Enabling bricolage in resource-constrained contexts: the role of sense of community and passion in African social entrepreneurs

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Abstract

Purpose – Small social entrepreneurs (SSEs) who operate in resource-constrained environments frequently use entrepreneurial bricolage (EB) to overcome such limitations. Research in social entrepreneurship mainly focuses on the outcomes of bricolage, with little knowledge about individual mechanisms that lead SSEs to use this approach. The authors fill this gap by investigating the role of entrepreneurial passion in fostering bricolage and the mediating effect of the sense of community.

Design/methodology/approach – To validate the theoretical model, the authors surveyed 279 SSEs operating in 7 African countries. The authors assessed the risk of common method bias, internal reliability and the validity of constructs and tested the hypotheses by performing linear regression analysis.

Findings – This study's results demonstrate that passionate SSEs operating in resource-constrained contexts develop a sense of community by perceiving it as a valuable resource provider and that sense of community moves them to engage with EB.

Research limitations/implications – Within the field of social entrepreneurship, this study examines the importance of a sense of community among SSEs; this evidence opens new avenues for research on drivers of small businesses operating in developing economies.

Practical implications – This study has practical implications for SSEs on implementing bricolage, and guidelines for governments, policymakers and NGOs in better developing their policies and programs considering the role of communities.

Originality/value – This study contributes to the literature by highlighting individual-level drivers of bricolage for SSEs operating in resource constraints, and revealing the relevance of the subjective view of the role of the community.

Keywords Sense of community, Entrepreneurial bricolage, Entrepreneurial passion, Social entrepreneurs, Africa

Paper type Research paper

1. Introduction

Small social entrepreneurs (SSEs) are involved in the innovative use and combination of resources to pursue opportunities to create social and environmental value through profit-making activities (Mair and Marti, 2006; Murphy and Coombes, 2009; Saebi *et al.*, 2019), and usually operate in contexts characterised by resource constraints (Shepherd *et al.*, 2020; Sottini *et al.*, 2022). To overcome such limitations, SSEs often engage in so-called

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entrepreneurial bricolage (EB) (Di Domenico *et al.*, 2010; Busch and Barkema, 2021), that is, an approach of "making do by applying combinations of the resources *at hand* to new problems and opportunities", using creativity and improvisation and refusing to be constrained (Baker and Nelson, 2005). From an empirical perspective, in resource-constrained environments, bricolage is often the main solution for SSEs to overcome resource scarcity and unlock social entrepreneurship (Bacq *et al.*, 2015; Holt and Littlewood, 2017; Janssen *et al.*, 2018).

The extant research on social entrepreneurship has mainly focused on the outcomes of bricolage, studying, for instance, how it enables innovation and social change (Bacq *et al.*, 2015; Di Domenico *et al.*, 2010), firm growth (Janssen *et al.*, 2018; Busch and Barkema, 2021) and survival (Stenholm and Renko, 2016). Thus, while scholars converge on the relevance of EB in resource-constrained environments (Hertel *et al.*, 2021; Reypens *et al.*, 2021; Shepherd *et al.*, 2020), only a few studies have explained what effectively drives social entrepreneurs to engage with EB (Desa and Basu, 2013; Janssen *et al.*, 2018). The main antecedents of EB have been found in the intensity of local relationships (Ciambotti *et al.*, 2021) and entrepreneurial passion (EP), which increases the use of EB in start-ups in a developed context because "passionate entrepreneurs are motivated to tackle encountered challenges or problems" (Stenholm and Renko, 2016, p. 596). However, while scholars support the relevance of EP to social entrepreneurs (Thorgren and Omorede, 2018; Yitshaki and Kropp, 2016) and the fact that local communities may play a critical role in driving entrepreneurs to use EB when operating in constrained contexts such as Africa (Lashitew *et al.*, 2020; Busch and Barkema, 2021; Reypens *et al.*, 2021), it remains empirically unclear if and how EP fuels EB in SSEs in such contexts, and what is the nexus with local communities.

This study fills this gap by discussing the mediating role of a psychological sense of community (PSOC) in the relationship between EP and EB. Originating in human needs theory (Peterson *et al.*, 2008), PSOC has been studied both as construct (Nowell and Boyd, 2010) and a theory (McMillan, 2011). In particular, PSOC represents the set of feelings related to belonging to a community, which include a sense of mattering and making a difference to a group, knowing that the community members will meet their physical and psychological needs (McMillan and Chavis, 1986). In fact, PSOC is fuelled by individuals' tendency to perceive the community as a *resource-provider* that meets their needs (McMillan and Chavis, 1986; Nowell and Boyd, 2010). Focussing on entrepreneurship, EP has been discussed as a driver of social entrepreneurs' need to assemble available resources to find, invent and develop entrepreneurial solutions (Cardon *et al.*, 2013; Murnieks *et al.*, 2020). Thus, we may expect EP to fuel social entrepreneurs' perceptions of the community as a resource provider and, consequently, help them develop PSOC. In this sense, the more a small social entrepreneur experiences EP, the more they will perceive the community as a provider of those resources that are necessary to engage with the entrepreneurial activities they are passionate about (Cardon *et al.*, 2013; Thorgren and Omorede, 2018).

To test the mediating role of PSOC, we ran a quantitative analysis of 279 small social entrepreneurs (SSEs) across 7 African countries, including East and West African countries (e.g. Kenya, Uganda, Ghana and Ethiopia). We based this research on the setting of African economies because there are many SSEs who aim to address societal issues (Jones *et al.*, 2018; Lashitew *et al.*, 2020). Moreover, these countries present several resource constraints that limit the entrepreneurial action of SSEs, such as a lack of technology and financial and human resources or poor infrastructure (Holt and Littlewood, 2017; Ciambotti and Pedrini, 2021; Busch and Barkema, 2021), while also offering an interesting setting in which to study community-level phenomena and thus reveal the presence of strong social ties (Lashitew *et al.*, 2020; Hertel *et al.*, 2021).

With our paper, we mainly contribute to the literature on the factors enabling social entrepreneurship in resource-constrained contexts, such as developing economies (Shepherd *et al.*, 2020; Busch and Barkema, 2021), by documenting the role played by EP and PSOC in SSEs, driving them to implement bricolage. Thus, our paper extends the knowledge on *why*

"a given venture engages in EB to best evaluate the behaviour's overall effects on its outcomes" (Reypens *et al.*, 2021, p. 12). In addition, our results contribute to the growing body of research on social entrepreneurship and community (Bacq *et al.*, 2022; Lashitew *et al.*, 2020; Hertel *et al.*, 2021; Ciambotti *et al.*, 2021) by underlining the central role of psychological factors such as feelings in belonging to a community for social entrepreneurs and showing how subjective perceptions of resource providers shape entrepreneurial processes in the face of resource constraints. We also provide practical implications for SSEs who seek to operate and create a social impact in resource-constrained conditions (Jones *et al.*, 2018; Saebi *et al.*, 2019; Murphy *et al.*, 2021) while offering practical guidance to policymakers, governments and NGOs in such African contexts.

The paper proceeds as follows. In the next section, we present our hypotheses on the mediating role of PSOC in the EP–EB relationship. Next, we explain the methodology and the findings. Finally, we discuss the theoretical contributions and practical implications of our study.

2. Theoretical background

According to the most recognised definitions, social entrepreneurs are involved in "the innovative use and combination of resources to pursue opportunities to catalyse social change and/or address social needs" (Mair and Marti, 2006, p. 37). Transcending the dichotomy of profit and non-profit organisational forms (Murphy *et al.*, 2021), this broad definition follow those of others, which recognises common elements for social entrepreneurs as the innovative use of *hybrid* missions, processes, models and resources to create economic, social and environmental value (Murphy and Coombes, 2009, p. 326; Saebi *et al.*, 2019, p. 72). According to this, SSEs seek to adopt market-based approach (some form of commercial activity to generate revenues), while pursuing social and environmental goals (Doherty *et al.*, 2014). However, SSEs typically operate in resource-constrained environments, such as developing economies (Bacq *et al.*, 2016; Shepherd *et al.*, 2021; Sottini *et al.*, 2022). Such contexts strongly affect the entrepreneurial ventures of SSEs, who often engage with EB to operate in such resource-constrained environments (Di Domenico *et al.*, 2010; Busch and Barkema, 2021). Specifically, EB is the process of "making do by applying combinations of the resources *at hand* to new problems and opportunities" (Baker and Nelson, 2005, p. 333). Thus, through creativity and improvisation, bricoleurs refuse to be constrained by limitations (Fisher, 2012), thereby representing a concrete way to overcome resource constraints arising from the environment (Desa and Basu, 2013; Reypens *et al.*, 2021).

Literature on bricolage has increased in relevance in recent years (Janssen *et al.*, 2018; Reypens *et al.*, 2021; Busch and Barkema, 2021), with many studies on the outcomes of this approach, such as social change (Bacq *et al.*, 2015; Di Domenico *et al.*, 2010), growth and firm survival (Stenholm and Renko, 2016; Busch and Barkema, 2021). In turn, little research has investigated the antecedents of EB (Desa and Basu, 2013; Janssen *et al.*, 2018), with limited evidence regarding the role of entrepreneurial passion (EP) among start-uppers operating in developed economies (Stenholm and Renko, 2016) or the relevance of local relationships that foster the engagement with EB (Ciambotti *et al.*, 2021). With this recent evidence, scholars have proven how EP plays a positive role in engaging with bricolage in small organisations such as start-ups, but they have focused these studies on developed countries, which are less resource constrained, and not considered social entrepreneurs in their sample. Grounded in this initial evidence, we now offer our perspective concerning EP and EB among SSEs.

2.1 Passion and bricolage in small social entrepreneurs

Entrepreneurial passion (EP) is the set of "intense positive feelings experienced by engagement in entrepreneurial activities associated with roles that are meaningful and salient to the self-identity of the entrepreneur" (Cardon *et al.*, 2009, p. 517). Extant research has

demonstrated the motivating and energising role of EP (Murnieks *et al.*, 2020) because it boosts entrepreneurs' efforts (Cardon *et al.*, 2017) and persistence toward goals despite significant obstacles (Murnieks *et al.*, 2014; Cardon and Kirk, 2015). In fact, EP is a driver of engaging with the EB approach because "passionate entrepreneurs are motivated to tackle encountered challenges or problems" and they are "more likely to identify solutions that could otherwise go unnoticed or unexploited" (Stenholm and Renko, 2016, p. 596). Murnieks *et al.* (2014, p. 1584) also described that this aspect as EP "inspires individuals to persist through the trials and tribulations".

In addition, among social entrepreneurs, EP can play a critical role. Thorgren and Omorede (2018, p. 506) claim that "despite the barriers, the passionate leaders continue to engage in regular activities to develop the communities in which they operate"; this aspect of persistence refers to the EB pillar of *refusal to be constrained by limitations* (Desa and Basu, 2013), which can refer to an environment with severe resource scarcity (Di Domenico *et al.*, 2010). Entrepreneurial passion has also been linked to creative problem-solving (Cardon *et al.*, 2009), which is extremely important when entrepreneurs venture into resource-scarce contexts such as India (Shepherd *et al.*, 2020), a manifestation of which could be the creative use of *resources at hand* and *improvisation*, which are pillars of EB (Fisher, 2012).

Building on extant research on EP and EB, we thus argue that, in developing countries with resource constraints, EP triggers SSEs to engage with EB because passion motivates them to refuse to be constrained by limitations (Desa and Basu, 2013; Stenholm and Renko, 2016; Yitshaki and Kropp, 2016) and stimulates the creativity needed to combine resources *at hand* and thus provide the desired contribution to the community in which they operate (Thorgren and Omorede, 2018; Lashitew *et al.*, 2020; Murnieks *et al.*, 2020). Heeding this evidence, we posit the following hypothesis:

H1. In resource-constrained contexts, greater entrepreneurial passion drives SSEs to stronger engagement with EB.

2.2 Sense of community and bricolage

Sarason (1974) described PSOC as a perception of similarity with others, an acknowledged interdependence with others and the feeling that an individual is part of a larger dependable and stable structure. Following this study, McMillan and Chavis (1986) theorised PSOC as a feeling of belonging, mattering and making a difference to a group, with the perception that the community will meet its members' needs because of their membership. The theory of PSOC points out that individuals perceive responsibilities related to being members of a community (Chavis and Pretty, 1999; Peterson *et al.*, 2008; McMillan, 2011). In fact, the theory of PSOC explains that "affiliation with a given community evokes a sense of personal responsibility for the community well-being" (Boyd and Nowell, 2014, p. 116), and in this way, individuals are moved to action by this sense of belonging and mattering (for instance, PSOC stimulates greater levels of commitment and prosocial behaviour).

Because PSOC relates to the feelings of belonging and mattering through membership, scholars have discovered how it activates personal resources because PSOC implies sacrificing and committing time, cost, energy, ideas and action to the community in the face of the hardest challenges (Boyd and Nowell, 2014), such as actions to "help rescue flood victims" (McMillan, 2011, p. 511) or "save a pub" (Wells *et al.*, 2019). This evidence suggests a potential relationship between PSOC and EB, especially when SSEs operate in the face of resource constraints (Di Domenico *et al.*, 2010; Lashitew *et al.*, 2020) and in the most challenging contexts, such as slums (Shepherd *et al.*, 2021) and impoverished settings (Holt and Littlewood, 2017).

The theory of PSOC explains that the feeling of belonging to a community stimulates the creativity needed "to generate alternative ideas and solutions to problems" (Boyd and Nowell, 2014, p. 116) and leads individuals to do whatever is possible to maintain their membership in

and influence on the community (McMillan and Chavis, 1986). Similarly, Chavis and Pretty (1999, p. 640) state that the commitment provided by PSOC drives the greater mobilisation of resources, even in challenging conditions. In a recent article, Ciambotti *et al.* (2021) documented that intellectual capital in the form of local relationships owned by social entrepreneurs drives them to implement EB. Similarly, other studies of social entrepreneurship highlight the fact that local communities facilitate and trigger entrepreneurial action by providing for resource acquisition (Wells *et al.*, 2019) and resource mobilisation (Shepherd *et al.*, 2020; Hertel *et al.*, 2021). Lashitew *et al.* (2020, p. 438) also uncover this potential interplay between the PSOC and EB, claiming that "a strong sense of communal belonging can hence encourage experimentation with social innovations", which also relates to the EB pillar of the "*creative combination of resources*" (Fisher, 2012). In another case, Busch and Barkema (2021) show that SSEs in a resource-scarce context engaged community members "without formal skills as teachers, and used discarded, underused or undervalued materials for training". Thus, we might expect that greater engagement with community members reinforces the use of EB in SSEs.

The result of this argumentation is that PSOC, in a context of resource scarcity, nourishes SSEs to combine the resources *at hand* by experimenting in creative ways and refusing to be constrained (Janssen *et al.*, 2018). Based on this evidence, we posit the following:

H2. In resource-constrained contexts, a greater sense of community drives SSEs to stronger engagement with EB.

2.3 Psychological sense of community as a mediator in the EP–EB relationship

Finally, we argue that EP stimulates PSOC, which, in turn, drives social entrepreneurs to use bricolage. In fact, PSOC grounds theoretical developments in the human-needs theory (McMillan and Chavis, 1986; McMillan, 2011; Boyd and Nowell, 2014), which explains that individuals develop PSOC when they view a community as a resource provider "for meeting physical and psychological needs" (Nowell and Boyd, 2010, p. 829). Individuals are thus attracted to a community in which they find physical resources, relationships and competences (Chavis and Pretty, 1999; Nowell and Boyd, 2010).

Social entrepreneurs who experience EP are moved to engage with activities related to finding, inventing and developing solutions that provide them with intense positive feelings (Cardon *et al.*, 2013). Thus, EP plays a motivational role in activities that are meaningful for social entrepreneurs (Murnieks *et al.*, 2014; Yitshaki and Kropp, 2016; Cardon *et al.*, 2017), and a greater level of EP fosters the consequent need for the resources to implement those activities (Murnieks *et al.*, 2020).

We argue that, when confronting resource-constrained environments, EP moves entrepreneurs to perceive a greater *need for fulfilment* in terms of resources and affection toward the social environment. Thus, passionate SSEs may generate a "feeling of belonging, of being part of a collective, and identification with the community" (McMillan and Chavis, 1986, p. 10) because only through membership in a community can they find the resources required for their activities (Lashitew *et al.*, 2020; Bacq *et al.*, 2022; Hertel *et al.*, 2021).

In other words, EP may stimulate SSEs who operate with resource constraints to a greater need of closeness, affection and belonging to places in which resources can be mobilised (Hertel *et al.*, 2021) in community contexts (Bacq *et al.*, 2022). In fact, "passionate entrepreneurs experiencing positive affect are likely to make favourable judgements or evaluations" (Stenholm and Renko, 2016, p. 600), which can be assimilated into the feeling of being part of a community as the resource provider (Bacq *et al.*, 2022).

Further, the "passionate entrepreneur is likely to see more opportunities for resource usage where others see mainly limitations" (Stenholm and Renko, 2016, p. 599), and thus, we suppose that passionate SSEs who have developed strong PSOC will tend to engage with EB.

This has also been highlighted by the social entrepreneurship literature (e.g. Yitshaki and Kropp, 2016; Lashitew *et al.*, 2020; Bacq *et al.*, 2022; Busch and Barkema, 2021), which explains that embeddedness in a community supports social entrepreneurs in developing countries to mobilise resources for venturing (Wells *et al.*, 2019; Hertel *et al.*, 2021) and creating social value (Di Domenico *et al.*, 2010; Janssen *et al.*, 2018).

Gathering these arguments together, social entrepreneurs in resource-constrained contexts who experience EP will develop PSOC because of the need to engage with entrepreneurial activities linked with the perception that the community is a resource provider. As a result, EP leads to greater PSOC, and the latter encourages social entrepreneurs to implement EB. We thus posit the following hypothesis:

H3. In resource-constrained contexts, the sense of community mediates the relationship between EP and EB in SSEs.

Figure 1 shows our conceptual model of the hypotheses developed based on the theoretical background. The following section presents the methods and results of this study.

3. Research methodology

3.1 Population and sample

Our research investigates the individual mechanisms that foster EB among SSEs operating in contexts characterised by resource constraints (Di Domenico *et al.*, 2010; Busch and Barkema, 2021; Reypens *et al.*, 2021). In line with this purpose, we focus on Sub-Saharan African countries for three main reasons. First, African countries are characterised by vast social needs, including access to healthcare, water, energy, financial services and basic consumer goods for poor populations living in slums and rural areas (Jones *et al.*, 2018; Lashitew *et al.*, 2020). These untapped problems have moved a multitude of SSEs to address such needs, thus offering the best setting in which to explore the social entrepreneurship phenomenon (Busch and Barkema, 2021). Second, Sub-Saharan African countries are widely recognised as resource-constrained environments, which limit the operations of small social enterprises affected by a lack of resources, such as technologies, human and financial resources (Holt and Littlewood, 2017; Ciambotti and Pedrini, 2021). A third reason is that, in Sub-Saharan African countries, the resources that the entrepreneur draws on are the people of the community in which they live (Lashitew *et al.*, 2020) because resources are usually gathered together at the community level (Reypens *et al.*, 2021). Thus, the conditions of African countries perfectly suit the purpose of our study.

Thanks to the E4Impact Foundation, an organisation whose mission is to offer training and support programmes to develop social entrepreneurship in Africa, we identified SSEs with the following criteria: (1) being social entrepreneurs based on the most recently recognised definition which refers to individuals involved in the innovative use and

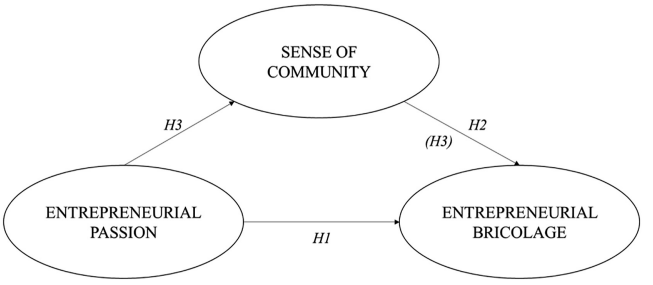

Figure 1.
The conceptual model

combination of resources to pursue opportunities to catalyse social change and/or address social needs through a market-based approach (Mair and Marti, 2006; Saebi *et al.*, 2019), (2) currently operating in Sub-Saharan Africa and (3) having completed at least two years of operations, small dimensions and legal registration to prove that the social business is not merely in the idea stage. Furthermore, to ensure sample reliability, we validated criteria 1, 2 and 3 through the statements and documents provided by the social entrepreneurs to the E4Impact Foundation, in which they declare that they run a small social enterprise and report their ventures' objectives (financial, social and environmental). Through meetings with the E4Impact Foundation's local managers, we verified that our sample of SSEs still had to face the need to find financial resources, technological knowledge and access to suppliers, as well as skilled employees. We identified 942 SSEs and decided to test our hypotheses through a survey. To ensure causality between our variables, we decided to submit two questionnaires at two different times (late January and late June 2019).

The first step was aimed at collecting data on our independent, mediating and control variables. Then, we submitted the second survey with the aim of collecting data regarding our outcome variable. In total, we received 338 responses to the first survey and 321 responses to the second. We matched the data collected in the two steps, reaching a total of 313 observations. Of these, we excluded 34 observations due to incomplete answers. Our final sample was comprised of 279 observations, reflecting a 29.6% effective response rate. The SSEs in our sample operate in different industries, including financial services and agrobusiness in rural or underserved areas; healthcare and renewable energy for poor populations in slums and manufacturing consumer goods, such as water or sanitary pads, offered to the poor population or unprivileged and low-income customers. The final sample contained data on seven African countries, resulting in 60 observations from Uganda, 21 from Kenya, 12 from Ethiopia, 38 from Zimbabwe, 33 from Sudan, 86 from Ghana and 29 from Sierra Leone. The average age of the respondents was 37 years, the average experience in entrepreneurship was 9 years and the average enterprise size was 32 employees.

3.2 Survey design

To mitigate the potential effects of bias, we employed several *ex ante* remedies (Podsakoff, 2003). We attempted to mitigate social-desirability bias by using previously validated scales and managing an online survey that is generally considered less prone to social desirability (Podsakoff, 2003). The questionnaire was in English, and three established social entrepreneurship scholars and five E4Impact Foundation members (two of whom were African managers based in Kenya and Ghana) revised its structure and content to ensure its clarity and effectiveness.

3.3 Measures

3.3.1 Entrepreneurial bricolage. We measured bricolage using the scale developed and tested by Senyard *et al.* (2009) and validated by Stenholm and Renko (2016). Each of the eight items was measured on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (never) to 5 (always). As shown in Table 1, to test the internal consistency of the bricolage construct, we ran a Cronbach's alpha test. The results revealed a Cronbach's alpha of 0.84, which is above the acceptability threshold of 0.70 (Hair *et al.*, 2010), indicating an adequate level of internal consistency. Moreover, we ran the Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) test to ensure sampling adequacy. The KMO score was higher than the threshold usually accepted in the literature (KMO = 0.86).

3.3.2 Entrepreneurial passion. We measured EP using Cardon *et al.*'s (2013) scale. This choice was consistent with previous studies in the entrepreneurship field, such as that of Cardon and Kirk (2015) and Stenholm and Renko (2016), who applied Cardon *et al.*'s (2013) measurement scale. The distinction of passion into three role dimensions is suitable for

Factor	Items	Loading values
EB (KMO = 0.862; α = 0.84)	We are confident of our ability to find workable solutions to new challenges by using our existing resources	0.552
	We gladly take on a broader range of challenges than others with our resources would be able to	0.698
	We use any existing resource that seems useful to responding to a new problem or opportunity	0.722
	We deal with new challenges by applying a combination of our existing resources and other resources inexpensively available to us	0.756
	When dealing with new problems or opportunities we take action by assuming that we will find a workable solution	0.736
	By combining our existing resources, we take on a surprising variety of new challenges	0.702
	When we face new challenges, we put together workable solutions from our existing resources	0.734
	We combine resources to accomplish new challenges that the resources were not originally intended to accomplish	0.602
EP (KMO = 0.929; α = 0.93)	It is exciting to figure out new ways to solve unmet market needs that can be commercialised	0.761
	Searching for new ideas for products/services to offer is enjoyable to me	0.809
	I am motivated to figure out how to make existing products/services better	0.872
	Scanning the environment for new opportunities really excites me	0.743
	Inventing new solutions to problems is an important part of who I am	0.815
	Establishing a new company excites me	0.784
	Owning my own company energises me	0.881
	Nurturing a new business through its emerging success is enjoyable	0.814
	Being the founder of a business is an important part of who I am	0.841
	I really like finding the right people to market my product/service to	0.839
	Assembling the right people to work for my business is exciting	0.781
	Pushing my employees and myself to make our company better motivates me	0.833
	Nurturing and growing companies is an important part of who I am	0.788
PSOC (KMO = 0.861; α = 0.89)	I can get what I need in this neighbourhood	0.666
	This neighbourhood helps me fulfil my needs	0.736
	I feel like a member of this neighbourhood	0.808
	I belong in this neighbourhood	0.796
	I have a say about what goes on in my neighbourhood	0.757
	People in this neighbourhood are good at influencing each another	0.727
	I feel connected to this neighbourhood	0.829
	I have a good bond and tie with others in this neighbourhood	0.786

Table 1.
Measurement scale for EB, EP and PSOC

studies in developed countries that are not characterised by severe resource constraints, as are Sub-Saharan Africa. In this context, entrepreneurs need to find creative solutions to gain access to resources, even during the developing phase, after the venture has been founded and when firm is relatively small (Desa and Basu, 2013). In addition, in these countries, the legal foundation of a venture usually occurs only when an entrepreneur's activity reaches a level of development sufficient to justify legal foundation costs (Holt and Littlewood, 2017). Consequently, the three entrepreneurial roles, rather than adding up, overlap and reinforce one another during the evolution of an entrepreneurial activity.

Therefore, we decided not to consider the three passion domains as distinct (passion for inventing, passion for founding and passion for developing) but, rather, as a whole construct.

Table 1 lists the 13 items used. These items were measured on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). To test the internal consistency of the EP construct, we ran the Cronbach's alpha test and the KMO test ($\alpha = 0.929$, KMO = 0.934). As shown in Table 1, to ensure that our decision to consider passion as a whole construct was consistent with the analysis, we decided to verify the internal consistency and sampling adequacy for each passion (passion for inventing: $\alpha = 0.85$, KMO = 0.830; passion for founding: $\alpha = 0.84$, KMO = 0.807; passion for developing: $\alpha = 0.83$, KMO = 0.787). These scores are all above the acceptability threshold of 0.70 (Hair *et al.*, 2010), but they are still lower than the internal consistency and sample adequacy of the overall construct of EP.

3.3.3 Psychological sense of community. We measured PSOC using an eight-item scale developed by Peterson *et al.* (2008), which captured the respondent's feeling of being part of a community (see Table 1). Scholars in the community psychology field consider that this scale offers the most robust and accurate representation of McMillan and Chavis' (1986) pillars of PSOC (Peterson *et al.*, 2008; McMillan, 2011; Boyd and Nowell, 2014). The items were measured on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). As shown in Table 1, to test the internal consistency of the PSOC construct, we ran Cronbach's alpha test, revealing a score of 0.89, which is above the acceptability threshold of 0.70 (Hair *et al.*, 2010), thus indicating a high level of internal consistency. We again ran the KMO test again, and the sampling was adequate (KMO = 0.861).

3.3.4 Control variables. To control for other factors that may influence EB, the following control variables were included in each equation. First, we decided to control for firm size because small entrepreneurial businesses may be more inclined to embrace a bricolage approach than large businesses (Baker and Nelson, 2005). To control for firm size, we decided to use the total number of employees. Second, we decided to control for entrepreneur age because previous studies have shown that age has an influence on the decision to start a new venture (Shane, 2003) and, thus, also on bricolage activities. Third, we decided to control for potential gender differences because previous research has shown that gender has an influence on business creation (Carter and Brush, 2004) and, thus, also on bricolage activities. Fourth, we decided to control for the age of the venture because new businesses may be more inclined to embrace a bricolage approach than old ones (Stenholm and Renko, 2016). Fifth, because our sample includes SSEs who operate in different countries, as well as in different industries, we decided to control for country and industry specificities. Indeed, as regards country specificities, scholars argued that the institutional context where the firm is located defines and limits entrepreneurial opportunities, and thus affects entrepreneurs behaviour (Hwang and Powell, 2005; Bruton *et al.*, 2010). This is particularly evident in challenging contexts such as Africa (Welter and Smallbone, 2011; Holt and Littlewood, 2017). Similarly, as regards industry specificities, scholars argued that the industry is likely to shape the processes and outcomes of entrepreneurship (Stenholm and Renko, 2016; De Massis *et al.*, 2018). Therefore, we included in the model dummy variables for country and industry to ensure that geographic and industry specificities would not influence our results.

4. Findings

As is often the case in entrepreneurial research (Cardon and Kirk, 2015; Short *et al.*, 2010), our sample is not particularly large. Because, in small datasets, issues of model fit can become problematic with use of structural equation modelling, we decided to follow Kline's (2005) suggestion and adopt regression analysis. In this section, we present the results that emerged.

4.1 Measurement model

Before testing our hypotheses, we assessed the risk of common method bias and the internal reliability and validity of our constructs.

4.1.1 Assessment of common method bias. To examine common-method variance, we carried out Harman's single-factor test. This test is a *post-hoc* procedure that is conducted after data collection to check whether a single factor is accountable for variance in the data. All items from every construct were loaded into a factor analysis to check whether a single factor emerged. The generated principal component analysis output revealed five distinct factors accounting for 60.1%. The first unrotated factor captured only 27.7% of the variance. Thus, no single factor emerged, and the first factor did not capture most of the variance. These results suggest that we can reasonably conclude that common-method variance is not a relevant issue in this study.

4.1.2 Internal consistency and construct validity. We conducted exploratory factor analysis with direct oblimin rotation to examine the discriminant validity of all the constructs. The use of an oblique rotation permits an item to load on multiple factors, thus demonstrating its true impact across all factors. We removed two of eight EB items (3 and 4), two of 13 EP items (1 and 2) and two of eight PSOC items (1 and 6) due to high cross-loadings with other factors. Specifically, the EP items that were dropped are both related to passion for inventing and refer to the *intense positive feelings* dimension of passion, while the one PSOC item that was dropped is related to the *need for fulfilment* dimension, and another is related to the *influence* dimension. We contend that dropping these items did not significantly alter the measurement of our variables, because each variable still contains the most important dimensions that characterise each construct. To ensure that dropping some items did not obstruct the potential overlap between the constructs, we also ran the exploratory factor analysis, including all the items, and did not find any significant change in regression findings. In line with most quantitative studies in the field of entrepreneurship, we adopted 0.40 as a cut-off criterion (Meek *et al.*, 2010; Urban and Kujinga, 2017). All remaining items were represented by unique factors, with loadings greater than 0.40, and were therefore retained.

The results of the exploratory factor analysis show that our dataset is characterised by three main latent constructs: EP, PSOC and EB. Following Hahn *et al.* (2012), we conducted confirmatory factor analyses to determine whether EP, PSOC and EB measures were best represented by a three-factor model. We compared the one- and two-factor models with our three-factor model. The results showed that a single latent variable model had a poor overall fit to the data and the fit indices ($\chi^2[230] = 1{,}575.21, p < 0.001, \chi^2/\text{df} = 6.85$, CFI = 0.561, RMSEA = 0.145) were below the recommended cut-off values (Hair *et al.*, 2010). The results also showed that the two-factor model had a poor fit to the data ($\chi^2[229] = 1{,}240.73, p < 0.001, \chi^2/\text{df} = 5.42$, CFI = 0.67, RMSEA = 0.126), thus indicating that our model comprised of three latent variables had a better and more acceptable fit ($\chi^2[227] = 540.365, p < 0.001, \chi^2/\text{df} = 2.38$, CFI = 0.898, RMSEA = 0.070).

4.2 Descriptive statistics, correlation and regression

Table 2 summarises the descriptive and correlation statistics for the variables used in the study. The correlation matrix shows that there is a positive and significant correlation between EB and EP, as well as between EB and PSOC.

	Variable	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	EB	0.00	1.00						
2	EP	0.00	1.00	0.245**					
3	PSOC	0.00	1.00	0.352**	0.327**				
4	Company size	31.91	230.47	0.002	−0.188**	−0.037			
5	Company age	5.05	8.65	−0.092	−0.099	−0.027	0.119		
6	Entrepreneur age	36.85	8.36	0.127*	0.063	0.184**	0.081	0.164**	
7	Entrepreneur gender	0.29	0.45	−0.022	−0.089	0.131*	0.055	0.014	−0.076

Note(s): $n = 279$ (entrepreneurs); *$p < 0.05$, **$p < 0.01$, ***$p < 0.001$

Table 2.
Descriptive statistics and correlation

We tested the conceptual model and hypotheses using hierarchical regression analysis via IBM SPSS statistics software. In the first step, the control variables were entered, with EB as the outcome variable. In the second step, control variables and EP were entered to determine whether EP positively influences EB 1. In the third step, control variables, EP and PSOC were entered to determine whether PSOC mediates the relationship between EP and EB, following the procedures recommended by Baron and Kenny (1986). Thus, if mediation was present, we would expect the effect of EP on PSOC to be significant and that the effect of EP on EB would not be significant after the addition of PSOC to the model. Table 3 presents the results of these regressions. H1 argues that greater EP would lead to greater EB, and this was supported by our results ($\beta = 0.236$, $p < 0.01$). H2, which argues that a greater PSOC would lead to greater EB, was also supported by our results ($\beta = 0.270$, $p < 0.001$). H3 argues that PSOC mediates the effect of EP on EB, and this was supported by our results because EP became insignificant ($p > 0.05$) as PSOC was added to the regression analysis. The fact that our independent variable was no longer significant indicates full mediation. In addition, as shown in Table 4, we ran a regression analysis to determine the effect of EP on PSOC, and the result was positive and significant ($\beta = 0.278$, $p < 0.05$).

DV: EB	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Intercept	−0.056	0.034	0.144
Control variables			
Company size	0.000	0.000	0.000
Company age	−0.015	−0.018*	−0.017*
Entrepreneur age	0.017	0.013	0.008
Entrepreneur gender	0.058	0.051	0.000
Country			
Ethiopia	−0.604	−0.494	−0.434
Ghana	−0.699**	−0.433	−0.323
Kenya	−0.317	−0.178	−0.098
Sierra Leone	−0.284	−0.122	−0.162
Sudan	−0.572	−0.432	−0.201
Uganda	−0.575*	−0.471	−0.434
Industry			
Agriculture	−0.035	0.042	−0.039
Construction	−0.182	−0.290	−0.378
Energy	0.113	0.351	0.277
Financial services	0.507	0.323	0.234
Healthcare	0.057	−0.088	−0.142
Hospitality	0.616	0.540	0.949
Insurance	0.059	0.052	−0.135
Manufacturing	−0.371	−0.347	−0.318
Real estate	1.158	0.935	1.160
Services	0.098	−0.040	0.225
Independent variable			
EP		0.236**	0.148
Mediating variable			
PSOC			0.270***
Adjusted R^2	0.043	0.090	0.145
F	1.516	2.022**	2.635***

Note(s): $n = 279$(social entrepreneurs); *$p < 0.05$, **$p < 0.01$, ***$p < 0.001$

Table 3.
The effect of EP and PSOC on EB

DV: PSOC	Model 1
Intercept	−0.288
Control variables	
Company size	0.000
Company age	0.000*
Entrepreneur age	0.016
Entrepreneur gender	0.203
Country	
Ethiopia	−0.264
Ghana	−0.491*
Kenya	−0.326
Sierra Leone	0.086
Sudan	−0.793**
Uganda	−0.196
Industry	
Agriculture	0.181
Construction	0.305
Energy	0.185
Financial services	0.294
Healthcare	−0.108
Hospitality	−1.501
Insurance	0.657
Manufacturing	−0.147
Real estate	−0.864
Services	−1.014*
Independent variable	
EP	0.278***
Adjusted R^2	0.183
F	3.300***

Note(s): $n = 279$ (social entrepreneurs); *$p < 0.05$, **$p < 0.01$, ***$p < 0.001$

Table 4.
The effect of EP on PSOC

4.3 Robustness test

We performed a Sobel test of significance to determine whether the reduction in the effect of EP, after including PSOC in the model, was significant and, therefore, the mediation effect was statistically significant. A significant result indicates that the independent variable has an indirect effect on the dependent variable, meaning that the effect is mediated, in whole or part, by the mediating variable. With the interactive Sobel test, we verified our mediation effect. The Sobel test result was 2.845, with a p-value of 0.004. We also tested the mediation effect using the Aroian (1944) and Goodman (1960) tests. The Aroian test result was 2.804, with a p-value of 0.005, and the Goodman test result was 2.888, with a p-value of 0.003. We concluded that our results were robust and that PSOC mediates the effect of EP on EB.

5. Discussion

This study investigates the individual drivers that lead SSEs to use bricolage when venturing in resource-constrained environments. Consistent with our expectations, our analysis confirms that passionate SSEs operating in a resource-constrained context develop a PSOC and that the latter fuels bricolage.

Our findings extend the knowledge on the antecedents of social entrepreneurship by explaining the drivers of EB in SSEs operating in resource-constrained environments (Shaw and Carter, 2007; Di Domenico *et al.*, 2010; Saebi *et al.*, 2019; Reypens *et al.*, 2021; Busch

and Barkema, 2021) and providing a better understanding of the role of the community in such developing contexts (Wells *et al.*, 2019; Bacq *et al.*, 2022; Lashitew *et al.*, 2020; Hertel *et al.*, 2021).

5.1 What drives small social entrepreneurs to use EB in resource-constrained contexts?

Our study contributes to a better understanding of what leads SSEs to engage with the entrepreneurial process known as bricolage when operating in resource-constrained contexts (Baker and Nelson, 2005; Shaw and Carter, 2007; Busch and Barkema, 2021; Reypens *et al.*, 2021). In particular, while the main literature has focused on the outcomes of this approach (e.g. innovation, growth, survival and social change), our study offers insights into two specific individual drivers, EP and PSOC.

First, by deepening the knowledge of why socially-oriented entrepreneurs operate through EB in the resource-constrained contexts of developing countries, we complement extant research showing that SSEs are not only moved to use bricolage by the resource constraints of the environment but also by individual-level characteristics (Bacq *et al.*, 2016). We thus complement and extend the evidence offered by Stenholm and Renko (2016), which showed that passionate entrepreneurs in a developed context are likelier to engage in EB when developing their start-ups. In turn, our results extend such a view by illustrating the positive role of EP in EB implementation among SSEs who which operate in resource-constrained countries (confirming *H1*). This result contributes to a greater understanding of the role of passion in entrepreneurial processes in social entrepreneurship (Yitshaki and Kropp, 2016) as an enabling factor for SSEs (Thorgren and Omorede, 2018).

Second, we tested and validated *H2*, documenting that, in SSEs operating in resource-constrained contexts, PSOC is generated by the motivational and affectional roles of passion, which create the need to find resources *at hand* to engage with entrepreneurial activities. Thus, social entrepreneurs are moved to engage with EB not only because passion stimulates grit and persistence in the face of challenges (Stenholm and Renko, 2016) but, more importantly, because it generates a sense of belonging and mattering for the community (Wells *et al.*, 2019), one enriched by creativity and experimentation, as discussed by Lashitew *et al.* (2020) and Shepherd *et al.* (2020). In revealing PSOC as the second individual-level driver of EB among SSEs, we also extend the evidence of Ciambotti *et al.* (2021). While these authors have provided evidence of the importance of quality and intensity of local relationships as a positive driver of EB, we extend such a view by including the mediation effect of PSOC as a specific mechanism of venturing in resource-scarce contexts, where the effects of EP are channelled to EB practices through the feeling of belonging and mattering for the community in which SSEs live and operate (*H3*). This mediation model also contributes to extended studies by Bacq *et al.* (2016, 2022), Hertel *et al.* (2021), Busch and Barkema (2021) and Reypens *et al.* (2021) in highlighting ways of generating resourcefulness behaviour through EB in resource-scarce environments and offering a contextualisation of the social entrepreneurship phenomenon in such developing countries (Saebi *et al.*, 2019; Shepherd *et al.*, 2020).

These results offer avenues for future research. Building on our model, further studies should connect individual drivers of EB with firm-level outcomes, such as the growth and scaling of social impact (Busch and Barkema, 2021), which may reveal whether passionate SSEs who experience PSOC can also achieve greater social impact in their communities or develop resilience and persistence in the face of challenges (Shepherd *et al.*, 2021). In this way, research may better understand how and why SSEs sacrifice and commit time, cost, energy, ideas and action to address challenges and needs in the community, as well as to "help rescue flood victims," as figuratively reported by McMillan (2011, p. 511).

5.2 Psychological sense of community in the field of social entrepreneurship

A second theoretical contribution of this study relates to the introduction of the PSOC in the literature on social entrepreneurship. In fact, our study reveals what nourishes the sense of belonging and mattering to the community in social entrepreneurs while also showing the positive role of PSOC in fuelling a specific entrepreneurial process.

To capture the role of communities in social entrepreneurship, scholars have described how entrepreneurs become embedded in local communities to obtain resources and legitimacy (Di Domenico *et al.*, 2010; Wells *et al.*, 2019). Other studies have explained that, under resource constraints, social entrepreneurs, especially those running small companies, behave based on necessity (Shepherd *et al.*, 2021). Adopting the individual perception lens, our study bridges these two streams of research by highlighting the positive role of EP in channelling the necessity of resources to nourish PSOC and actions taken to solve challenges, rather than necessity. We reveal that, when passion for entrepreneurial solutions moves individuals to belong to a community to obtain resources, it fuels entrepreneurial resistance in the face of constraints (Desa and Basu, 2013; Janssen *et al.*, 2018).

Second, our study contributes to the field of social entrepreneurship and community, revealing the motivational nature of PSOC in terms of making use of whatever is available, refusing to be constrained by limitations, and stimulating creativity to find new solutions. This integrates and validates evidence provided by Lashitew *et al.* (2020, p. 438), who discovered that "a strong sense of communal belonging can hence encourage experimentation with social innovations," and Shepherd *et al.* (2020), who explained that entrepreneurs in difficult conditions believe that a strong sense of belonging to communities creates positive benefits for business ventures aimed at poverty reduction. Given this introduction of PSOC in the field of social entrepreneurship, future studies may adopt this lens to deepen our understanding of the individual characteristics of social entrepreneurs in order to better classify their behaviours and strategies to invent, develop and grow their companies in communitarian contexts (Saebi *et al.*, 2019; Shepherd *et al.*, 2020; Hertel *et al.*, 2021).

5.3 Implications to practitioners and policymakers

This study offers several contributions to decision-making process of social entrepreneurs, policymakers, and actors of the entrepreneurial ecosystem (such as NGOs and other intermediaries). First, our study provides implications to social entrepreneurs of small businesses operating in developing countries by revealing the main role of passion and sense of community in acquiring and mobilising resources for entrepreneurial action. In fact, assuming that the EB is one of the most effective approach in resource-scarce context to create social and environmental value, social entrepreneurs should provide attention to promote and embed these individual-level aspects into their mission, organisational culture and operating processes to enact a greater engagement with bricolage practices. For instance, SSEs could implement initiatives to spread and flourish passion and sense of community among the employees, so that they could be triggered toward this entrepreneurial approach. More empirical studies in this direction are required to test and validate our model and hypotheses at employee level.

We offer implications for policymakers especially in developing economies, where new policies to foster social entrepreneurship are strongly required (Welter and Smallbone, 2011; Shepherd *et al.*, 2021). In the light of our study, policymakers should consider the opportunity to review social entrepreneurship support programs in two different directions. First, our results showpolicymakers the opportunity to combine traditional programmes to support social entrepreneurs with programmes intended to stimulate the growth of the new generation of social entrepreneurs. These programmes should work to keep and strengthen

the relationships between potential social entrepreneurs and their community which ultimately may better enable SSEs to experience a sense of community and thus activate them to use the bricolage approach (Lashitew *et al.*, 2020; Hertel *et al.*, 2021). For instance, policymakers can enhance their governmental initiatives to foster entrepreneurship by crafting and developing educational and capacity-building programmes which ground on the relationships inside communities, as well as between communities and SSEs. Similarly, policymakers who intends to develop financial-support programmes to startups or early-stage social businesses (typically facing resource-constraints) (Stenholm and Renko, 2016; Reypens *et al.*, 2021) could evaluate the project feasibility also considering the sense of community as key indicator because it may drives in flourishing of entrepreneurial venturing for societal and environmental development through bricolage. Second, policymakers of developing countries should expand the target beneficiaries of their policies from the focus to offer direct support to social entrepreneurs toward a broad support which, acknowledging the essential link between social entrepreneurs and their community, offer support to communities in which they live and operate. For instance, policymakers could prioritise the access to additional resources to those social enterprises which cultivate the relationship with community in a continuous and stable way, for instance, having corporate governance bodies which embed representative of communities and, in this sense, cultivating and demonstrating a strong sense of community.

Heeding the previous insights, this study offers implications for the wider ecosystem actors, such as intermediaries, business accelerators, incubators, universities, impact investors and innovation hubs (Busch and Barkema, 2021; Sottini *et al.*, 2022). In fact, those intermediaries are typically involved in weaving and sustaining ecosystem actors to promote and develop entrepreneurship (Busch and Barkema, 2022; Lashitew *et al.*, 2020). Our results first suggest the need for such actors to better identify passionate entrepreneurs as key enablers in their networks; secondly, such ecosystem actors should re-direct their efforts in supporting business models designed to incorporate relationships with local communities (Ciambotti *et al.*, 2020; Sottini *et al.*, 2022). For instance, ecosystem networks could help in creating relationships with community leaders (Thorgren and Omorede, 2018), community-groups, and community-based organisations (Hertel *et al.*, 2021; Bacq *et al.*, 2022) as they may extend the sense of community of SSEs, thus enabling them in venturing through bricolage.

Eventually, this study has implications for NGOs and other third-party actors involved in African economies to provide social benefits. In fact, by showing the relevance of EP and PSOC in fuelling a bricolage approach, NGOs and other international and local actors may focus their missions on developing phycological aspects of sense of community of entrepreneurs (e.g. as sense of membership, sense of mattering, feeling of belonging and responsibility etc.). This is particularly important in slum areas (Shepherd *et al.*, 2021) and impoverished settings such as the base of the pyramid (Holt and Littlewood, 2017; Sottini *et al.*, 2022), as SSEs which operates in such contexts could be better enabled to engage with bricolage, thus overcoming the severity of resource constraints (Ciambotti and Pedrini, 2021).

6. Conclusion: limitations and further research

This study aimed to better understand what leads SSEs to engage with EB in resource-constrained contexts. We examined two important individual-level drivers by testing and verifying the existence of a mediating effect on the part of PSOC on the EP–EB relationship. We determined that PSOC plays a critical role in social entrepreneurship because passionate SSEs will develop PSOC, and the latter will lead these passionate SSEs to implement EB.

We acknowledge that this study has limitations, which suggest new areas of future research. First, the sampling strategy involved African countries, which offered an ideal setting in which to investigate the social entrepreneurship phenomenon of EB. However,

a different setting could be used to test and validate our evidence in different contexts, and a different sample could be used that includes the life stage of a company (Saebi *et al.*, 2019), as well as organisations of greater size, such as medium-sized or large social enterprises. Also, while Africa represents an ideal setting in which to investigate community-based situations (Jones *et al.*, 2018; Lashitew *et al.*, 2020), social entrepreneurs in other geographical areas may have different relationships with the communities in which they operate; similarly, women entrepreneurs may perceive greater or lower PSOC depending on their integration into the society in which they live. Additionally, this study did not consider external factors, such as corruption, institutional voids and economic growth, which may also influence both the experience of EP and PSOC. This opens up the possibility of moderators in our model. Finally, while EB represents a leading practice in resource-constrained contexts, other entrepreneurial processes may also be useful for resource acquisition and mobilisation, such as optimisation, resource-seeking or bootstrapping (Shaw and Carter, 2007; Desa and Basu, 2013; Hertel *et al.*, 2021). Future research may investigate the impact of EP and PSOC on such processes to foster contextualisation and variations among social entrepreneurs (Welter and Smallbone, 2011; Shepherd *et al.*, 2021) in order to finally develop more fine-grained theories on social entrepreneurship (Saebi *et al.*, 2019; Murphy *et al.*, 2021). Overall, we hope that this study inspires scholars and practitioners to better develop knowledge about how SSEs may create social and environmental impacts in their communities and societies, ultimately contributing to a better world.

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