



# Empowering Women Entrepreneurs in Real Estate: The Role of Skills Training in Driving Success in Limpopo, South Africa

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## ABSTRACT

This article explores the relationship between skills training and the success of women entrepreneurs in the real estate services sector; this study analyses qualitative data collected from 18 women in the South African real estate industry. The results show that a variety of training methods, including as official degrees and informal education, have a major impact on confidence, business performance, and entrepreneurial resilience. There are still obstacles such a lack of mentorship, budgetary limitations, and institutional inefficiencies. The article ends with actionable suggestions for enhancing training assistance and inclusion systems to promote women's involvement and advancement in real estate business.

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## 1. Introduction

The role of women entrepreneurs in fostering innovation, economic growth, and poverty alleviation is becoming more widely acknowledged (UN Women, 2021). Women have particular possibilities and disadvantages in the real estate services industry (Petersen, 2025). Despite the industry's potential for flexible career paths and high income, obstacles like lack of mentorship, restricted funding, and gender inequity frequently prevent achievement (Fatoki, 2020; Motsa & Dlamini, 2022). Entrepreneurial success is greatly aided by skill development, especially for women navigating historically male-dominated fields (Ramirez-Lozano & Portuguese-Castro, 2026). In their investigation of the ways in which entrepreneurship education and training assist female entrepreneurs in overcoming obstacles, Molina-López et al. (2021) emphasised that particular training boosts self-efficacy and skill development, allowing women to successfully traverse competitive environments. The authors discovered that entrepreneurial training boosts confidence, which is crucial for successful entrepreneurship, in addition to developing technical and business skills. Women now have more opportunities to acquire technical and managerial skills in South Africa thanks to initiatives to professionalise the real estate industry with credentials like the NQF4 and NQF5 (PPRA, 2023). Furthermore, the SETAs (2023) Skills Development and Sector Support Framework places a strong emphasis on workplace learning, targeted skills interventions, and ongoing professional development initiatives that match workforce competencies with sector demands. This framework offers structured guidance for both aspiring and seasoned women entrepreneurs to improve their employability, business performance, and overall entrepreneurial outcomes in the real estate industry. It supports training in property management, valuation, sales, and regulatory compliance (SETAs, 2023; Botha & Bignotti, 2022). But little research has been done on how much of these training initiatives result in real entrepreneurial outcomes (Lambebo & Abegaz, 2025). By investigating the relationship between skill training and the success of women entrepreneurs in the real estate services, this study seeks to close that gap. The socioeconomic background is also taken into account, including laws, industry rules, and technological advancements, all of which have a significant impact on the training environment and business prospects accessible to women.

## 2. Theoretical framework for the study

This study is grounded in two theoretical frameworks: the Resource-Based Entrepreneurship Theory and the Creation Theory of Entrepreneurship.

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## **2.1 The Resource-Based Entrepreneurship Theory**

According to the Resource-Based Entrepreneurship Theory, a company can achieve long-term competitive advantage and success by strategically deploying valuable, uncommon, and non-replaceable resources like knowledge and skills (Alvarez & Busenitz, 2020). By emphasising that entrepreneurs and new ventures succeed when they successfully acquire, combine, and mobilise valuable resources like human capital, social networks, knowledge, and financial capital to recognise opportunities and drive performance outcomes, Resource-Based Entrepreneurship Theory applies RBV principles specifically to entrepreneurship. Building on RBV, entrepreneurial research highlights how company development and competitive positioning are shaped by resource heterogeneity and the entrepreneur's capacity to coordinate resources (such as skills, knowledge, and social ties) (Nasra & Oliver, 2025). Building on the Resource Based View (RBV), the Resource Based Entrepreneurship Theory contends that an entrepreneur's internal resources such as knowledge, skills, and human capital are essential to the success of a business. According to this approach, skills training improves human capital, a vital resource for entrepreneurs, in terms of both quality and diversity. Training enhances the entrepreneur's capacity to recognise, acquire, and utilise important resources, hence promoting competitive advantage and improved performance outcomes. Examples of these abilities include financial literacy, business planning, and opportunity recognition. According to the fundamental RBV principles that valuable, uncommon, and hard-to-copy resources are what propel long-term business success, skills training can be essentially seen as a strategic investment in resource development that enhances the entrepreneur's ability to efficiently coordinate resources (Kumari & Sudha, 2026). These resources in the real estate industry include soft skills like digital literacy, client relations, and negotiating in addition to technical knowledge of property law and sales (Qudah, 2025; Mokgadi & Segalo, 2023). To sum up, the Resource-Based Entrepreneurship Theory emphasises that successful entrepreneurship is fuelled by the strategic application of valuable resources, especially human capital and skills (Parker, 2022). Particularly for women working in intricate real estate marketplaces, skills training improves both technical and soft skills, bolstering resource coordination and competitive advantage (Parker, 2022). The theory's strong internal focus, however, limits its ability to account for external structural constraints that may limit resource deployment even in the presence of sufficient capabilities, such as market volatility, regulatory hurdles, gender bias, and unequal access to financing. Therefore, to better understand how training translates into quantifiable business outcomes, future research should incorporate contextual and institutional perspectives

## **2.2 The Creation Theory of Entrepreneurship**

Contrarily, the Creation Theory of Entrepreneurship highlights how entrepreneurs, especially in unpredictable situations, actively shape opportunities through action, experimentation, and resource assembling (Fisher, 2021). Training can serve as a tool and a catalyst for entrepreneurship, particularly for under-represented groups like women in real estate, according to this hypothesis (Sánchez-Riofrío, López-Pérez, & Castaño-Martínez, 2025). The idea that skill development is an ongoing, flexible process that is impacted by the entrepreneur's surroundings and setting is also supported by this theory (Sánchez-Riofrío et al., 2025). In this approach, skills training is essential because it improves human capital, adaptability, and problem-solving abilities, all of which help entrepreneurs take advantage of and mould possibilities (He & Martin, 2024). According to the Creation Theory of Entrepreneurship, possibilities are actively created via engagement, testing, and learning in unpredictable circumstances rather than just being found. Entrepreneurs must constantly shape opportunities through adaptive action and competence development in the real estate sector, which is marked by volatile markets, complicated regulations, and relationship-driven transactions (He & Martin, 2024). By enhancing human capital, opportunity perception, and problem-solving skills, skills training is essential to this process and helps real estate entrepreneurs implement and improve business concepts in changing environments (He & Martin, 2024). In order to navigate uncertainty and create value in competitive real estate markets, entrepreneurial self-efficacy and reflective practice are further strengthened by experiential learning strategies like case-based learning, mentorship, and simulations (Ndlovu, Ebewo, Mlotshwa, & Shumba, 2025). Additionally, training that develops soft skills like communication, negotiation, flexibility, and digital competency promotes ongoing, context-dependent learning, supporting the creation-oriented perspective that digital platforms can further support women's entrepreneurial development and that entrepreneurial capabilities develop through practice and environmental engagement (Novaes, 2024; Nkosi & Sibanda, 2024). As a result, skills training in the real estate industry serves as a strategic tool for creating opportunities and maintaining entrepreneurial performance in addition to being merely educational. Finally, the Creation Theory of Entrepreneurship emphasises that in unpredictable situations, opportunities are actively created through learning, experimentation, and adaptive resource assembly (Fisher, 2021). Real estate entrepreneurs may strategically plan and execute their projects thanks to skills training, which improves human capital, opportunity recognition, and self-efficacy (He & Martin, 2024). The adaptive skills necessary for negotiating intricate and relationship-driven real estate markets are further strengthened by experiential and soft-skills-oriented training (Ndlovu et al., 2025; Novaes, 2024). The theory's heavy focus on agency, however, limits its ability to account for structural limitations including capital access, regulatory restrictions, and institutional disparities that may impede opportunity creation even with training (Sánchez-Riofrío et al., 2025).

### 3. Comparative analysis of theories applicable to skill training

The Creation Theory of Entrepreneurship and the Resource-Based Entrepreneurship Theory (RBET) present different but complimentary viewpoints on the significance of skill development for business success. According to RBET, having and strategically utilising valuable, uncommon, and unique resources especially human capital, skills, and knowledge is the source of competitive advantage (Parker, 2022; Nasra & Oliver, 2025). By improving internal capacities including technical know-how, financial literacy, and social capital, skills training is seen in this paradigm as a strategic investment that improves resource orchestration and business success (Kumari & Sudha, 2026). This encompasses both soft skills like digital literacy and negotiating, which are vital entrepreneurial resources, and technical skills like property law and sales knowledge in the real estate industry (Qudah, 2025).

The Creation Theory of Entrepreneurship, in contrast, places more emphasis on taking advantage of opportunities and acting as an entrepreneur than on owning resources. It contends that in unpredictable situations, opportunities are actively created via trial and error, education, and adaptability (Fisher, 2021). According to this viewpoint, skills training helps entrepreneurs develop the adaptive thinking, self-efficacy, and experiential learning skills necessary to shape and create opportunities in addition to building resources (He & Martin, 2024). Research shows that training that is experiential and coaching-based enhances reflective practice and an entrepreneurial attitude, both of which are critical for thriving in dynamic markets like real estate (Ndlovu et al., 2025; Novaes, 2024).

Although RBET offers a methodical explanation of how skills serve as strategic assets, it is frequently criticised for its internal concentration and lack of attention to institutional and environmental constraints (Parker, 2022). On the other hand, creation theory emphasises flexibility and agency but may downplay structural obstacles that can limit the creation of opportunities, such as legal restrictions and unequal access to capital (Sánchez-Riofrío et al., 2025).

Overall, combining the two theories provides a more thorough explanation of entrepreneurship skill development. While Creation Theory describes how skills are enacted and turned into possibilities through dynamic action and contextual learning, RBET explains why skills are important as valued resources. When combined, they offer a strong theoretical framework for investigating how skill development affects female entrepreneurs in the real estate industry.

**Table 1. Comparative analysis of theories applied in skills training**

<b>Approach</b>	<b>The Resource-Based Entrepreneurship Theory</b>	<b>The Creation Theory of Entrepreneurship</b>
Focus	Internal resources and capabilities as sources of advantage	Entrepreneurial action and opportunity creation in uncertainty
Goal in skills training	Build valuable skills for competitive advantage	Develop adaptive skills to create opportunities
Main tools	Education, certification, human capital development	Experiential learning, coaching, experimentation
Strengths	Explains how skills drive sustained performance	Emphasizes innovation, adaptability, and agency
Limitations	Underplays external and institutional constraints.	Underestimates structural barriers and resource limits

**Table 1** demonstrates that while both theories acknowledge the value of skill development in entrepreneurship, they take distinct approaches to the topic. While the Creation Theory stresses adaptive action, experimentation, and the active production of possibilities in unpredictable situations, the Resource-Based Entrepreneurship Theory concentrates on building internal skills and strategic resources that provide competitive advantage. By considering skills training as a dynamic learning process as well as a resource-development strategy, an integrated method blends these viewpoints. This indicates that training should promote flexibility, creativity, and experiential learning (opportunity creation) in addition to developing important technical and soft skills (resource strength). When combined, the two theories offer a more thorough framework for comprehending how skill development promotes long-term business success, especially in intricate industries like real estate.

### 4. Methodology

Four local municipalities Polokwane, Lepelle-Nkumpi, Molemole, and Blouberg—make up the Capricorn District Municipality, an economic center in South Africa's Limpopo Province, where the study was carried out. Particularly in the real estate industry, where women are progressively establishing themselves as major estate agents, property developers, and service providers, this region exhibits increased entrepreneurial energy. The district's growing real estate industry and socioeconomic diversity provided a strategic backdrop

for examining the ways in which government assistance affects the long-term viability and expansion of female entrepreneurs in the industry.

The study population consisted of women operating as principal estate agents or owners of registered real estate firms within the Capricorn District Municipality. In order to ensure in-depth and pertinent insights into the research problem, the study purposefully selected 18 female entrepreneurs who satisfied particular inclusion criteria from this demographic. Purposive sampling was selected because it enables the intentional selection of participants who have first-hand experience and specialist knowledge of the topic being studied, which is crucial in qualitative research (Etikan, 2023). The data's richness and usefulness were increased by this sampling strategy, which made sure that every participant was actively engaged in the real estate industry and had used government assistance programs.

The 18 female major estate agents participated in structured in-person interviews to gather data. According to Creswell and Poth (2023), structured interviews were judged appropriate because they permit probing while preserving uniformity among participants, allowing for a thorough examination of experiences, viewpoints, and difficulties. To maintain comfort and secrecy, each interview was conducted in a quiet environment and lasted roughly an hour. With the participants' permission, a digital recorder was utilised to accurately capture the conversations, and field notes were collected at the same time to capture nonverbal clues, contextual information, and emotional nuances that would help analyse the results later. Prior to data collection, ethical clearance was acquired, and participants were made aware of their rights, which included the freedom to withdraw at any time in accordance with accepted ethical research procedures and the opportunity to participate voluntarily (Saunders et al., 2022).

The thematic analysis approach proposed by Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke (2021), widely recognised for its flexibility and effectiveness in identifying patterns within qualitative data, was used to analyse the collected data. The process began with data familiarisation, which involved careful reading and transcription of interview recordings, as well as repeated listening to the audio files to ensure immersion in the data.

Following familiarisation, the researcher generated initial codes across the entire dataset using an inductive approach. Meaningful data segments were systematically identified and coded, allowing patterns to emerge directly from participants' narratives. The generated codes were then grouped into broader sections, from which preliminary themes were developed. These themes were reviewed and refined to ensure internal coherence and alignment with the study's objectives and theoretical framework. Thereafter, clear and matching names were assigned to each theme to accurately reflect the essence of the participants' experiences.

To enhance the credibility and validity of the findings, the thematic analysis was submitted to an expert in qualitative research within the Department of Entrepreneurship. The expert reviewed the coding process and thematic structure to ensure appropriate matching of codes and themes, thereby strengthening the trustworthiness and rigor of the analysis.

The exploratory character of the research and the requirement to gather complex, context-specific insights on skill training and women's entrepreneurial sustainability made the adoption of this study model which combines purposive sampling, structured interviews, and theme analysis necessary. Rich, first-hand narratives of institutional relationships, obstacles, and enabling processes within the real estate industry were gathered by the researcher thanks to the model, which may not have been adequately captured by quantitative methodologies. Furthermore, a strong foundation for comprehending how formal structures and informal socio-cultural norms operate together to create women's entrepreneurial paths was made possible by the methodological decisions' conformity with institutional theory. This method was crucial for producing evidence-based suggestions that practitioners, support organisations, and legislators could use to increase women's involvement and sustainability in the real estate sector.

## 5. Results

This paper involved individual, face-to-face interviews with 18 women entrepreneurs in the real estate sector. Appointments were scheduled with them, and they were interviewed at locations of their preference, specifically their offices.

5.1 The demographic features of the participants are delineated in tables 2, 3,4 and 5 below:

**Table 2. Age Group of the Participants**

Age Group	Number of Participants	Percentage (%)	Cumulative Percentage (%)
18–28	1	5.56%	5.56%
29–38	5	27.78%	33.34%
39–48	7	38.89%	72.23%
49–58	4	22.22%	94.45%
>59	1	5.56%	100%
<b>Total</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>100%</b>	

### Age Group

Table 2 shows the findings by participant age group. The age range of the participants was 18 to over 59, and the age group of 40 to 48 showed the highest level of engagement, suggesting that they are probably the main audience or most interested in the subject. The level of engagement is particularly high among those aged 29 to 38. It is possible that outreach was insufficient or that younger individuals were disinterested given the low participation of the youngest age group (18–28 years old). Despite their moderate to low level of engagement, the 49–58 and >59 age groups are rather significant. level of education, as shown in Table 3.

**Table 3. Educational level of the Participants**

<b>Educational Level</b>	<b>Number of Participants</b>	<b>Percentage</b>	<b>Cumulative Percentage</b>
Matric	5	27.78%	27.78%
Diploma	7	38.89%	66.67%
Degree	4	22.22%	88.89%
Honours	1	5.56%	94.44%
Masters and above	1	5.56%	100%
<b>Total</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>100%</b>	

### Educational level

Individuals' educational attainment is displayed in Table 3. There were no cases of people who had never gone to school because all of the participants had some degree of formal education. The most common accreditation is a diploma, which shows that access to or demand for vocational or technical training is high. One of the most common educational outcomes is matriculation, as many people choose not to pursue further education. Enrolment in post-diploma higher education has drastically decreased. There may be minimal interest in or access to postgraduate education, as evidenced by the fact that only one respondent had honours or a master's degree or above. Participants' race, as indicated by the data in Table 4:

**Table 4. Race of the Participants**

<b>Race</b>	<b>Number of Participants</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>	<b>Cumulative Percentage (%)</b>
Black	12	66.67%	66.67%
White	5	27.78%	94.44%
Coloured	0	0%	94.44%
Indian	1	5.56%	100%
Other	0	0%	100%
<b>Total</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>100%</b>	

### Race

The racial makeup of the participants is displayed in Table 4. Twelve responses were received by the Black racial group, the most of any group interviewed. There were four answers from the White racial group. There was no response from the racial category of coloured individuals. There was only one response and little contact between the Indian and other racial groups. Across all responses, Black and white respondents were the most active. White participants, on the other hand, showed focused reactions in specific domains, while Black participants showed a broad range of responses. Table 5 below shows the marital status of the participants:

**Table 5: Marital Status of the Participants**

<b>Marital Status</b>	<b>Number of Participants</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>	<b>Cumulative Percentage (%)</b>
Married	10	55,56%	5.56%
Single	6	33,33%	33.34%
Widow	2	11,11%	72.23%
Divorced	0	0%	94.45%
Separated	0	0%	100%
<b>Total</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>100</b>	

### **Marital status**

The individuals' marital status is displayed in Table 5. Nine out of sixteen respondents indicated that their marital status was the most common. Five responses from single people made up the second-largest batch. With just two responses, widows were the least represented group in the recorded responses. The "Divorced" and "Separated" statuses received no replies, indicating that they were either not included in the sample at all or were just partially represented. According to the paper's findings, the majority of respondents (55.6%) are married, suggesting a sizable portion in committed, long-term partnerships. With younger people included, 33.3% of the population is unmarried.

The conclusions drawn from the participants' answers are shown in this section. The primary focus is on government assistance for female real estate entrepreneurs. The interviews' thematic analysis identified government support as a crucial yet challenging component of women entrepreneurs' sustainability in the Capricorn District real estate market. The following five sub-themes surfaced: (1) types of skills learned, (2) training sources, (3) the importance of skills for business success, (4) self-initiated learning, and (5) peer and mentor learning.

## **5.2 Skills training for Women Entrepreneurs in Real Estate**

One of the key factors affecting women's business performance in the real estate industry in the Capricorn District of the Province of Limpopo is the problem of skills acquisition and training. The findings show that improving the skills and self-assurance of female entrepreneurs requires both official training programs and unofficial skill development.

### **5.2.1 Types of Skills Acquired**

The results of this study show that women entrepreneurs in the Capricorn District of the Province of Limpopo's real estate sector have a wide range of skills that are critical to the expansion and sustainability of their businesses. These skills, which are developed through formal education and informal experiences like workshops, mentorship, and self-directed learning, include communication, client management, financial savvy, legal knowledge, and an entrepreneurial mindset. The improvement of interpersonal and communication skills, which are seen to be essential for engaging clients and creating long-lasting commercial relationships, was a recurring subject among participants. Participant 10 highlighted, for instance, "How to communicate with clients and not lose patience." Discuss social media and networking, emphasising the value of professionalism and emotional intelligence in positions involving direct client interaction. Mavhungu (2023:99) emphasises the importance of soft skills in enhancing customer satisfaction and trust, claiming that strong communication and negotiation skills improve outcomes in service-oriented industries like real estate. Participant 13 echoed this, saying, "I've learned soft skills such as managing clients, closing deals, being professional and well-etiquette

Additionally, participants reported developing their business and financial management skills, such as understanding contracts and creating budgets. The learning of skills essential to effective business operations is demonstrated by Participant 9's statement, "I have learned to manage the finances, I am managing the body corporates' finances and able to implement cost-cuttings and prepare the budget." The fundamental literacy skills required in real estate are also emphasised by Participant 1, who stated that "Basic understanding of mathematics and reading and writing in English assist when you fill in contracts." This is supported by Fatoki (2021:80), who shows that increased financial literacy enhances sustainability and entrepreneurial decision-making. Additionally, it was believed that managing real estate transactions required legal and regulatory expertise. Indicating an increasing understanding of the regulatory environment, Participant 8 said, "I was taught that the sectional titles are governed by the bodies like Community Scheme Ombud Service (CSOS)." "Education teaches you about laws relating to real estate and how to apply them," said Participant 16, pointing to a broader trend toward professionalisation in the industry. According to Meyer (2024:14), regulatory knowledge is crucial for avoiding legal issues and ensuring moral behaviour in real estate transactions

However, not every experience was positive. A number of interviewees reported challenges in developing these skills, which were often ascribed to a lack of institutional support systems. As an illustration of the function of informal learning in the absence of mentorship or formal training, Participant 16 talked about depending on "self-taught experience and asking around." This is in line with Mashaba (2023:211), who cautions that while skill development is important, structural obstacles such as unequal opportunities and limited training access can hinder women's success. However, Moeketsi and Van der Merwe (2024:98) contend that recent advancements in public-private training initiatives have begun to close these gaps by offering specialised mentorship and digital upskilling programs tailored to women's entrepreneurial needs, particularly in semi-urban and peri-urban areas.

The Capricorn District's rural and semi-urban setting, which limits access to formal education and structured training programs, may be the cause of the disparities in results from earlier research. As a result, many women rely on self-motivation, peer support, and non-formal learning to improve their skill sets, highlighting the need for locally specific training programs that are both practical and accessible.

These results suggest that acquiring a wide range of technical and people skills is crucial for women entrepreneurs to succeed in the real estate industry. In order to promote and strengthen women entrepreneurs in rural South Africa, efforts must be made to increase access to mentorship and training programs that are contextually relevant.

### **5.2.2 Sources of Skills Training**

According to the study, a combination of official and informal training sources helped women entrepreneurs in the Capricorn District of the Province of Limpopo acquire essential professional and entrepreneurial skills. The sources included self-directed learning, industry-led seminars, social media platforms, structured mentorship programs, and previous business experience. The diversity of these training options illustrates the flexible methods used by female entrepreneurs to get relevant skills when they are unable to access trustworthy institutional support

A sizable portion of participants stated that industry-sponsored seminars and mentorship programs were crucial to their skill development. For instance, Participant 1 mentioned, "By attending seminars and presentations offered by the PPRA and other stakeholders," highlighting the role that regulatory bodies have in disseminating information particular to a given industry. Similar to this, Participant 2 said, "Our principal as well as people I know have been helpful with advice and tactics that can be used in business," suggesting that mentorship and practical business insights are provided via personal networks in the industry. Others relied on unofficial educational networks and internet platforms. The use of digital tools to overcome training shortages, especially in rural or underserved places, is demonstrated by Participant 3's comment, "Facebook there's Lebo Grass who assisted me with master classes and other social media platforms." According to Nkomo and Dube (2021:113), because digital platforms are accessible and reasonably priced, they have become a growing source of entrepreneurial education for women in South Africa

One important source of training, according to a number of participants, was their past unofficial business encounters. As an example of the function of cross-sector learning, Participant 6 noted, "Being in the business of selling meat assisted with experience." Informal workplace training effectively closes the skills gap, as evidenced by Participant 13's comment that they "had lots of training from how to answer a phone to signing offer to purchase and lease agreements." But not every player was able to take advantage of these chances. When asked if they had any experience with mentorship or extracurricular business training, Participant 7 simply replied, "No." This highlights a notable disparity in training opportunities, supporting worries expressed in previous studies that institutional barriers to formal skill development are often faced by women in rural or resource-poor contexts (Mabunda & Hlongwane, 2020:89).

From a literature perspective, our results are consistent with those of Khumalo and Sibanda (2022:345), who pointed out that while formal entrepreneurship education is lacking in many South African rural areas, women usually improve their skills through peer learning and informal mentoring. However, according to study by Molefe and Moagi (2023:155), informal training is marked by a lack of consistency and structure, which may reduce its effectiveness in comparison to professional training programs.

The contextual circumstances of the Capricorn District, where structured educational endeavours are sparse, may be the reason for the discrepancy in results between this study and others. Because of this, women entrepreneurs rely mostly on community-based and improvisational learning approaches, which are realistic and achievable despite being out of the ordinary. The use of informal peer learning and digital mentorship is particularly important for overcoming the obstacles posed by financial and geographic constraints

In summary, the findings show that women in the Capricorn District actively seek out alternative sources of information and guidance, despite the lack of official training opportunities. Customised assistance programs that combine online and in-person approaches are necessary to meet their diverse training needs and enhance their performance.

### **5.2.3 Skill Relevance to Business Success**

According to the study, women entrepreneurs in the Capricorn District of the Province of Limpopo had much higher company success when they possessed relevant entrepreneurial and technical skills. Participants often emphasised how specific attributes, such as professionalism, financial management, communication, customer relations, and negotiation, directly affected their competitiveness and operational efficacy in the real estate industry.

Many participants acknowledged the importance of communication and client engagement skills in maintaining and growing their businesses. As an illustration of the importance of soft skills in maintaining professional relationships, Participant 10 wrote, "How to communicate with clients and not to lose patience... relate on the social aspect and networking." This reinforces the importance of interpersonal skills in completing agreements and preserving client loyalty and is consistent with Participant 17's statement, "I've learned soft skills such as managing clients, closing deals, being professional and well-versed in etiquette."

Others noted that administrative expertise and financial management were essential to business success. While Participant 4 stated that her formal education "assisted with communication, reading contracts,

and writing," which are crucial skills for managing real estate transactions, Participant 9 shared, "I have learned to manage the finances implement cost-cutting and prepare the budget for the body corporate."

These conclusions are supported by recent research, which claims that skill development is a key indicator of entrepreneurial success, especially in service-oriented industries like real estate. According to Mokoena and Sefora (2022:132), South African women entrepreneurs that received training in customer service and financial literacy reported higher levels of profitability and client satisfaction. The importance of practical business skills, such as budgeting and contract negotiation, in improving operational efficiency was emphasised by Kgatle and Motloutsi (2021:455).

However, there is conflicting evidence. According to Mashaba (2023:34), institutional barriers such as gender discrimination, a lack of funding, and restricted market access have a greater impact on women's entrepreneurial success than talent relevance. Without structural assistance, even highly skilled women may struggle to succeed in such situations. Despite the validity of this viewpoint, the participants in the current study claimed that applying their abilities gave them a competitive advantage, particularly in a demanding environment. The discrepancy in outcomes could be attributed to Capricorn's rural and community-focused entrepreneurial climate, where women can overcome systemic constraints through skill acquisition through peer-to-peer learning and adaptive strategies. Moreover, a few participants (like Participant 6) mentioned that prior business experience, like selling meat before going into real estate, assisted them in transferring pertinent abilities. This supports the idea that developing relevant competencies through informal experiential learning is highly advantageous.

The study concludes by emphasising how crucial skill relevance is to success in the real estate industry, especially in the areas of interpersonal, financial, and communication skills. Women business owners in the Capricorn District use skill training as a tactical tool to get over obstacles and grow their companies in spite of institutional barriers. In this environment, the incorporation of mentorship, specialised training, and informal learning proved to be essential facilitators.

#### **5.2.4 Self-Initiated Learning**

The study demonstrated that self-directed learning is a vital process by which women entrepreneurs in the Capricorn District obtain necessary skills and knowledge in the real estate industry. A multitude of participants indicated a significant dependence on autonomous methods, including trial and error, digital resources, observation of seasoned experts, and informal counsel from colleagues to address the obstacles of entrepreneurship. For example, *Participant 12 simply stated, "Self-taught experience,"* while *Participant 16 explained, "Self-taught experience and asking around. Trial and error,"* emphasising how self-directed learning mitigates the absence of institutional support or mentorship. This method allows entrepreneurs to cultivate pragmatic problem-solving abilities and agility, crucial characteristics for success in a sometimes intricate and competitive sector.

The findings align with recent research by Molefe and Moagi (2023:155), which posits that informal and self-directed learning equips women entrepreneurs with adaptable, immediate methods suited to their local environments, a benefit that formal education may not consistently give. Dlamini and Nkosi (2021:198) similarly discovered that digital platforms and social media are essential instruments for women to autonomously get business knowledge, particularly in resource-constrained environments. This dependence on self-directed learning is not without its disadvantages. Mabunda & Hlongwane (2020:89) warn that self-directed learning may be disjointed and superficial, possibly resulting in deficiencies in essential business competencies in the absence of established programmes or mentorship. This issue corresponds with the experiences of certain participants in the study, who reported a deficiency of formal training and mentorship, potentially constraining their long-term growth potential.

The significance of self-directed learning in this study may indicate the distinct socio-economic circumstances of the Capricorn District, where restricted access to formal education and support services compels women to embrace independent learning practices out of necessity. In summary, whereas self-directed learning promotes autonomy and resilience in women entrepreneurs, its integration with formal mentorship and accessible training could improve business sustainability and success in the region.

#### **5.2.5 Mentorship and Peer Learning**

According to the study, peer learning and mentoring are important factors affecting the performance of female business owners in the Capricorn District real estate market. Many participants emphasised that receiving guidance and mentoring from more experienced colleagues helped them acquire the technical, managerial, and leadership skills necessary for efficient operation. According to the study, peer learning and mentoring have a big impact on how well women entrepreneurs do in the Capricorn District real estate market. Many participants emphasised that guidance and mentoring from more experienced peers helped them build the technical, managerial, and leadership skills necessary for their enterprises to function effectively. For example, while Participant 10 emphasised the continuous assistance they got from their mentor in overseeing day-to-day operations, Participant 2 mentioned that their principal and acquaintances offered insightful counsel and business strategies. Another important factor was peer learning via unofficial channels like social

media. As one example of how digital peer networks might support traditional mentorship, participant 3 highlighted taking master classes that are given through Facebook and other online forums. Furthermore, Participant 14 discussed the advantages of mentoring in developing leadership and management skills

These results are consistent with research showing how mentoring improves women's resilience and entrepreneurial performance, particularly in fields like real estate where men predominate (Nkosi & Moyo, 2022:45). According to Mahlangu, Mthiyane, and Dube (2021:87), peer learning has been shown to foster emotional support and the development of soft skills that are crucial for entrepreneurship. According to Khumalo and Ndlovu (2023:195), who warn that incompatible mentor-mentee relationships or limited program availability may reduce efficacy, the study found problems related to uneven access to quality mentorship programs. These limitations are demonstrated by the limited experience to mentorship reported by a few of study participants.

The unique socioeconomic and cultural context of the Capricorn District, where resources and official support systems are distributed unfairly, may have an impact on the diversity of mentorship experiences. Therefore, peer learning or self-directed projects are often used by female entrepreneurs to supplement traditional mentoring. The results show that while peer learning and mentorship significantly support women in real estate entrepreneurship, expanding access to organised, high-quality mentorship programs and building robust peer networks are essential to sustaining and enhancing these advantages.

This study was conducted in Polokwane, a relatively small city in South Africa, which may limit the broader applicability of the findings to larger metropolitan or more economically diverse contexts. The research was delimited to women operating within the real estate services sector, with a particular focus on women of colour. This focus was intentional, given the limited number of women especially black women actively participating in the real estate industry in the study area.

Due to the relatively small population of women in this sector, the sample size reflects the limited number of active participants available, which justifies the number included in the study. While this strengthens the contextual relevance of the findings, it also means that the results are more appropriately generalisable to black women operating in similar small-city or semi-urban real estate contexts rather than to all women entrepreneurs or the broader real estate industry nationally.

Nonetheless, the study provides valuable policy and practical insights, particularly in informing targeted interventions and support mechanisms aimed at increasing participation, sustainability, and growth of black women in the real estate sector.

## **6. Conclusion**

This study examined how skill development influences the sustainability and growth of women entrepreneurs in the real estate services sector within the Capricorn District of Limpopo Province, particularly in Polokwane, South Africa. Despite increasing participation in the industry, women continue to face structural barriers, limited access to formal training, and inconsistent institutional support, raising concerns about long-term business viability. Using a qualitative approach, the study purposively selected 18 women principal estate agents and firm owners operating in Polokwane. Data were collected through structured in-person interviews and analysed using thematic analysis.

The findings reveal that both technical skills (financial management, legal compliance, and contract administration) and soft skills (communication, professionalism, emotional intelligence, and negotiation) are critical to business success. However, many participants relied on self-directed learning and informal mentorship due to limited formal support systems. The study contributes to knowledge by highlighting the interaction between individual skill acquisition and the broader institutional context shaping rural and small-city entrepreneurship.

Importantly, the study offers practical and policy implications for skills training aimed at enhancing the success of women in real estate in Polokwane, South Africa. Practically, the findings identify the specific skills most relevant for women to succeed in a small city context such as Polokwane. These insights can inform the design of targeted training interventions that address both technical and interpersonal competencies required in the local real estate market. From a policy perspective, government initiatives on women's development can utilise these findings to strengthen and refine policies related to entrepreneurial skills development, particularly in the real estate sector. By aligning training programmes with the identified skill needs, policymakers can better support women's entrepreneurial sustainability and long-term business growth.

Future research should explore the long-term impact of digital training platforms, structured mentorship models, and public-private partnerships on women's entrepreneurial sustainability in emerging and semi-urban markets.

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## 8. Competing interests

The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

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