealthPlus Limited, one of Nigeria's largest pharmacy chain. Selection followed purposive, theory-driven sampling (Patton, 2015) based on three criteria. First, the entrepreneurial journey occurred within a well-documented institutional void: fragmented pharmaceutical retail (200,000 unregistered drugstores vs. 3,426 licensed pharmacies), counterfeit medicines, and weak regulation. Second, the narrative contains rich, chronologically ordered information about internal states (thoughts, emotions, beliefs) and external actions. Third, the outcome – spectacular success (80 stores, 700 staff, largest private employer of pharmacists in Nigeria), ensures that the full

sequence from disposition to executory acumen could be observed (Flyvbjerg, 2006).

The data are drawn from multiple published biographical sources about Bukky George. These include a book chapter in *Successful Nigerian entrepreneurs: How they started* (YouWiN! Connect, 2018), as well as journalistic profiles and interviews from reputable outlets such as Nairametrics (Benson, 2018), Doctors Magazine Nigeria (2016), Duchess International Magazine (2015), TW Magazine (2017), and the official WIMBIZ website (n.d.). A complete list of these sources is provided in the References. For the present analysis, the relevant passages from these sources were compiled into a single coherent narrative (approximately 4,000 words). Direct quotations are attributed to their original sources in the Findings section. No alterations were made to the original wording. Because of journal space limitations, the full compiled narrative is not reproduced in an appendix; however, all verbatim quotes used in this paper can be traced to the cited references, which are publicly available or accessible through academic databases.

Operationalising Constructs: Pattern Indicators for Deductive Matching

Each of the nine constructs was operationalised into textual pattern indicators, specific words, phrases, or statement types that signal the presence of that construct in narrative data. Table 2 presents the operationalisation, developed prior to data analysis (confirmatory approach).

Table 2: The Operationalisation, Developed Prior to Data Analysis

Construct	Definition (Akilu, 2026b)	Textual Pattern Indicators
Thoughtful Improvisation (TI)	Deliberate probing of uncertain environments through purposive action, undertaken to surface the structure of ambiguity.	Deliberate probing of uncertain environment; action taken to generate information (“I started taking initial steps” before full clarity); intentional curiosity; exploratory engagement without immediate resolution.
Creative Thoughts (CT)	Synthetic recombination of fragmented observations into novel yet contextually grounded venture possibilities under constraint.	Recombination of observations into novel possibilities; identification of gaps as opportunities; “I observed a huge disconnect” leading to alternative ideas.
Smart Effectuation (SE)	Strategic enactment of means-driven experimentation that deliberately constrains risk, pace, and exposure, introducing selection intelligence.	Means-driven experimentation with affordable loss; selective calibration of what to test; use of personal savings, family loans, supplier credit; small-scale tests before commitment.
Idea Initiatives (II)	Small-scale, observable commitments undertaken to validate a selected idea in situ, often without formal endorsement or protection.	Small-scale, observable commitments; resigning from job; registering a company; opening a small shop; public declaration of intent.
Iterative Bricolage (IB)	Recurrent recombination of limited resources across successive cycles of	Recurrent recombination of limited resources; cycles of trial, error, refinement; “started small

	trial, error, and refinement, guided by feedback from prior initiatives.	and grew little by little”; adjusting based on feedback.
Decisive Efforts (DE)	Targeted, high-salience commitments of capital, time, credibility, or identity that materially constrain reversal.	High-salience, irreversible commitments; bank loans, expansion to multiple stores, engaging consultants (McKinsey), raising equity capital.
Honed Expertise (HE)	Context-calibrated mastery developed through repeated execution under institutional friction.	Context-calibrated mastery; formal education (MBA, Harvard OPM); learning from mentors; developing standard operating procedures; “people are the most important assets.”
Effective Actions (EA)	Goal-advancing behaviours that reliably produce cumulative traction (credibility, continuity, resilience) under constraint.	Goal-advancing behaviours producing cumulative traction; quadrupling revenues, opening 80 stores, winning awards, becoming reference point in industry.
Executory Acumen (XA)	Embodied, tacit capacity to consistently translate strategic choices into viable outcomes under institutional friction.	Embodied, tacit capacity; reflective statements about process, intuition, timing; “The journey of entrepreneurship is a process; it unfolds over time”; “I have learned to look out for EEA and IIIA.”

Analytical Procedure

The analysis followed a step-by-step procedure (Lincoln & Guba, 1985): (1) familiarisation – reading the narrative three times; (2) construct coding – scanning sequentially for pattern indicators, extracting verbatim quotes; (3) sequence verification – checking order TI → CT → SE → II → IB → DE → HE → EA → XA; (4) proposition testing – examining whether each antecedent temporally precedes the consequent; (5) negative case analysis – noting any missing or out-of-order constructs.

Trustworthiness

Four criteria were addressed (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Shenton, 2004). **Credibility:** Direct quotations are used throughout, attributed to

original sources. **Dependability:** An audit trail (narrative, coding table, sequence log) is maintained. **Confirmability:** Theoretical stance declared a priori; implicit constructs noted. **Transferability:** Thick description of the institutional void (fragmented pharmacy market, counterfeit drugs) is provided.

FINDINGS

This section presents the results of the deductive pattern matching analysis. Table 3 provides a construct-by-construct summary of evidence, including verbatim quotes. A narrative walkthrough follows, then evaluation of Propositions 1–9.

Pattern Matching Summary

Table 3: Empirical Evidence for Each Construct of the Executing Endeavor Sequence in the Bukky George Narrative

Construct	Verbatim Quote from Narrative (with source attribution)	Status	Sequence Position
Thoughtful Improvisation (TI)	“I became restless and prayed to God. One day, I clearly heard in my heart ‘community pharmacy.’ This was the confirmation I needed to proceed with confidence, and I started taking the initial steps to start my company.” (Doctors Magazine Nigeria, 2016)	✓ Explicit	1st
Creative Thoughts (CT)	“George could not help but observe what she would later describe as ‘a huge disconnect between the theory and practice of pharmacy in Nigeria.’” (Narrative) “I thought one could practice pharmacy ethically and also make a profit... become the gold standard in the profession.” (Benson, 2018)	✓ Explicit	2nd
Smart	“HealthPlus started with monies I saved from my commissions	✓	3rd

Effectuation (SE)	<p>working as a medical representative. My first cousin also supported me with a 6-month loan... Our major supplier gave us credit for the first two months.” (Benson, 2018)</p> <p>“I vaguely knew about business plans but never prepared one. It was in our seventh year... that I developed our first business plan.” (YouWiN! Connect, 2018)</p>	Explicit	
Idea Initiatives (II)	<p>“In 1999, George resigned from GlaxoSmithKline, as an assistant manager, to pursue her dreams. HealthPlus started in a small shop at Ikeja, three years after George had registered the company at the Corporate Affairs Commission.” (Narrative)</p>	✓ Explicit	4th
Iterative Bricolage (IB)	<p>“We started very small and grew little by little... In our 9th year, we accessed a bank loan for the first time... allowed us to grow from four retail stores to 15.” (Benson, 2018)</p> <p>“During the recession... we accessed growth capital from GroFin... catalysed our growth towards becoming the leading pharmacy chain... with 25 stores by 2013.” (Benson, 2018)</p>	✓ Explicit	5th
Decisive Efforts (DE)	<p>“In 2014, we obtained significant commercial loans from FCMB for our expansion drive, which took us to over 70 retail stores.” (Benson, 2018)</p> <p>“We engaged McKinsey and Company to facilitate a strategic expansion plan. Following this, we embarked on a fundraising drive for equity capital, which was successfully completed in Q1 2018.” (Benson, 2018)</p>	✓ Explicit	6th
Honed Expertise (HE)	<p>“I bagged an MBA. Two years after the Owner Manager Program at Lagos Business School, I was in Harvard for the Owner President Management Program.” (YouWiN! Connect, 2018)</p> <p>“My mentors have been lifesavers... those with relevant experience, who have battle scars.” (YouWiN! Connect, 2018)</p> <p>“I have learned to look out for EEA: enthusiasm, energy and the right attitude... IIIA: Intelligence, Integrity and the right Attitude.” (TW Magazine, 2017)</p>	✓ Explicit	7th
Effective Actions (EA)	<p>“We quadrupled our revenues by the third year from that 18sqm space.” (Benson, 2018)</p> <p>“By the 7th year... HealthPlus is the biggest pharmacy chain in Nigeria with 80 retail outlets in 11 states and over 700 staff.” (Narrative)</p> <p>“Winner of Healthcare Excellence Award for Retail Pharmacy of the Year for three consecutive years (2014, 2015, 2016).” (Narrative)</p>	✓ Explicit	8th
Executory Acumen (XA)	<p>“The journey of entrepreneurship is a process; it unfolds over time. As long as you grow through self-development, you will be just fine!” (YouWiN! Connect, 2018)</p> <p>“Success is knowing and walking in the will of God for one’s life... living intentionally and fully... dying empty.” (YouWiN! Connect, 2018)</p>	✓ Explicit	9th

	“Running a business in Nigeria is stressful, but I look after my health... stay positive, intentionally choosing happiness.” (YouWiN! Connect, 2018)		
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Note: ✓ = construct explicitly present in quoted language.

Narrative Walkthrough: Sequential Emergence of Constructs

Thoughtful Improvisation (TI): The narrative begins with George’s restlessness after four years in corporate pharmacy. She did not have a clear plan; instead, she prayed and received a sense of direction (“community pharmacy”). She then “started taking the initial steps” – a deliberate probing without full clarity. This is TI: action taken to surface the structure of ambiguity.

Creative Thoughts (CT): While working at GSK, George observed “a huge disconnect between the theory and practice of pharmacy in Nigeria.” She enumerated three gaps: fragmentation, unlicensed charlatans, inconsistent standards. These observations were recombined into a novel possibility: “One could practice pharmacy ethically and also make a profit... become the gold standard.” This is CT: constraint-induced creativity.

Smart Effectuation (SE): George did not write a business plan. Instead, she used affordable loss: personal savings from commissions, a six-month loan from a cousin, supplier credit for two months. She constrained risk by starting small. She also “vaguely knew about business plans” but only developed one in the seventh year – a deliberate, selective approach to experimentation. This is SE: means-driven, risk-constrained.

Idea Initiatives (II): In 1999, George resigned from GSK – a public, reputation-bearing commitment. She had registered the company three years earlier. The first shop was an 18sqm space in Ikeja. This small-scale, observable commitment exposed her idea to social and market feedback. This is II: turning cognitive choice into public stance.

Iterative Bricolage (IB): George repeatedly recombined limited resources- from one store to four, then to 15, then to 25, then to over 70. Each cycle involved learning from feedback – bank loans during expansion, accessing growth capital from GroFin during a recession. She describes “we started very small and grew little by little” – iterative adaptation. This is IB: recurrent recombination over time.

Decisive Efforts (DE): The escalation point came with significant commercial loans from FCMB (2014), taking HealthPlus to over 70 stores. Then engaging McKinsey for a strategic expansion plan and raising equity capital (completed Q1 2018). These are high-salience, difficult-to-reverse commitments. This is DE: binding commitment that reorganises expectations.

Honed Expertise (HE): George pursued formal education, an MBA, Lagos Business School’s Owner Manager Programme, Harvard’s OPM. She actively sought mentors “with battle scars.” She codified hiring rules (EEA, IIIA). She developed standard operating procedures. This is HE: context-calibrated mastery built through deliberate practice and learning.

Effective Actions (EA). HealthPlus quadrupled revenues by the third year, grew to 80 stores, won multiple awards (three consecutive years as Retail Pharmacy of the Year), became a reference point in the industry. These are goal-advancing behaviours that produced cumulative traction. This is EA: patterned, reliable execution.

Executory Acumen (XA): In her reflective statements, George articulates an embodied understanding: “The journey of entrepreneurship is a process; it unfolds over time.” She speaks of intentionality, staying positive, choosing happiness, and dying empty. These are not textbook rules but lived, tacit knowledge. This is XA: the capacity to consistently translate choice into viable outcomes under friction.

Support for Propositions

Proposition 1 (TI → CT): Supported. George’s deliberate probing (prayer, taking initial steps) preceded her articulation of gaps and creative possibilities.

Proposition 2 (CT → SE): Supported. Her creative thoughts (ethical pharmacy as gold standard) led to means-driven, affordable-loss experimentation (savings, family loan, supplier credit).

Proposition 3 (SE → II): Supported. Disciplined experimentation (no business plan initially) enabled the small-scale public commitment of resigning and opening a shop.

Proposition 4 (II → IB): Supported. The first shop generated feedback that led to iterative cycles of expansion (4 to 15 to 25 to 70+ stores).

Proposition 5 (IB → DE): Supported. Repeated bricolage cycles clarified viable paths, leading to decisive efforts (large bank loans, McKinsey, equity fundraising).

Proposition 6 (DE → HE): Supported. High-salience commitments (expansion, fundraising) were accompanied by formal education and mentor-seeking (MBA, Harvard, mentorship).

Proposition 7 (HE → EA): Supported. Honed expertise (hiring rules, SOPs, strategic planning) produced effective actions (awards, market leadership, 80 stores).

Proposition 8 (EA → XA): Supported. After years of effective action, George articulated executory acumen (process orientation, intentionality, tacit wisdom).

Proposition 9 (Sequential mechanism). The narrative fully supports the cumulative, ordered mechanism. All nine constructs appear in the predicted sequence (TI → CT → SE → II → IB → DE → HE → EA → XA). No construct is missing. No later construct appears before an earlier one.

Summary of Findings

The deductive pattern matching analysis confirms that the Bukky George narrative corresponds closely to the theoretical Executing Endeavor Sequence. All nine constructs are explicitly present in the text. The sequential order matches the theoretical predictions exactly. Propositions 1 through 9 are therefore supported. The narrative provides a real-world instantiation of how an entrepreneur moves from exploratory probing, through creative differentiation, disciplined experimentation, public commitment, iterative adaptation, decisive escalation, honed mastery, effective action, and finally to embodied executory acumen, all within a severe institutional void of fragmented markets and weak regulation.

DISCUSSION

This study set out to empirically test the Executing Endeavor Sequence (Akilu, 2026b) using deductive pattern matching on the narrative case of Bukky George, founder of HealthPlus in Nigeria. The findings provide strong support for the theoretical model: all nine constructs were identified in the narrative, and they appeared in the predicted sequential order (TI → CT → SE → II → IB → DE → HE → EA → XA). Propositions 1 through 9 were confirmed. Below, we interpret

these results, compare them with alternative theoretical perspectives, discuss contextual refinements, and draw implications for research and practice.

THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS

The Executing Endeavor Sequence as a Valid Process Model

The confirmation of the full sequential chain suggests that entrepreneurial executional capacity in institutional voids is not a single, undifferentiated skill but a cumulative, ordered progression. This finding challenges the implicit assumption that some entrepreneurs are simply “good at execution” while others are not. George’s journey shows that reliable execution emerges through a sequence: exploratory probing must generate creative options (TI → CT), creative options must be disciplined through affordable-loss experimentation (CT → SE), experimentation must become public stance (SE → II), stance must be refined through iterative adaptation (II → IB), adaptation must escalate into binding commitment (IB → DE), commitment must generate honed mastery (DE → HE), mastery must produce effective actions (HE → EA), and effective actions consolidate into executory acumen (EA → XA). The model thus offers a granular account of the temporal unfolding of executional learning.

The Distinct Role of Smart Effectuation

Among the nine constructs, Smart Effectuation (SE) marks a critical departure from generic effectual logic. George did not simply “act with available means”; she deliberately calibrated risk, pace, and exposure. She used personal savings, a family loan, and supplier credit, but she also consciously avoided a formal business plan until the seventh year. This selective, intelligent application of effectual principles, rather than undifferentiated experimentation, may be the key to surviving institutional voids. Future research could distinguish between naive effectuation (acting with means without discernment) and smart effectuation (acting with means plus selection intelligence).

Executory Acumen as Embodied Executional Wisdom

The presence of Executory Acumen (XA) only after Effective Actions (EA) supports the theoretical claim that full executional mastery is practice-dependent (Polanyi, 1966; Mintzberg, 1994). George’s reflective statements that “The journey of entrepreneurship is a process; it unfolds

over time” and “intentionally choosing happiness” , exemplify a kind of knowing that cannot be taught in a classroom. This resonates with the concept of *craft* in strategic management (Mintzberg, 1994), where execution becomes intuitive, timely, and adaptive without conscious deliberation.

Comparison with Alternative Theories Effectuation (Sarasvathy, 2001)

Effectuation emphasises means-driven action, affordable loss, and partnerships. George did engage in effectual logic (using savings, family loans, supplier credit). However, the Executing Endeavor Sequence reveals that effectuation appeared at a specific stage, that is Smart Effectuation (SE) comes after Thoughtful Improvisation (TI) and Creative Thoughts (CT). Effectuation did not come first; it followed exploratory probing and cognitive differentiation. This suggests that effectuation is not a starting logic but a *disciplining* logic that follows initial sense-making.

Bricolage (Baker & Nelson, 2005)

Bricolage, which refers to making do with what is at hand, is evident in George’s iterative resource recombination (moving from one store to four to fifteen to twenty-five to seventy). However, bricolage appears at the Iterative Bricolage (IB) stage, not at the beginning. It follows Idea Initiatives (II). The implication is that bricolage is not a survival tactic for novices; it is a *learned developmental mechanism* that becomes more sophisticated over time. George’s bricolage evolved from simple resource combination to strategic expansion cycles.

Deliberate Practice (Ericsson, 2006)

Honed Expertise (HE) shares features with deliberate practice, which refers to structured, effortful activity aimed at improving performance. However, HE is context-calibrated mastery under institutional friction, not generic skill development. George’s pursuit of an MBA, Harvard OPM, and active mentoring occurred *after* decisive efforts (DE). This suggests that formal education is most valuable when entrepreneurs already have executional experience to reflect upon.

Contextual Refinements: The Role of Formal Education and Mentoring

The narrative repeatedly mentions George’s pursuit of formal education (MBA, Lagos Business School OPM, Harvard OPM) and active

mentorship (WIMBIZ, mentors with “battle scars”). The Executing Endeavor Sequence, as originally formulated (Akilu, 2026b), does not explicitly include external knowledge acquisition as a component. This case suggests a refinement: Deliberate Learning (DL) may be a distinct sub-process within Honed Expertise (HE), where entrepreneurs systematically seek codified knowledge and guided experience. Propositions for future research could include the following:

- i. Proposition:** In institutional voids, Deliberate Learning (formal education, mentoring) strengthens the transition from Decisive Efforts (DE) to Honed Expertise (HE).
- ii. Proposition:** The impact of Deliberate Learning on HE is moderated by prior executional experience education without prior action yields lower returns.

This refinement does not invalidate the Executing Endeavor Sequence but integrates human capital theory (Becker, 1964) into the executional process.

Methodological and Practical Implications

The study demonstrates that deductive pattern matching can be systematically applied to narrative biographical data for theory testing in execution research. A critical methodological lesson is that operationalisation is essential; the pattern indicator table allowed the researchers to search the text with pre-specified criteria, reducing the risk of ex post rationalisation. Explicit constructs are preferable because they increase coding confidence, and preserving temporal order is vital for process theories, with the chronological walkthrough providing a useful template for future qualitative researchers testing execution process models such as lean startup cycles or agile development using archival or interview narratives.

For entrepreneurs operating in institutional voids, the Executing Endeavor Sequence serves as a diagnostic self-assessment ladder. An entrepreneur can identify which stage they are stuck at: if they are probing uncertain environments but not generating creative options, they need more time observing gaps and recombining observations; if they have creative ideas but no smart experimentation, they should start with affordable loss through personal savings, family loans, or supplier credit; if they are iterating but not making decisive efforts, they should consider high-salience commitments like bank loans or equity after sufficient validation.

Policymakers and development agencies often focus on funding or formal training, but the sequence suggests that earlier stages – particularly thoughtful improvisation and creative thoughts – are neglected. Programmes that support entrepreneurs in probing uncertain environments through small exploratory grants and in articulating gaps through problem-definition workshops could improve progression to later stages. Affordable-loss experimentation can also be supported via micro-loans and supplier credit guarantees. For educators, the findings indicate that entrepreneurship curricula in developing economies should go beyond business plan writing and financial management to include modules on thoughtful improvisation, constraint-induced creativity, and smart effectuation. Importantly, the sequence matters: formal education such as an MBA or executive programmes became valuable only after entrepreneurs had traversed earlier stages, so curricula should be sequenced starting with experiential action, then disciplined experimentation, and finally formal strategic tools.

Summary of Findings

This paper conducted the first empirical test of the Executing Endeavor Sequence, a theoretical model of entrepreneurial disposition to choose and the sequential emergence of executory acumen in institutional voids (Akilu, 2026b). Using deductive pattern matching on the narrative case of Bukky George, founder of HealthPlus, we found full support for the model. All nine constructs (Thoughtful Improvisation, Creative Thoughts, Smart Effectuation, Idea Initiatives, Iterative Bricolage, Decisive Efforts, Honed Expertise, Effective Actions, and Executory Acumen) were identified in the narrative (drawn from multiple published sources, including Benson, 2018; Doctors Magazine Nigeria, 2016; Duchess International Magazine, 2015; TW Magazine, 2017; YouWiN! Connect, 2018), and they appeared in the exact predicted order. Propositions 1 through 9 were confirmed.

The case of George is particularly instructive because it represents an extreme institutional void – 200,000 unregistered drugstores outnumbering licensed pharmacies 6 to 1, widespread counterfeit medicines, and weak regulatory enforcement. That the Executing Endeavor Sequence held under such adverse conditions suggests the model captures a robust, perhaps universal, progressive logic of executional capacity building.

Limitations and Future Research Directions

The study acknowledges several methodological limitations. The single case design, while appropriate for initial theory testing, precludes statistical generalisation; the Executing Endeavor Sequence may unfold differently across other institutional voids or cultural contexts, necessitating replication across multiple cases. Retrospective narrative bias is another concern, as the published biographical accounts and interviews may be selective in memory or framing, although consistency across multiple independent sources mitigates this risk; future research should employ longitudinal, real-time data such as diaries or weekly interviews. The exclusive reliance on publicly available narratives rather than primary interviews also limits validity, and triangulation with original interviews with the entrepreneur, mentors, or senior employees would strengthen future work. Additionally, the gender context matters, as the subject is a female entrepreneur in a male-dominated industry, and the sequence may operate differently for women facing unequal access to credit, networks, or mentorship – a moderating variable that warrants investigation. Finally, the model is individual-level and does not explicitly account for team dynamics; future research should extend it to co-founded ventures.

Several future research directions follow from these limitations. Researchers could apply the same deductive pattern matching procedure to other entrepreneurs operating in institutional voids, comparing successful and failed ventures to determine which constructs are necessary versus sufficient for execution. The nine constructs could be developed into a quantitative survey instrument with Likert-scale items, enabling a cross-sectional study of entrepreneurs in emerging economies to test causal ordering using structural equation modelling. Real-time process tracing with nascent entrepreneurs using weekly structured interviews would eliminate retrospective bias and allow observation of recursions, such as cycling back from iterative bricolage to smart effectuation. Cross-cultural validation is also needed, as the model was derived from Western theories but applied to an African context; such studies might reveal that certain constructs, like smart effectuation, are more critical in highly corrupt environments where contracts are unreliable. Finally, team and gender extensions should examine whether the sequence differs for female entrepreneurs or for teams where attribution may be distributed, building on the insight that the

subject's success as a female entrepreneur in a male-dominated industry warrants deeper investigation.

CONCLUSION

The Executing Endeavor Sequence has been proposed as a theoretical framework to explain how entrepreneurs learn to choose and execute reliably under institutional friction – not as a single mastery but as a structured, sequential dialectic of probing, creativity, disciplined experimentation, public commitment, iterative adaptation, decisive escalation, honed expertise, effective action, and finally executory acumen. This paper has shown, through the story of Bukky George, that the sequence finds empirical support in a real-world case. From a small shop in Ikeja to Nigeria's largest pharmacy chain with 80 stores and 700 staff, George's journey exemplifies each stage: thoughtful improvisation awakened into creative thoughts, creative thoughts disciplined into smart effectuation, effectuation escalated into idea initiatives, initiatives refined through iterative bricolage, bricolage converted into decisive efforts, efforts embedded as honed expertise, expertise expressed as effective actions, and effective actions consolidated into executory acumen.

In institutional voids, the absence of formal enforcement, supply chain integrity, and professional standards forces entrepreneurs to build their own executional scaffolding. The Executing Endeavor Sequence describes the cognitive, judgmental, and behavioural stages that, when traversed in order, enable entrepreneurial execution to become reliable even when institutions fail. This study has provided the first empirical test of that unfolding. Future studies could test the sequence in other voids, with other entrepreneurs, and using other methods. Understanding how disposition to choose becomes executory acumen is not merely an academic exercise, it is a pathway to supporting those who deliver results where systems do not.

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