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**WHERE DO THEY GO FOR ADVICE? ENTREPRENEURS' ADVICE-SEEKING**  
**BEHAVIOR IN AFRICA**  
 --Manuscript Draft--

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<b>Response to Reviewers:</b>	Response (R): We thank you for your suggestion. We have read through the manuscript and made the necessary corrections on pages 9 and 22.  Accordingly, on page 9, we change the incorrect "state-of-act" to "state-of-the-art".  The last sentence of page 22 also now reads correctly as:  In particular, we show that the positive effects of institutional voids on external advice-seeking is enhanced when entrepreneurs develop ties with government and regulatory authorities, and the negative impact of institutional voids on internal advice-seeking is positive when entrepreneurs' ties with government and regulatory authorities are well developed.

## Where do they go for advice? Entrepreneurs' advice-seeking behavior in Africa

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## Where do they go for advice? Entrepreneurs' advice-seeking behavior in developing countries

### Abstract

Using time-lagged primary data from entrepreneurs in two developing countries (Ghana, N=261 and Ethiopia, N=166), we examine how institutional voids drive entrepreneurs' advice seeking behavior. Our findings show that higher levels of institutional voids in these developing countries are negatively related to internal advice-seeking but positively associated with external advice-seeking. The results also show that a heightened perception of environmental dynamism negatively moderates the relationship between institutional voids and internal advice-seeking but positively moderates the effect of institutional voids and external advice-seeking. Furthermore, we find that the negative relationship between institutional voids and internal advice-seeking is positive when entrepreneurs develop ties with politicians. The positive relationship between institutional voids and external advice-seeking is amplified when political network connections are stronger. Implications and direction for future research are discussed.

**Keywords:** *internal advice seeking; external advice seeking; environmental dynamism; entrepreneurs; Africa.*

### 1. Introduction

The Schumpeterian tradition suggests that entrepreneurship is rife in different institutional contexts (Lau & Busenitz, 2001; Stewart Jr, May & Kalia, 2008). For example, developing and emerging economies are characterized by institutional voids which reflect the weak institutions that facilitate economic activity, as well as the absence of an associated set of rewards and sanctions to enforce rules, norms and belief systems (Tracey & Phillips, 2011). The underdeveloped formal institutions present challenges (Puffer, McCarthy & Boisot, 2010) for entrepreneurs to adapt to the business environment as these conditions beget new competitive requirements to recalibrate their substantive capabilities (Yiu, Bruton, & Lu, 2005) to address the challenges arising from institutional voids (Ge, Carney, & Kellermanns, 2019).

To address the challenges associated with these institutional impediments, some entrepreneurs tend to develop compensating mechanisms to perform market functions such as

obtaining market information, interpreting regulations, and enforcing contracts” (Peng & Luo, 2000, p. 487). In addition, entrepreneurs are increasingly required to proactively seek advice to achieve effective strategic alignment. In developing economies characterized by lack of financial credit availability, weak legal enforcement system and inadequate disclosure (Chakrabarty, 2009; Chung & Luo, 2008), entrepreneurs may be forced to engage in advice seeking (i.e., problem-solving behavior where entrepreneurs acquire knowledge in the decision-making process) as a means of overcoming such constraints associated with institutional voids. More importantly, the institutional constraints may render past market information obsolete, thus compelling entrepreneurs to seek and utilize different ranges of advice. In particular, entrepreneurs develop network-based strategies such as informal ties and relational governance mechanisms to facilitate economic exchanges (Chrisholm & Nielson, 2009; Peng & Heath, 1996).

However, despite a growing body of research on entrepreneurs’ advice-seeking behavior, our understanding of how institutional voids influence entrepreneurs to seek advice is limited. Indeed, to date, studies have offered very limited insight into “the decision to seek advice” (Brooks et al., 2015, p. 1421). Context plays an important role in the strategic decisions of entrepreneurs. However, our understanding of how the institutional context influences advice-seeking behavior of entrepreneurs in developing economies is lacking.

Using insights from institutional theory as our theoretical lens, we seek to address these gaps in the current literature by examining the relationship between institutional voids and top executives’ tendencies to develop internal advice seeking and external advice seeking. Specifically, we examine entrepreneurs’ advice seeking behaviors as a strategic response to institutional voids. This line of inquiry is particularly important for the entrepreneurial firm given that seeking advice can be a crucial factor in determining the survival of the firm. It has been

suggested that entrepreneurs' advice-seeking behavior is crucial for their learning efforts, actions and inactions, career development and enhancements (Newman, Obschonka, Schwarz, Cohen & Nielsen, 2018; Tolentino, Sedoglavich, Lu, Garcia, & Restubog, 2014) and entrepreneurial competencies development (Kyndt & Baert, 2015). In addition, informational deficiencies and lack of access to quality information are primary causes of entrepreneurial business failure (Amankwah-Amoah, 2016). Using a cross-national study of two emerging African economies, namely Ghana and Ethiopia, we provide new insights into entrepreneurs' responses to institutional voids.

In addressing these shortcomings, our study expands on the existing literature in two ways. First, we contribute to the literature on advice seeking behavior (Brooks et al., 2015; Heyden et al., 2013) by showing how institutional voids impact entrepreneurs' advice seeking behavior. Second, we show the conditions under which institutional voids are more or less pronounced in entrepreneurs' advice seeking behavior in developing countries. In particular, we show that political connections and environmental dynamism are boundary conditions of the entrepreneurs' advice seeking behavior.

The rest of the paper proceeds as follows. First, we present a review of literature on institutional voids, internal and external advice seeking, and business performance. After this, we present the research method. The penultimate section sets out the results of our data analysis. We conclude by setting out the theoretical and public policy implications.

## **2. Theory and hypotheses**

### *2.1 Institutional theory and institutional voids*

Institutional theory is one of the multiple theoretical perspectives which have been used to explain institutional voids. Institutional theory focuses on how businesses secure their positions and

legitimacy by complying with the rules and norms of their institutional environment (Meyer & Rowan, 1991; Scott, 1987, 2014). Institutional pillars include regulatory, social, and cultural influences that shape the survival and legitimacy of a business. The institutional theory offers a useful theoretical setting for understanding how entrepreneurs are constrained and enabled by the institutions in their business environment (Scott, 2008), exploit and discover market opportunities (Khanna & Palepu, 2010).

Institutional voids which are prevalent in emerging markets economies manifest when market-supporting institutions that support business activities are underdeveloped (Khanna and Palepu, 1997). Institutions that support economic exchanges are needed to promote, and support entrepreneurship (Bruton, Ahlstrom & Li, 2010). As a feature of emerging markets, institutional voids can impede or facilitate business activities. The context within which a firm operates has been found to have a major impact on the decision-making process of entrepreneurs. DiMaggio and Powell (1983) indicated that organizations operating in a common institutional environment tend to be homogenous over time due to isomorphism. As such, the presence of institutional voids act as an impediment to entrepreneurial activities, processes and outcomes (Bruton, Ahlstrom & Li, 2010; McAdam, Crowley & Harrison, 2019). Extant literature indicates that institutional voids create several challenges resulting from market and government failures that impede the creation of new businesses (Khanna & Palepu, 2010; Meyer & Rowan, 1991). In a market context where institutional voids are predominant, entrepreneurs must seek advice or find an alternative way to acquire resources and implement transactions (Puffer, McCarthy & Boisot, 2010).

According to Elert & Henrekson (2017), entrepreneurs respond to institutional voids by engaging in three behaviors: choosing to abide (create a business opportunity within prevalent institutions); evade (avoid stifling labor market regulations through a new contractual form) or

alter (provide a new local public good and private security companies) the institutional framework. The institution-abiding market entrepreneur focuses on how large businesses try to shape and influence government regulation (McAdam, Crowley & Harrison, 2019). For example, an entrepreneur can lobby policymakers that have the power to change the institutions to alter the rules and regulations to favor its core business operations (Lawrence & Suddaby 2006; Lawton, Mcguire, & Rajwani, 2013). As such, given that this option is sometimes not available to most new and small businesses, they resort to approaches that alter the institutions through their market activities (Elert, Henrekson, & Stenkula, 2017). Prior studies (e.g., Padilla & Cachanosky, 2016; Lawrence & Suddaby 2006) suggest that survival amidst institutional voids necessitates an adequate level of learning in order to create innovative initiatives to exploit the opportunities from institutional gaps and alleviate the negative influence of institutional inefficiencies. This is especially because advice seeking is vital for understanding what is actually happening in the environment in order to take advantage of the type of institutional void present and identify business opportunities that will lead to the creation of a new business venture and or further enhance their current business offering.

## 2.2 *Advice-seeking behavior*

Advice-seeking behavior could be considered under the umbrella of help seeking (Brooks, Gino & Schweitzer, 2015). Help-seeking is defined as “the act of asking others for assistance, information, advice, or support” (Hofmann et al., 2009, p. 1262). The two differ in a sense that seeking advice entails “asking another person what course of action he or she would recommend” whereas help seeking necessitates “asking another person to take action on one’s behalf” (Brooks et al., 2015, p. 1422). There is an implicit assumption that one would follow a piece of advice. By seeking help, individuals impose demands on others by utilizing their time, expertise and resources

to their benefit (Lee 2002). Advice-seeking is a proactive behavior which can enable organizations to mobilize expertise to solve problems (Lee, 2002; St-Jean, Radu-Lefebvre, & Mathieu, 2018). Negative perceptions of advice seekers exist, as it may be construed as admitting being incompetent and inferior and this can impose some social costs (Lee, 2002). By seeking advice from others, one acknowledges their shortcomings and recognizes the need for help to rectify the limitations (Argyris, 2000; Lee, 2002). That notwithstanding, some entrepreneurs draw on intra-organizational sources for new knowledge and advice to inform decisions, whilst others deviate from such advice-seeking by turning to outside parties such as government officials, regulators and clients (Heyden et al., 2013). Yet still, others draw on their own intuition and past experiences. In this paper, we hypothesize and examine various conditions which may promote different advice seeking behavior.

### 2.3 *Internal advice seeking*

Institutional voids are prevalent in developing/emerging market economies when market-supporting institutions that support business activities are underdeveloped (Khanna and Palepu, 1997). Institutions that support economic exchanges are needed to promote, and support entrepreneurship (Giacomin, Janssen, Guyot & Lohest, 2011). However, past studies indicate that many entrepreneurs are reluctant to seek advice and information, and rather rely on their experiences and “gut feelings”, when confronted with new challenges (Pineda, Lerner, Miller & Phillips, 1998; Dyer & Ross, 2008). Over time, individuals develop a routine of relying on intuition rather than seeking advice. The absence of clear information or a course of action motivates entrepreneurs to gravitate towards basing their decision on intuition. Another key factor in the small-business culture is where some entrepreneurs adopt the “*I do it my way*” approach and thereby overlook available information and advice to their detriment (Gibb, 2000). There are also

business managers with the attitude that “*I am my own boss, and I will manage my business as I please*” (Hay & Gray, 1974, p. 138). The notion that: “*I am my own boss, make my decision and do not have to check with anyone*” characterized the actions of many entrepreneurs in the Global South. Accordingly, when confronted with institutional voids and looming constraints, they are more likely to turn inwards to their past experiences and knowledge. Fearing the potential loss of autonomy and conveying an impression of lacking market knowledge, many entrepreneurs opt for relying on their own expertise (Zinger, Blanco, Zanibbi & Mount, 1996; Dyer & Ross, 2008). By failing to admit their limitations, their organizations become less equipped to weather the effects or respond to institutional voids. Thus, we argue that:

*H1a: Perceived institutional voids negatively relate to entrepreneurs’ internal advice-seeking.*

#### *2.4 External advice seeking*

When the environment is challenged with voids, the knowledge residing within the firm’s boundaries becomes less informative to the entrepreneur. Thus, they may look at external sources for advice. Nevertheless, although many entrepreneurs are guarded when it comes to their intellectual property and resources, many often turn to outside experts for advice when they recognize their own deficiencies and limited knowledge (Dyer & Ross, 2008). This is more so in areas which require technical expertise such as refinancing, law and accounting to understand the current circumstances (Pineda et al., 1998). In the face of lacking the necessary know-how and resources to make sense of changes or complex business terrain, top executives would be more inclined to turn to external entities for advice (Smeltzer, Van Hook & Hutt, 1991). For instance, when the regulatory environment and legal system remain uncertain, firms would be more inclined

to forge political ties such as links to government officials and regulatory bodies as a means of accessing quality advice to improve the business (Peng & Luo, 2000).

Entrepreneurs may have access to professional networks and government agencies that provide a reservoir of expertise that can be tapped into to inform their decisions. Given that institutional voids can impede the flow of information leading to “information voids” (Doh, Rodrigues, Saka-Helmhout & Makhija, 2017; Khanna & Palepu, 1997; Marano et al., 2017), entrepreneurs might be forced to develop political ties with government officials to ease access to information. As environments become institutionally void, entrepreneurs can be expected to seek advice from outsiders to improve their assessment and comprehension of new opportunities and threats confronting the firm. Accordingly, we hypothesize the following:

*H1b: Perceived institutional voids positively relate to entrepreneurs’ external advice-seeking.*

### *2.5 The moderating effect of environmental dynamism*

Environmental dynamism refers to “the extent of unpredictable change in an organization’s environment” (Goll & Rasheed, 2004, p. 44). The dynamic environments are typified by “rapid, discontinuous change in demand, competitors, technology, and/or regulations such that information is often inaccurate, unavailable, or obsolete” (Eisenhardt & Bourgeois, 1988, p. 816). In the face of unpredictable change in the business environment and in situations of “information void” alluded to above, savvy entrepreneurs and executives would gravitate towards seeking and utilizing external advice to meet the new environmental demands. As the environment becomes more dynamic, entrepreneurs will tend to gear their information search towards internal sources of advice to keep up to date with developments and adapt swiftly by imputing probabilities as events unfold (Pye, 2004). When managers perceive the environmental threats to be higher and beyond

the competences of the existing employees, they are more likely to turn to managers internally for advice. Accordingly, we hypothesize the following:

*H2a: The negative effect of institutional voids on entrepreneurs' internal advice-seeking is more negative when environmental dynamism is high.*

In addition to the above hypothesis, we suggest that when institutional voids are rife and environmental dynamism is greater, the entrepreneur's propensity to seek external advice will be greater. An environment characterized by greater flux and uncertainty could generate voids for entrepreneurs to engage in external advice seeking because they tend to obtain information to make sense of and cope with the environmental forces that are beyond the control of the focal firm (Dyer & Ross, 2008; Heyden et al., 2013). In addition, such a condition will prime entrepreneurs to mimic the behavior of other firms in their environment by engaging in industry best practices such as adopting **state-of-the-art** technology (Heyden et al., 2013). By adopting the **state-of-the-art** technology or engaging in the industry best practices, entrepreneurs will be more likely to seek external sources of advice. By seeking external advice, entrepreneurs are able to keep records of up-to-date developments in the marketplace and adapt swiftly to the institutional voids and the conditions of flux and uncertainty. More importantly, when challenged with uncertainty resulting from institutional voids and dynamic environments, entrepreneurs' advice seeking serves to interpret weak signals from actors which could help identify new blind spots emanating from environmental conditions (Ansoff, 1975). Thus, as the environment becomes more dynamic, the effect of institutional voids on external advice seeking is likely to be amplified because external advisers provide information about early warning signals that could affect the focal firm. Accordingly, in dynamic environments, entrepreneurs faced with severe institutional voids can be

expected to seek advice from outsiders to enhance their understanding of opportunities and threats in the market. Based on the foregoing argument, we suggest that:

*H2b: The positive effect of institutional voids on entrepreneurs' external advice-seeking is more positive when environmental dynamism is high.*

## *2.6 The moderating effect of political connections*

A distinctive feature of institutional voids is lack of access to quality information (Doh et al., 2017). Institutional voids facilitate poor quality information to guide organizational decisions (Kingsley & Graham, 2017). Lacking public dissemination of information to guide investment decisions (Doh et al., 2017; Kingsley & Graham, 2017), entrepreneurs are more likely to develop political ties as a means of accessing the difficult-to-obtain information (Chisholm, & Nielsen, 2009). By developing informal and personal connections with political actors such as government agencies, politicians and regulatory bodies (Ge et al., 2018; Sun et al., 2012), entrepreneurs are better able to access resources anchored in the nation state (Xin & Pearce, 1996). As Dong et al. (2013, p.42) observed a few years ago, political connections help to “decode policies and regulations as well as future development plans and priorities”. In the presence of institutional voids, entrepreneurs develop political connections to circumvent the voids. Thus, entrepreneurs are likely not seeking any advice in an institutionally challenged environment. Hence:

*H3a: The negative relationship between institutional voids and entrepreneurs' internal advice-seeking is more negative when political connections are high.*

Additionally, when the environment is characterized by institutional voids and flux, entrepreneurs must work to alter practices to execute their activities (Ge, Carney, & Kellermanns, 2019). Over time, these practices could be institutionalized (Tsai, 2006) which could function as informal mechanisms to attenuate the threat emanating from the market environment. Social capital is

defined by Nahapiet & Ghoshal (1998: 243) as “the network of relationships possessed by an individual or social unit, and the sum of actual and potential resources embedded within, available through and derived from such networks”. Political networks can be used as a medium for the communication of valuable information and resources for businesses, given that they act as links to a broad marketplace and local bridges between businesses and the government. This intent would enable the entrepreneurs to get access to new market segments or new customers, and/or obtain technological know-how. In emerging/developing market contexts, the primary form of political ties involves a high-power distance patron–client relationships based on the exchange of favors (Wank, 1996). Entrepreneurs in these settings rely on patrons for preferential treatment (e.g., economic resources, information, bureaucratic facilitation) when challenged with institutional voids (Ge, Carney, & Kellermanns, 2019). Thus, when faced with greater institutional voids, entrepreneurs are likely to rely on their political networks instead of external advisers. Political connections are likely to weaken the positive relationship between institutional voids and external advice seeking. Thus, we hypothesize that:

*H3b: The positive relationship between institutional voids and entrepreneurs’ external advice-seeking is negative when political connections are high.*

### **3. Research method**

#### *3.1 Study settings and data collection*

This study is a multi-industry study of firms operating in Ghana, and to gain confidence in our findings, we replicated the study with data from both the service and the manufacturing firms in Ethiopia. We selected Ghana and Ethiopia as our study contexts for several reasons. First, both Ghana and Ethiopia are considered emerging countries (World Bank, 2016). Second, both

countries scored high on weak infrastructure, poor patent regulations, poor credit card systems, weak market regulations, and underdeveloped market research (World Bank, 2018). Third, while these voids are a source of many problems of doing business in both countries, both Ghanaian and Ethiopian economies are among the best performing economies in emerging markets (World Bank, 2018), with increased GDP growth rates that outstrip many developed markets. Thus, examining how entrepreneurs seek advice in developing countries offers a crucial emerging-market perspective to the current literature.

*The Ghanaian study.* We utilized a multi-industry sampling frame of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) from the Ghana Business Directory and Ghana Revenue Authority databases. Firms that met the following criteria were purposely selected to participate in the study: (1) independent firms that do not form part of any group; (2) firms owned and controlled by individual entrepreneurs or a team of entrepreneurs; (3) firms employing a minimum of five full-time employees and a maximum of 250 employees (Ghana Statistical Service, 2000) and (4) firms with complete contact information of the entrepreneur. From the chosen sampling frame, a total of 755 firms that met the above criteria were randomly selected to participate in the study.

We collected data in two waves. In the first wave (T1), we approached all the 755 firms with a questionnaire in person to collect data on the dependent and the moderating variables. We received 386 responses, and after discounting missing values we obtained a total of 311, representing a 41.19% response rate. In the second wave (T2), we approached the 386 entrepreneurs who participated in T1 to collect data on the dependent variables (internal and external advice seek behavior). This was done because cross-sectional studies are often associated with common method bias (Podsakoff et al., 2003). We received 269 responses and after eliminating missing values, we obtained 261 responses representing a 34.56% response rate.

On average, the firms have been operating for eight years since their incorporation and employed 17 full-time employees with an average annual turnover of U.S \$ 298,670. The firms operate in multiple industries including agro-processing (22%), engineering services (12%), financial services (9%), security services (14%), textiles and garments (19%), and food processing (24%). Overall, most of the firms are manufacturing (65%) whilst the rest are service firms (35%).

*The Ethiopian study.* We undertook a multi-industry survey in Ethiopia by deriving our sample from the Ethiopian Revenues and Customs Authority database. This database contains up-to-date information of all companies that pay tax to the Ethiopian Government. We followed the same procedures as those used in Study 1 to collect data in two phases. In the first phase, (T1), we contacted a sample of 1,200 active firms with a questionnaire by mail to collect data on institutional voids, political connections, and environmental dynamism. After sending two reminders, we received 189 usable responses from the entrepreneurs/owner-managers. We did a followed-up study 12 months after T1 to collect data on the dependent variables (internal and external advice seeking behavior). Accordingly, we contacted the 189 entrepreneurs via email in the second phase (T2). We received 169 responses in T2, and after discounting missing values we obtained 166 responses, representing a 13.83% response rate. On average, the firms were 5 years old and employed 13 full-time employees. The firms operate in different industries including transport (10%), hotel and tourism (7.5%), information communication technology (5.5%), healthcare (6%), textiles and garments (23%), and beverages (48%). In total, 71% of the firms are in the manufacturing sector while the rest (29%) are in the service sector.

### *3.2 Measure of constructs*

All measures were captured with a 7-point multi-item scale with anchors ranging from 1 = not at all to 7 = to an extreme extent. The details of multi-item measures are presented in Table 1.

*Institutional voids.* We adapted four items from Giachetti (2016) to capture institutional voids. The scale taps managerial perception of the extent to which institutional voids are present in the business environment.

*Advice seeking.* Our dependent variables relate to the sources from which entrepreneurs seek advice. Earlier research has divided sources of advice into two: internal and external sources (Alexiev et al., 2010; Heyden et al., 2013; McDonald & Westphal, 2003). We operationalize internal advice-seeking as knowledge inputs about current strategy and future strategy sought from sources within the focal firm whilst external advice-seeking captures the extent to which respondents seek knowledge inputs from sources outside the firm. We followed Heyden et al. (2013) and modelled these two items into two corresponding latent variables,  $\eta_1$  and  $\eta_2$  respectively.

*Environmental dynamism.* We measure market environment dynamism by adopting a three-item scale developed by Miller & Friesen (1982). This scale captured managerial perception of the degree of variation within the domestic-market environment.

*Political connections.* We assessed political connections using a four-item scale taken from Acquaah (2007) that measures network relationships with government officials and politicians. This scale asked respondents to indicate how extensive (or how little) their ties were to different types and levels of government officials (e.g., “Political leaders in various levels of the government” and “Officials in regulatory and supporting institutions”).

*Control variables.* We controlled for several variables that could influence our research model. These included firm size, firm age, industry type, entrepreneurs’ age, propensity to take advice and entrepreneurs’ education. Firm size was measured as the number of full-time employees whilst firm age was captured as the number of years the business has been in operation

since its incorporation (Autio, Sapienza & Almeida, 2000; Sheng, Zhou & Li, 2011). We included firm size as a control variable because larger firms have more slack resources which could influence advice-seeking (Bourgeois, 1981; Heyden et al., 2013). Firm age was controlled for because older firms may have more experience and information in the market that could influence advice-seeking (Chenhall, 2003). *Industry* was measured with a dummy variable with “1” indicating manufacturing industry and “2” indicating otherwise. Entrepreneurs’ age was captured as the number of years of age of the entrepreneur. These variables were controlled for because more experienced and older entrepreneurs could use their own experiences to influence strategy (Arendt et al., 2005). We also controlled for entrepreneurs’ *propensity to seek advice* by summing two seven-point items that asked respondents the extent to which they had resorted to internal or external advice (Heyden et al., 2013). Finally, we controlled *education* which was coded as “1” = “high school”, “2” = “associate degree”, “3” = “bachelor’s degree”, “4” = “master’s degree” and “5” = “doctoral degree”.

[INSERT TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE]

## **4. Analyses**

### *4.1 Potential biases, reliability and validity*

For both samples, we assessed whether non-response bias affects our data by adopting the approach suggested by Armstrong & Overton (1977). We compared respondents and non-respondents based on our key variables. Using Pearson’s chi-square test for categorical variables (Greenwood & Nikulin, 1996), we found that the two groups did not differ significantly in terms of firm age, firm size, education, entrepreneur age and industry. This suggests non-response bias does not have any influence on our data.

We investigated potential common method bias in our data by utilizing two approaches. First, we employed the method suggested by Lindell and Whitney (2001) and introduced a marker variable that is not conceptually related to any of our constructs. We used “my job allows me freedom to decide how I do my own work”, a variable considered as a measure of job autonomy as our marker variable. The results show non-significant relationships, with correlations ranging from -.01 to .04 for both samples. Second, we followed the approach suggested by Carson (2007) and estimated a combined CFA measurement model for all the multi-item constructs. This CFA model includes a common method factor estimated to load on all items. We then estimated two competing models: Model 1 was a trait-only model which was estimated to load on its intended latent factor. For the Ghana sample, we obtained results that show good fit:  $\chi^2/df = 1.22$ ; RMSEA = 0.04; NNFI = 0.93; and CFI = 0.94. Model 2 estimated a trait-method involving a common factor linking all the indicators in Model 1. We also obtained adequate fit for Model 2:  $\chi^2/df = 1.21$ ; RMSEA = 0.05; NNFI = 0.95; and CFI = 0.96. Though the chi-square statistic for Models 1 and 2 are significant at 1%, we obtained a p-value of the test of close fit (RMSEA  $\leq$  0.05) of 0.04 and 0.05 respectively. We obtained similar results for the Ethiopian sample  $\chi^2/df = 1.31$ ; RMSEA = 0.02; NNFI = 0.96; and CFI = 0.96. In Model 2 we obtained adequate fit for our data:  $\chi^2/df = 1.47$ ; RMSEA = 0.03; NNFI = 0.96; and CFI = 0.92. This suggests adequate probability of accepting the fit of the measurement model. In addition, we compared the two models and found that Model 2 is not materially better than Model 1. Overall, we believe common method variance has no substantial influence on our results.

Subsequently, we examined the reliability and validity of our constructs by estimating a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) model using LISREL 9.30. We obtained good fit for the Ghana data: ( $\chi^2/df = 1.40$ ; RMSEA = 0.02; NNFI = 0.97; CFI = 0.98; GFI = 0.95; and TLI = 0.97) and

the Ethiopia data ( $\chi^2/df = 1.29$ ; RMSEA = 0.05; NNFI = 0.94; CFI = 0.93; GFI = 0.93; and TLI = 0.94). We also obtained significant factor loadings for each construct (i.e., each construct significant at 1%), supporting convergent validity of the measures (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988). We also investigated reliability by inspecting the composite reliability, average variance extracted (AVE) and highest shared variance of our constructs. We found each construct indices are higher than the conventional cut-off point of 0.70 (Bagozzi & Yi, 2012). In addition, we used AVE generated by each construct to assess discriminant validity. The results show that each construct's AVE was greater than the HSV of each pair of constructs (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

[INSERT TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE]

#### *4.2 Invariance of measurement across Ghana and Ethiopia*

Following the assessment of reliability and validity of our constructs for both samples, the measurement equivalence of measures was evaluated across Ghana and Ethiopia. We followed previous studies devoted to the subject (Bollen, 1989; Steenkamp & Baumgartner, 1998). We ran invariance tests for *configural*, and *metric*, *scalar* variance for our constructs. Table 3 presents the results of our invariance tests. For simplicity we show the procedure used for testing external advice-seeking (Table 3 Panel A) and chi-square difference tests (Table 3 Panel B). We assessed fit of the models using chi-square difference tests and other fit heuristics, namely RMSEA, NNFI, CFI, and consistent Akaike information criterion (Horn & McArdle, 1992). Results of the chi-square difference test were non-significant for the configural, metric, scalar, factor variance and error variance models. This suggests that configural, metric, scalar, factor variance and error variance invariances exist for all items across the Ghanaian and Ethiopian samples, indicating that

the items are equally reliable across the samples. Thus, the measures can be used for hypothesis testing (Steenkamp & Baumgartner, 1998).

[INSERT TABLE 3 ABOUT HERE]

#### *4.3 Estimation and results*

Table 2 contains the correlations and descriptive statistics for both samples. We used hierarchical regression to test our hypotheses (Cohen & Cohen, 1983). To attenuate the threat of multicollinearity, we mean centered the continuous variables before the interaction terms were created (Aiken & West, 1991). The highest variance inflation factor (VIF) for both samples was (i.e., 2.49 for Ghana and 3.87 for Ethiopia) lower than the commonly used cutoff value of 10, suggesting that multicollinearity is not a concern in the data (Neter et al., 1996; Neter, Wasserman & Kutner, 1990).

Tables 4 and 5 contain the results of all regressions from models for the Ghanaian and Ethiopian samples. The control variables are treated in Models 1 and 6 in Tables 4 and 5. We test the effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable in Table 4 (Ghanaian sample) and Table 5 (Ethiopian sample). For the Ghanaian sample, Model 2 in Table 4 indicates that institutional voids negatively relate to internal advice-seeking ( $\beta = -0.21, p < 0.01$ ) and positively relate to external advice-seeking ( $\beta = 0.27, p < 0.01$ , Model 7). Similar results were obtained from the Ethiopian data in Table 5 (Model 2). That is, institutional voids negatively relate to internal advice-seeking ( $\beta = -0.13, p < 0.05$ ) and positively relate to external advice-seeking ( $\beta = 0.16, p < 0.01$ , Model 7). Thus, these results confirm Hypotheses 1a and 1b in both samples.

[INSERT TABLES 4 & 5 ABOUT HERE]

Next, we examined the moderation hypotheses for both samples. For the Ghanaian sample, we examined the moderating effect of environmental dynamism on the relationship between institutional voids and internal advice-seeking in Table 4 (Model 3) and external advice-seeking in Table 5 (Model 9). We received support for Hypotheses 2a ( $\beta = -0.09, p < 0.10$ ) and 2b ( $\beta = 0.43, p < 0.01$ ) for the Ghanaian sample. We confirm both Hypothesis 2a ( $\beta = -0.11, p < 0.10$ ) and 2b ( $\beta = 0.31, p < 0.01$ ) in Ethiopia too. Thus, the negative relationship between institutional voids and internal advice-seeking becomes more negative when the environment is perceived to be in a constant state of flux. However, in dynamic environments the positive effect of institutional voids on external advice-seeking becomes more positive.

In Hypothesis 3a, we argued that political connections moderate the relationships between institutional voids and entrepreneurs' internal advice-seeking in such a way that the relationship is stronger (more negative) at higher levels of political connections. For both samples, we found no support for this prediction ( $\beta = 0.11, p < 0.10$ , Ghanaian sample) and ( $\beta = 0.08, p < 0.10$ , Ethiopian sample). Therefore, Hypothesis 3a is not supported. We argued in Hypothesis 3b that the positive relationship between institutional voids and entrepreneurs' external advice-seeking will become negative when political connections are high. The results show that this hypothesis is rejected for both samples ( $\beta = 0.14, p < 0.05$ , Ghanaian sample) and ( $\beta = 0.25, p < 0.01$ , Ethiopian sample).

Further, we followed the procedure advanced by Cohen et al. (2003) and performed simple slope analysis to investigate the moderation hypotheses. Figure 1 shows a stronger negative relationship between levels of institutional voids and internal advice-seeking when environmental dynamism is higher (vs. low environmental dynamism). This supports Hypothesis 2a. Figure 2 also indicates that the positive effect of institutional voids on external advice-seeking is stronger when environmental dynamism is higher (vs. low environmental dynamism). The rest of the

figures are interpreted using the same procedure. Data points for plotting the figures were computed using +/- 1SD for institutional voids, environmental dynamism and internal advice-seeking (external advice).

[INSERT FIGURES 1-3 ABOUT HERE]

#### *4.4 Robustness analyses*

We ran additional tests to substantiate the robustness of our research model. First, we used categorical binary-dependent variables, which hold the value of either 1 or 0 to measure both internal and external advice seeking. We then estimated a logit regression using a pooled data set of both samples. To remove nationality, we “de-culturalized” the data set by standardizing the data set for each country before pooling the data (Song, Kawakami & Stringfellow, 2010). This was done to eliminate the situation where true correlation between any two variables is influenced by cultural issues from both countries. We found no differences between our initial results and the logit regression models. Thus, our results remain largely the same.

[INSERT FIGURE 4 ABOUT HERE]

Second, we undertook further analysis to alleviate multicollinearity concerns by randomly drawing a subsample of 90% of the pooled data set and re-estimated the regression models (Echambadi & Hess, 2007). According to the logic of this procedure, multicollinearity will result in unstable regression coefficients. Our results show that the regression coefficients are stable in terms of magnitude and direction, suggesting that it does not substantially affect our data. Third, we used the institutional profile questionnaire (Busenitz, Gomez & Spencer, 2000) to measure institutional environment. We utilized the structural equation modeling (SEM) approach to include all the variables (i.e., including the moderation variables) in one model. Accordingly, we tested the effects of the three dimensions of institutional environment (regulatory, cognitive and normative) on

advice-seeking (internal and external advice). The fit statistics for the model ( $\Delta\chi^2/\Delta df = 1.16$ ; RMSEA = 0.04; NNFI = 0.92; CFI = 0.90; SRMSR = 0.06) provide adequate fit. Therefore, path coefficients of empirical results using SEM are consistent with our initial results.

## **5. Discussion and conclusion**

This study has analyzed how institutional voids relate to patterns of entrepreneurs' advice-seeking. Specifically, we examined advice-seeking as a strategic response to institutional voids. Our analysis of primary data gathered from entrepreneurs in two African countries, namely Ghana and Ethiopia, revealed that higher levels of institutional voids negatively relate to internal advice-seeking but positively associated with external advice seeking. Besides developing and leveraging external help-seeking behavior as a means of accessing scarce knowledge and political resources to fill the information vacuum, the executives also gravitate towards this strategy to overcome institutional voids. Although there are compelling motives for top executives and emerging-market firms to engage in internal help-seeking behavior, we found that external help-seeking behavior was more effective in helping organizations to overcome or offset the effects of institutional voids. We also found that the positive relationship between institutional voids and entrepreneurs' external advice-seeking will become negative when political connections are high. Furthermore, our results have shown that in dynamic environments, the negative effects of institutional voids on internal advice-seeking are higher. This is particularly true because in stable environments, entrepreneurs tend to focus on utilizing internal capabilities to predict the future. Likewise, entrepreneurs whose firms operate in stable environments use the internal resources to attain competitive advantage such as cost-saving (Lee & Miller, 1996). We also found that in dynamic environments unlike stable environments, entrepreneurs tend to seek external advice when the institutional voids are high. The reason may be that in an institutionally challenged environment characterized by

constant states of flux, internal knowledge within the firm becomes less informative to entrepreneurs, hence the need to seek external advice.

Theoretically, we contribute to literature in several ways. First, the finding that institutional voids predict patterns of advice-seeking extends earlier work that examined determinants of advice-seeking behavior (Heyden et al., 2013). The literature on advice-seeking shows that researchers have frequently examined the consequences of advice-seeking (Alexiev et al., 2010, McDonald & Westphal, 2003; McDonald et al., 2008; Vissa & Chacar, 2009). Unlike prior studies, our study increases understanding of institutional voids as potential antecedents of advice-seeking. Second, a large body of the current studies on business advice focuses on the types of advisors that are used (Dyer & Ross, 2008), without accounting for advice-seeking a strategic response to environmental constraints. In this direction, we contribute to the advice-seeking literature (Smeltzer et al., 1991) by articulating how different advice-seeking behaviors are triggered in response to institutional voids. Third, the study contributes to research on emerging-market perspectives (Ofori-Dankwa & Julian, 2013) by articulating how entrepreneurs in two emerging nations leverage external advice-seeking as a means of overcoming the institutional voids such as lack of access to quality information. Thus, we empirically demonstrate how institutional voids trigger different firm-level behaviors in emerging economies.

Fourth, by integrating two contingent variables (political connections and environmental dynamism) with the advice-seeking literature, we resolve some of the tensions in the literature regarding the impact of institutional environment on upper-echelons' advice seeking. **In particular, we show that the positive effects of institutional voids on external advice-seeking is enhanced when entrepreneurs develop ties with government and regulatory authorities, and the negative**

impact of institutional voids on internal advice-seeking is positive when entrepreneurs' ties with government and regulatory authorities are well developed. We also show that a heightened perception of environmental dynamism negatively moderates the relationship between institutional voids and internal advice-seeking but positively moderates the effect of institutional voids and external advice seeking.

This study has practical implications for managers. First, the findings have shown that SMEs managers need to be more receptive to external advice to improve their understanding of dynamic business environments. SMEs could also aggressively focus on developing a diverse pool of external advisers to be able to mobilize all necessary expertise to improve their organizations' chance of success. Second, SMEs need to develop and embed an advice-seeking culture as part and parcel of their overall strategy for emerging markets. In addition, public policy initiatives are needed to enhance the visibility, and quality of small-business advisers. This would go a long way in helping such organizations thrive as engines for economic development in these and other developing nations.

Finally, our findings are not only important but also timely for policymakers and entrepreneurial managers in sub-Saharan Africa as well as for those in other developing economies, since many SMEs in these markets share common structural and institutional characteristics (Fu, Mohnen, & Zanello, 2018). For example, the study's insights can support the enactment of appropriate policies that are directed towards the development of SMEs (Adomako et al., 2020).

## **6. Limitations and direction for future research**

There are some noteworthy limitations of the study. First, although we utilize insights from two African countries, namely Ghana and Ethiopia, these two nations differ in terms of cultural

traditions and norms, which impacts on how top executives behave. Second, the focus on just two nations fails to offer any multi-country analysis of the advice-seeking in the Global South. An area worthy of further investigation would be to seek multi-country data to help determine the extent to which our findings can be generalized. Third, an area for future research would be to assess the effectiveness of help-seeking behavior relative to other strategies for overcoming institutional voids including strategic alliances. It is our hope that this study fosters new research on cultivating a more effective help-seeking behavior among SMEs in developing countries.

### **Ethical Statement**

All the informants gave informed consent. The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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**Table 1: Construct validation and reliability tests**

	Standardized factors loadings	Error variances
Measure details	Ghana and Ethiopia	Ghana and Ethiopia
<i>Institutional voids: <math>\alpha = 0.89</math>; CR = 0.85; AVE = 0.60; HSV = 0.13</i>		
- Lack of infrastructure to facilitate the relationship between the firm and its clients, or between the firm and its suppliers	0.88 (1.00)	0.24 (11.40)
- We were able to find adequate and reliable information about the tastes and preferences of consumers, and the reliability of suppliers with ease (r)	0.79 (14.20)	0.23 (11.65)
- Underdeveloped education infrastructures and the need for intensive training of Ghanaian/Ethiopian employees	0.90 (9.29)	0.18 (12.88)
- Ambiguous bureaucratic and legal system	0.93 (10.42)	0.12 (9.82)
<i>Environmental dynamism: <math>\alpha = 0.88</math>; CR = 0.87; AVE = 0.62; HSV = 0.09</i>		
- Competitors are constantly trying out new competitive strategies	0.73 (1.00)	0.47 (13.38)
- Customer needs and demands are changing rapidly in our industry	0.81 (10.96)	0.32 (11.10)
- New markets are emerging for products and services in our industry	0.75 (22.18)	0.41 (12.43)
<i>Political connections: <math>\alpha = 0.82</math>; CR = 0.84; AVE = 0.59; HSV = 0.08</i>		
- Political leaders in various levels of the government (e.g., Ministers of State)	0.66 (1.00)	0.37 (10.14)
- Officials in regulatory and supporting institutions (e.g., Ghana Standards Board and Internal Revenue Service)	0.75 (14.77)	0.44 (12.83)
- Metropolitan/municipal/district chief executives	0.87 (15.95)	0.27 (8.85)
-Regional and national government politicians (e.g., regional or national party chairman/chairperson)	0.76 (15.49)	0.43 (13.02)
<i>Internal advice seeking: <math>\alpha = 0.96</math>; CR = 0.95; AVE = 0.76; HSV = 0.27</i>		
To what extent did you acquire knowledge from the managers within your organization about your future strategy?	0.92 (1.00)	0.18 (11.86)
To what extent did you acquire knowledge from the managers within your organization about the current strategy?	0.86 (26.27)	0.24 (13.36)
<i>External advice seeking: <math>\alpha = 0.86</math>; CR = 0.78; AVE = 0.65; HSV = 0.19</i>		
To what extent did you acquire knowledge from the managers of other organizations about your future strategy?	0.72(1.00)	0.51(12.86)

To what extent did you acquire knowledge from the managers of other organizations about your current strategy?	0.81 (15.38)	0.34 (9.98)
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*t*-values are shown in parentheses.

AVE = average variance extracted; CR = construct reliability; HSV = highest shared variance with other constructs.

**Table 2: Descriptive statistics and correlations**

	Variables	1	2	3	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1.	Firm size (employees)	—	0.04	-0.05	-0.09	0.03	0.05	-0.07	0.11	-0.11	0.05	0.19**
2.	Firm age (years)	0.05	—	-0.03	0.09	0.02	0.08	-0.11	0.09	-0.10	0.07	-0.09
3.	Industry	-0.01	-0.12	—	-0.08	0.05	0.14*	-0.04	0.06	0.06	0.11	0.04
4.	Entrepreneurs' age	-0.02	0.01	-0.04	—	0.07	0.15*	0.03	0.22**	-0.09	0.05	0.00
5.	Education	0.00	0.00	0.03	0.03	—	0.14	-0.04	0.07	0.14*	0.14*	0.18**
6.	Propensity to take advice	0.09	0.01	0.09	0.14*	0.11	—	0.03	0.09	0.11	0.11	0.22**
7.	Environmental dynamism	-0.04	-0.04	-0.02	0.00	-0.01	0.04	—	0.14*	-0.06	-0.12	0.34**
8.	Political connections	0.07	0.12	0.11	0.19**	0.09	0.03	0.18**	—	0.19**	0.22**	0.33**
9.	Institutional voids	-0.04	-0.03	0.04	-0.08	0.14*	0.09	-0.02	0.22**	—	-0.14*	0.31**
10.	Internal advice seeking	0.08	0.04	0.04	0.03	0.14*	0.12	-0.14*	0.27**	-0.29**	—	0.19**
11.	External advice seeking	0.14*	-0.05	0.11	0.01	0.19**	0.35**	0.41**	0.28**	0.33**	0.23**	—
Mean	Ghana	17.19	8.64	0.54	42.9	2.53	4.28	5.16	5.55	5.58	5.57	5.29
	Ethiopia	13.38	5.70	0.74	47.77	2.80	5.58	5.21	4.27	4.49	4.93	3.63
SD	Ghana	20.13	6.87	0.46	11.44	0.68	0.98	1.27	1.09	1.47	1.15	1.24
	Ethiopia	10.22	2.45	0.44	9.29	1.21	1.09	1.08	1.22	1.26	1.35	1.46

Correlations for the Ethiopian sample appear in the upper right half of the matrix and correlations for the Ghanaian sample appear in the lower-left half of the matrix.

<sup>a</sup> Logarithm transformation of original values.

SD = standard deviation \* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$

**Table 3: Measurement invariance assessment**

<b>(a) An example of test procedure: “External advice seeking” across Ghana and Ethiopia</b>						
Models	$\chi^2$	<i>df</i>	RMSEA	NNFI	CFI	CAIC
Configural invariance	4.32	3	0.04	0.96	0.94	168.75
Metric invariance	8.74	6	0.02	0.98	0.95	122.67
Scalar invariance	14.18	10	0.03	0.94	0.97	124.45
<b>(b) Test results of all constructs across Ghana and Ethiopia</b>						
$\Delta\chi^2$ Difference Tests						
Construct	Metric vs. configural	Scalar vs. configural	Variance vs. Scalar	Factor variance		
Institutional voids	$\Delta\chi^2(3) = 4.41, p = 0.33$	$\Delta\chi^2(5) = 5.56, p = 0.12$	$\Delta\chi^2(2) = 6.36, p = 0.09$	$\Delta\chi^2(3) = 1.07, p = 0.72$		
Political connections	$\Delta\chi^2(3) = 4.22, p = 0.31$	$\Delta\chi^2(6) = 5.53, p = 0.34$	$\Delta\chi^2(3) = 6.93, p = .08$	$\Delta\chi^2(3) = 1.77, p = 0.89$		
Environmental dynamism	$\Delta\chi^2(2) = 3.42, p = 0.46$	$\Delta\chi^2(7) = 4.33, p = 0.32$	$\Delta\chi^2(4) = 5.88, p = 0.12$	$\Delta\chi^2(5) = 5.47, p = .38$		
Internal advice seeking	$\Delta\chi^2(3) = 4.134, p = 0.35$	$\Delta\chi^2(7) = 6.34, p = 0.44$	$\Delta\chi^2(3) = 4.23, p = 0.16$	$\Delta\chi^2(6) = 4.83, p = .74$		
External advice seeking	$\Delta\chi^2(3) = 4.423, p = 0.357$	$\Delta\chi^2(5) = 3.61, p = 0.265$	$\Delta\chi^2(6) = 6.49, p = .22$	$\Delta\chi^2(5) = 3.60, p = 0.78$		

Note: CFI = comparative fit index; NNFI=non-normed fit index; RMSEA = root mean square error of approximation; CAIC = consistent Akaike information criterion

**Table 4: Regression results for hypotheses tests (Ghanaian sample, N = 261)**

Independent variables	Internal advice-seeking				External advice-seeking					
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7	Model 8	Model 9	Model 10
Firm age	-0.04	-0.04	-0.05	-0.04	-0.04	-0.05	-0.05	-0.04	-0.05	-0.05
Firm size	0.03	0.04	0.05	0.03	0.03	0.04	0.05	0.05	0.03	0.04
Industry	0.05	0.04	0.05	0.05	0.05	0.11*	0.12*	0.11*	0.10*	0.11*
Education	0.14**	0.14**	0.15***	0.13**	0.14**	0.20** *	0.21***	0.21***	0.18***	0.22***
Propensity to take advice	0.13**	0.13**	0.14**	0.11*	0.12*	0.21** *	0.22***	0.22***	0.23***	0.24***
<i>Direct effects</i>										
Institutional voids		-0.21***	-0.20***	-0.18***	- 0.17** *		0.27***	0.26***	0.25***	0.22***
Environmental dynamism			-0.14**	-0.14**	-0.13**			0.24***	0.23***	0.23***
Political connections			-0.15***	-0.15***	-0.14**			0.19***	0.18***	0.18***
<i>Moderating effects</i>										
Institutional voids x dynamism				-0.09*	-0.08*				0.43***	0.40***
Institutional voids x political connections					0.11*					0.14**
Model fit statistics										
F-value	0.14*	5.97***	7.33***	8.87***	9.55** *	4.73**	6.80***	7.07***	8.18***	8.92***
R <sup>2</sup>	0.08	0.11	0.14	0.18	0.21	0.10	0.12	0.14	0.18	0.20
ΔR <sup>2</sup>	-	0.02	0.03	0.04	0.03	-	0.02	0.02	0.04	0.02
Largest VIF	1.33	2.49	1.11	1.89	1.18	2.19	2.02	2.44	1.86	2.11

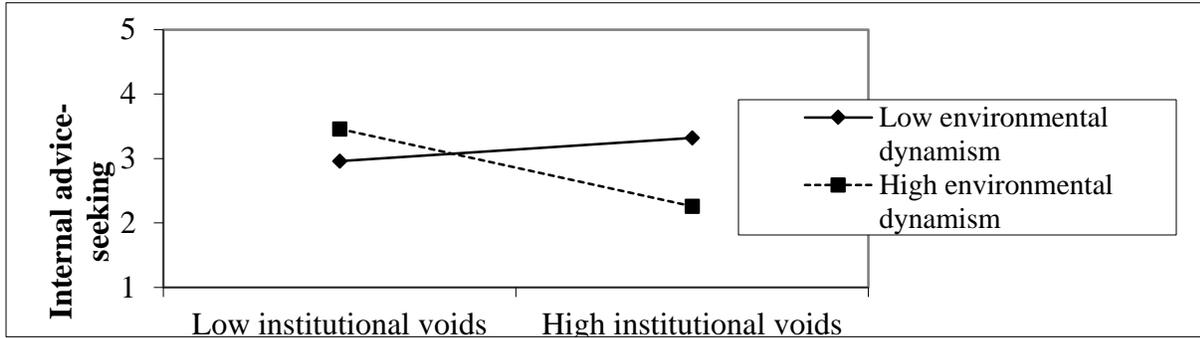
\*  $p < 0.10$ .; \*\*  $p < 0.05$ .; \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ .; Standardized coefficients are shown

**Table 5: Regression results for hypotheses tests (Ethiopian sample, N = 166)**

Independent variables	Internal advice-seeking					External advice-seeking				
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7	Model 8	Model 9	Model 10
Firm age	-0.01	-0.03	-0.04	-0.04	-0.04	-0.02	-0.03	-0.04	-0.05	-0.04
Firm size	0.07*	0.08*	0.09*	0.03	0.05	0.03	0.03	0.04	0.07*	0.08*
Industry	0.05	0.04	0.04	0.05	0.07*	0.05	0.05	0.04	0.05	0.04
Education	0.07*	0.08*	0.08*	0.13**	0.12**	0.12*	0.11*	0.10*	0.10*	0.11*
Propensity to advice	0.10*	0.11*	0.10*	0.11*	0.10*	0.14**	0.13**	0.14**	0.13**	0.14**
<i>Direct effects</i>										
Institutional voids		-0.13**	-0.12*	-0.12*	-0.11*		0.16***	0.16***	0.15**	0.15**
Environmental dynamism			-0.11*	-0.11*	-0.11*			0.29***	0.28***	0.25***
Political connections			-0.12*	-0.12*	-0.12*			0.14**	0.14**	0.14**
<i>Moderating effects</i>										
Institutional voids x dynamism				-0.11*	-0.11*				0.31***	0.30***
Institutional voids x political connections					0.08*					0.25***
<i>Model fit statistics</i>										
F-value	0.17	2.72*	2.81*	5.93***	3.19*	2.23*	5.39***	6.17***	7.21***	8.17***
R <sup>2</sup>	0.07	0.10	0.12	0.15	0.19	0.11	0.13	0.15	0.18	0.22
ΔR <sup>2</sup>	-	0.03	0.02	0.03	0.04	-	0.02	0.02	0.03	0.04
Largest VIF	2.17	1.19	3.01	1.87	1.34	1.14	1.12	3.87	1.17	1.54

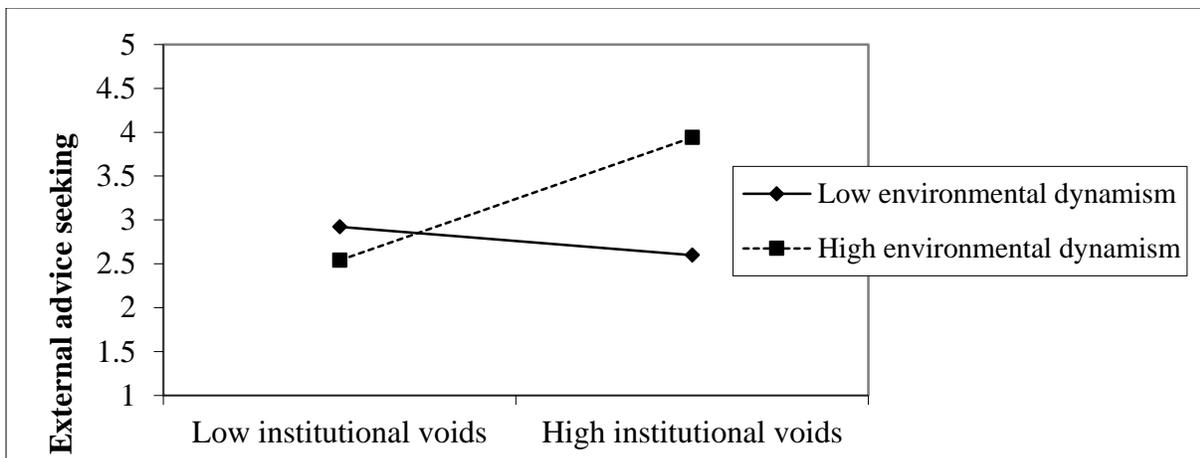
\*  $p < 0.10$ .; \*\*  $p < 0.05$ .; \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ .; Standardized coefficients are shown

**<sup>a</sup> Figure 1: Interaction effect of institutional voids with environmental dynamism on internal advice-seeking**



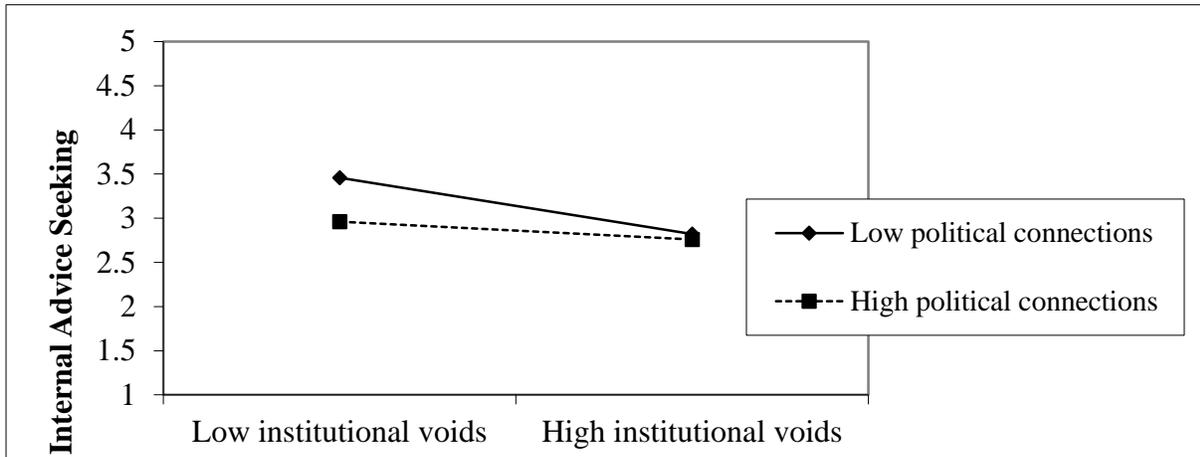
<sup>a</sup>The interaction graph for Ethiopian sample follows the same pattern as the above

**<sup>a</sup> Figure 2: Interaction effect of institutional voids with environmental dynamism on external advice-seeking**



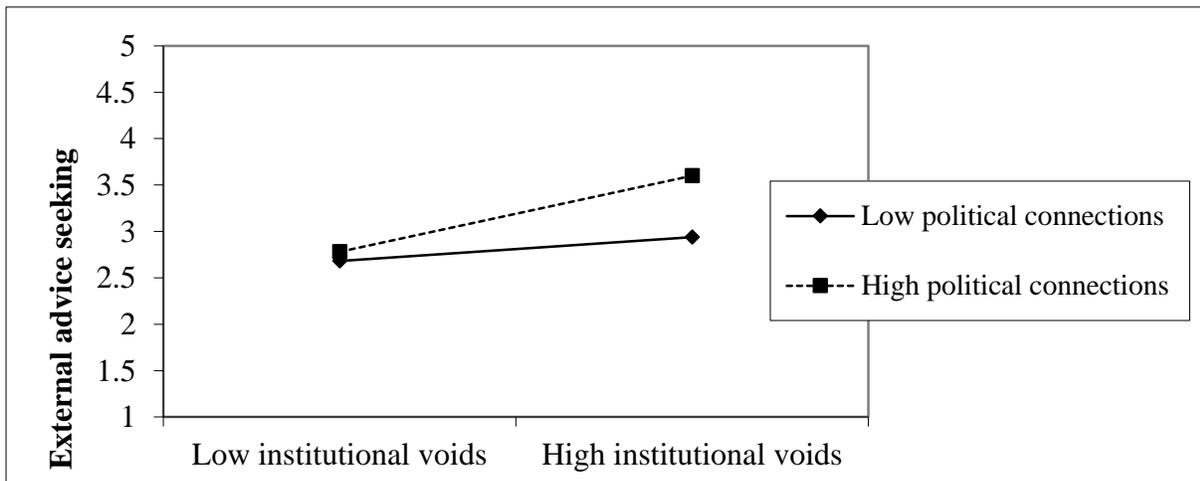
<sup>a</sup>The interaction graph for Ethiopian sample follows the same pattern as the above

**<sup>a</sup>Figure 3: Interaction effect of institutional voids with political connections on external advice-seeking**



<sup>a</sup>The interaction graph for Ethiopian sample follows the same pattern as the above

**<sup>a</sup>Figure 4: Interaction effect of institutional voids with political connections on external advice seeking**



<sup>a</sup>The interaction graph for Ethiopian sample follows the same pattern as the above

Ref.: Ms. No. MIMO-2020-0045R1

WHERE DO THEY GO FOR ADVICE? ENTREPRENEURS' ADVICE-SEEKING BEHAVIOR  
IN AFRICA  
**International Studies of Management & Organization (R&R2)**  
5 July 2021

Taran Patel, PhD  
Review Editor  
International Studies of Management & Organization

**Dear Professor Patel,**

We would like to thank you for the letter and the opportunity to resubmit a revised copy of this manuscript. We would also like to take this opportunity to express our sincere thanks to the reviewers for the positive feedback and helpful comments.

The manuscript has been revised to address the reviewers' remaining comments, which are appended alongside our responses to this letter. We hope the revised manuscript will be accepted for publication in the *International Studies of Management & Organization*.

Sincerely,

Dr Kwabena Kesse



On behalf of authors ~~Dr Kwabena Kesse~~

~~On behalf of~~

### **Editor's Comments:**

More precisely, I request you to read through your manuscript critically and ensure that there are no grammatical or stylistic errors. I draw attention to pages 9 and 22, where there seem to be some mistakes ('state-of-the-art', not 'state-of-the-act'; page 22 last sentence). Please make sure that the paper respects the publication guidelines of ISMO.

**Response (R):** We thank you for your suggestion. We have read through the manuscript and made the necessary corrections on pages 9 and 22.

## **Where do they go for advice? Entrepreneurs' advice-seeking behavior in developing countries**

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