

# An Analysis of the Factors Affecting Women Entrepreneurs in Zambia. A Case Study of Mandevu Business Centre in Lusaka District

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**Abstract**— *Zambian women entrepreneurs confront many obstacles to commercial success. This study examines how restricted funding, education, and networking effect women entrepreneurs in Mandevu Business Centre, Lusaka District. The study collected qualitative and quantitative data from 100 female entrepreneurs and regulatory authorities using mixed methods. Financial constraints, lack of formal education, and restricted business networks hamper business growth and competitiveness. Most respondents had trouble getting capital due to financial institution collateral requirements and gender discrimination. Educational restrictions hinder business acumen and strategic decision-making, while weak networking limits market expansion. The study emphasises financial inclusion, entrepreneurial education, and networking for women in business policy initiatives. Women-owned businesses should get targeted government support, capacity-building programs, and better regulatory frameworks. These findings contribute to the gender and entrepreneurship discourse and offer policymakers and stakeholders meaningful insights to create a more inclusive business climate for Zambian women.*

**Keywords**— *Women entrepreneurs; financial inclusion; business networking; entrepreneurship education; gender disparities; Zambia.*

## I. INTRODUCTION

As a key driver of economic growth, innovation, and job creation, entrepreneurship is a key driver of development in many economies around the world (Blackden, Bardasi, & Guzman, 2007). Women entrepreneurs play a big role in this dynamic process. This is especially true in emerging economies like Zambia, where the number of women working in both formal and informal businesses has been slowly rising (FSD Zambia, 2021). Even though there are more and more female entrepreneurs, they face many economic, financial, and social and cultural problems that make it hard for their businesses to grow and stay open (Gedion, Oyugi, & Munyithya, 2015). Not having enough access to cash is still one of the biggest problems for women entrepreneurs. It makes it hard for them to grow their businesses, invest in new technology, and compete well in their fields (Rahman, Rahman, & Ključnikov, 2016). Also, women still don't get the same amount of entrepreneurial training and business education as men, which means they often don't have the skills and information they need for marketing, making strategic decisions, and managing money (Seshie-Nasser & Oduro, 2018). Also, they don't have enough professional networks to get guidance, work together, and grow their markets, which

makes the problems they face in business even worse (Mehta et al., 2021). Since of these many problems, this study looked at what makes women businesses in the Mandevu Business Centre in the Lusaka District do better or worse, focussing on their ability to get money, get an education, and meet other businesswomen.

Women business owners in Zambia, especially those who work in local markets like the Mandevu Business Centre, have made a huge difference in the economy, even though they have had to deal with a lot of problems (ILO, 2017). Statistics from the Government of the Republic of Zambia (2008) show that small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs) create about 70% of jobs in Zambia. A lot of these companies are owned by women. But differences between men and women in access to money, schooling, and networking opportunities keep holding women entrepreneurs back (Halkias, Nwajiuba, Harkiolakis, & Caracatsanis, 2011). The business environment in Zambia is characterised by bureaucratic hurdles, restricted access to credit facilities, and social and cultural limitations that affect women entrepreneurs more than men. Even though the government is trying to make economic policies that are more gender-inclusive, many women still have trouble getting loans since financial institutions have strict rules about who can borrow money (Rahman, Rahman, & Ključnikov, 2016). It's also hard for female entrepreneurs to adapt to modern business practices and deal with competitive market conditions since they don't have access to official business training and mentorship programs (Seshie-Nasser & Oduro, 2018). Social norms and gender roles also put extra stress on women, which makes it harder for them to fully commit to business projects (Alam, Jani, & Omar, 2011). As more women work in Zambia's informal sector, this study looked at the main factors that affect their ability to be successful as business owners. It focused on three areas: access to capital, schooling, and networking.

The primary objective of this study was to analyze the factors affecting women entrepreneurs in Mandevu Business Centre in Lusaka District. The study was guided by the following specific objectives:

To assess the effect of limited access to finance on the performance of women entrepreneurs in Mandevu Business Centre.

To determine whether the level of education influences the performance of women entrepreneurs in Mandevu Business Centre.

To analyse the effect of poor networking on the performance of women entrepreneurs in Mandevu Business Centre.

Despite rising women entrepreneurship in Zambia, their economic potential is underutilised due to persistent constraints (ILO, 2015). Women entrepreneurs at Mandevu Business Centre struggle with cash, education, and networking, which hurts their business performance and sustainability (Barwa, 2003). Access to credit is a major issue for Mandevu Business Centre women entrepreneurs. Women-owned enterprises are generally seen as high-risk by banks, making it hard to get loans (Gedion, Oyugi, & Munyithya, 2015). Thus, many women use informal lending, which is unpredictable and insufficient for business growth (FSD Zambia, 2021). Insufficient funding hinders women-owned firms from investing in contemporary technologies, expanding operations, and competing successfully (Rahman, Rahman, & Ključnikov, 2016).

Another barrier to women entrepreneurs' success is education. Studies show that educated women make more strategic decisions, handle finances, and expand markets (Seshie-Nasser & Oduro, 2018). Many women in Mandevu Business Centre lack formal education, making them less able to adapt to changing business settings and seize new chances (Jere, 2019). Lack of business training and development programs makes it hard for women entrepreneurs to learn new skills (Mehta et al., 2021). Lack of networking opportunities prohibits women from developing successful business connections. Zambian women entrepreneurs lack market opportunities and mentorship due to cultural barriers (Ozgen & Baron, 2007). Information sharing, commercial alliances, and client acquisition require networking, but women entrepreneurs in Mandevu commercial Centre rarely have the means or platforms (Cesaroni, Pediconi, & Sentuti, 2018). Zambian women require financial empowerment, entrepreneurial knowledge, and strong business networks to overcome these obstacles. This study evaluated these key factors to identify women entrepreneurs' challenges and offer targeted solutions to boost business sustainability and growth.

The study helped us understand and deal with the problems that women business owners in Zambia, especially those who work in the Mandevu Business Centre, face. There is a lot of progress being made by women in business, but they still have issues like not having enough money, not learning enough about business, and not having enough chances to network (FSD Zambia, 2021). Looking into these issues was helpful for the study, which could lead to better policies that help more people get access to money and give businesses more training (Gedion, Oyugi, & Munyithya, 2015). The results showed how important it is for financial programs to take gender into account. They also pushed for different types of financing, such as microcredit and cooperative loan plans, to help businesses owned by women (Rahman, Rahman, & Ključnikov, 2016). What the study also found was that school programs can help women start their own businesses by teaching them the long-term management, money, and

business skills they need (Seshie-Nasser & Oduro, 2018). These steps may have helped women get ahead financially and made the business grow as a whole.

The study also talked about how important it is for women in Zambia to network and have a guide in order to be great business owners. Since of problems in society and culture, many women who owned their own businesses had trouble joining official business networks. It was harder for them to get business knowledge and find new customers since of this (Cesaroni, Pediconi, & Sentuti, 2018). The study found that women business owners should be able to meet with leaders in their fields and people who can help them get customers through structured business groups and mentorship programs (Alam, Jani, & Omar, 2011). By making it easier for people to learn from each other and work together, these programs could help small businesses get the help they need and make businesses run by women more competitive (Ozgen & Baron, 2007). Finally, the study added to the larger conversation about gender and entrepreneurship by giving policymakers, development agencies, and banks in Zambia ideas based on facts about how to help women start their own businesses.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Limited Access to Finance and Women Entrepreneurs' Performance

In poor countries like Zambia, financial restraints are a major challenge for women entrepreneurs. FSD Zambia (2021) reports that many women entrepreneurs use informal finance sources due to stringent lending conditions from conventional banks. For company capital, 68% of Lusaka women entrepreneurs, including those at Mandevu Company Centre, used rotating savings and credit associations (ROSCAs). Rahman, Rahman, and Ključnikov (2016) found that collateral limits hinder women's access to finance, hindering company growth. Traditional banks require collateral, but cultural and systemic gender inequities prevent many women entrepreneurs from owning property (Shaikh, 2020). Due to financial exclusion, women in Mandevu Business Centre struggled to buy goods, market, and hire competent labour to grow their enterprises.

Financial constraints worsen operational inefficiencies and limit competitiveness for women-owned firms. According to Alam, Jani, and Omar (2011), women entrepreneurs in underdeveloped nations struggle to get financing since they are seen as high-risk. The World Bank (2017) found that while financial inclusion in Zambia has improved, just 42% of women have access to formal financial services, compared to 58% of males. This gap leads women to use high-interest informal credit, which hurts their businesses. Lack of financial capital hinders firm investments and growth, according to Bala and Feng (2019). The study found that inadequate reinvestment possibilities prevented women entrepreneurs from scaling their enterprises at Mandevu Business Centre, resulting in significant business mortality.

This gender gap in business funding could be addressed by microfinance and digital lending. Gedion, Oyugi, and Munyithya (2015) discovered that Kenyan microfinance institutions help women-owned enterprises get money, a

model Zambia might adopt. The Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprise Development Policy of Zambia (2008) aims to make it easier for women to get loans to start their own businesses. These steps don't have as much of an effect as they could since of inefficient bureaucracy and a lack of specific financial solutions for women businesses. FSD Zambia (2021) said that programs that teach women about money were very important for helping them understand how the financial system works. So, regulatory changes and financial solutions that work for everyone are needed to help the women businesses at the Mandevu Business Centre do better.

## *2.2 Education and Women Entrepreneurs' Performance*

Education is crucial to women-owned businesses' success and longevity. Many studies have linked education to economic success (Mehta et al., 2021). Women business owners with college degrees are more likely to understand markets, establish solid business plans, and manage money, according to Halkias et al. (2011). At the Mandevu Business Centre, educated women were better at bookkeeping, inventory management, and customer service, which increased profit margins. On the other hand, women with little schooling tended to work informally and make decisions based on their gut feelings, which slowed down long-term growth (Bradley et al., 2012). This fits with what Jere (2019) found, which is that not having a formal education hurts business performance since people who don't know how to be entrepreneurs don't know how to run a business.

It's important to remember that technical and vocational skills can help women be more successful as business owners. Char, Yaso, and Hassan's (2010) research showed that focused training programs make people much smarter about business, especially women who run their own businesses in informal markets. In 2017, the International Labour Organisation (ILO) said that female entrepreneurs need programs that help them learn more about financial management, internet marketing, and supply chain management. Women in Zambia now have the business skills they need to training programs like the Women's Entrepreneurial Access Centre (WEAC) run by the US Embassy (US Embassy Zambia, 2020). Even with these efforts, the study found that 74% of women business owners at the Mandevu Business Centre had never had formal business training. This shows how important it is to make training classes easier for people to access.

Even though education has a big effect on how well a business does, women still can't easily get the business information they need. Cesaroni, Pediconi, and Sentuti (2018) say that traditional gender roles still make it hard for women in many African cultures to go to college and learn how to run a business. This was clear at the Mandevu Business Centre, where most of the female businesspeople said that family duties made it hard for them to go to school. Fischer, Reuber, and Dyke's (1993) study also showed that self-confidence, which is often built through schooling, is a key factor in the success of entrepreneurs. Getting rid of these differences in schooling through targeted policies and training programs is important for making Zambia a better place for women to start

their own businesses. Improving access to education and skill training can make a big difference in how well a business does, which can lead to higher profits and longer-term success.

## *2.3 Poor Networking and Women Entrepreneurs' Performance*

Business success depends on networking, especially for women entrepreneurs who are excluded from traditional business networks (Ewere, Adu, & Ibrahim, 2015). corporate networks improve corporate sustainability in emerging economies by providing access to resources, markets, and knowledge-sharing platforms (Ozgen & Baron, 2007). Women entrepreneurs in Mandevu Business Centre failed to build strong networks due to gendered societal norms and low professional association membership. Imbaya (2012) found that women entrepreneurs relied on informal networks like family and friends, limiting their growth potential. Male entrepreneurs had more business connections, mentorship programs, and supplier networks, giving them an advantage. This systemic exclusion from key commercial links inhibited women's market expansion and sustained business growth. Women entrepreneurs were further isolated and less competitive due to a lack of networking possibilities. According to Orhan and Scott (2001), women entrepreneurs who participated in professional networks were more likely to receive financial support and market links. ILO (2008) found that only 27% of Lusaka women entrepreneurs were members of business associations, underlining the need for networking awareness and access. Ozgen and Baron (2007) noted that business mentorship programs boost entrepreneurial success, especially for women in male-dominated fields. In Mandevu Business Centre, insufficient networking prevented women entrepreneurs from entering new markets, slowing business growth. Policy-driven interventions and mentorship programs must engage women into entrepreneurial ecosystems to address these issues.

For women businesses to have good networking opportunities, they need help from institutions. In 2004, UNECE told governments that to include women in business networks, they should use trade groups, incubator programs, and cooperation between different sectors. The Zambia Federation of Associations of Women in Business (ZFAWB) has helped female entrepreneurs in Zambia through mentoring and improving their skills (World Bank, 2017). Due to problems with funding and awareness, they only reach a few women-owned companies. Women-owned companies at the Mandevu Business Centre could do better with the help of business networks and mentorship programs. Networking tools that are open to both men and women help Zambian women business owners get into new markets, make relationships, and grow in a way that is sustainable.

## **III. MATERIALS AND METHODOLOGY**

### *3.1 Research Approach*

This study combined qualitative and quantitative methodologies to understand Mandevu Business Centre women entrepreneurs' difficulties. The quantitative portion looked for patterns and trends in data, while the qualitative



part examined women entrepreneurs' experiences (Creswell, 2014). Triangulating the results helped ensure the study's validity and reliability (Burns & Grove, 2001). The study found out how women company entrepreneurs struggle with money, education, and networking using both methods (Ajzen, 1991). Combining these methodologies made a thorough analysis easy, ensuring statistical significance and practicality (Sekaran & Bougie, 2010). The mixed-method approach helped interpret the data and supported numerical conclusions with compelling qualitative insights (Neuman, 2006). This strategy proved crucial for understanding how gender issues affect corporate performance (Ewere, Adu, & Ibrahim, 2015). Qualitative interviews revealed women entrepreneurs' issues better than standardised surveys (Adamson et al., 2004). The study used qualitative and quantitative methodologies to expand knowledge of African women's business ownership. Politicians and development organisations received useful advice (ILO, 2017). This method ensured data-driven results that demonstrated the study group's socioeconomic level (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003).

### 3.2 Research Design

An exploratory research method was used to look into the problems that women entrepreneurs at the Mandevu Business Centre were having. Explore research is great for looking into complicated social events that need a deep understanding of what causes them and how they are connected (Sekaran & Bougie, 2010). Neuman (2006) says that a mixed-method technique used both statistical evidence and detailed qualitative accounts. Interviews with women entrepreneurs gave personal details about their experiences, while polls showed problems with money, schooling, and making connections (Alam, Jani & Omar, 2011). This plan allowed for a full analysis that took into account different aspects of being an entrepreneur (Blackden, Bardasi & Guzman, 2007). Policy and corporate support gaps were found through exploratory study (ILO, 2015). Business owners, lawmakers, and financial institutions could all share their thoughts thanks to this design's adaptability (FSD Zambia, 2021). Exploratory study also found new themes that had not been covered in previous research (Cesaroni, Pediconi & Sentuti, 2018). Structured surveys and semi-structured interviews were used to get both big-picture trends and detailed personal accounts of people who have started their own businesses in Mandevu Business Centre (Gedion, Oyugi & Munyithya, 2015).

### 3.3 Data Collection Methods

Both primary and secondary data were used to ensure study reliability and completeness. Primary data came from systematic surveys and semi-structured interactions with women business owners, government officials, and business support groups (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003). Structured polls revealed how major challenges like money and networking are for businesses, while interviews provided additional detail (ILO, 2006). To balance statistical rigour and qualitative richness, the surveys included both open-ended and closed-ended questions (Bradley et al., 2012). Eighty businesswomen, ten Lusaka City Council members, and ten PACRA personnel were questioned (Government of Zambia, 2008). Secondary

data on Zambian women's business ownership came from government papers, scholarly articles, and foreign policy documents (ILO, 2017). Policy papers from the Zambian Ministry of Commerce, Trade, and Industry, World Bank financial reports, and ILO studies were included (FSD Zambia, 2021). Triangulation (using first-hand and second-hand data) improved results (Kothari, 2004). Using multiple sources helped identify trends and corroborate key findings. It also allowed us to analyse macroeconomic aspects and business happenings (Bala & Feng, 2019).

### 3.4 Data Analysis

Both qualitative and quantitative data analysis were used to fully understand the results. Pallert (2007) says that SPSS was used to look for trends, correlations, and regression models in quantitative poll data. In 2016, Rahman, Rahman, and Ključnikov did research that used descriptive data like frequencies and percentages to look at financial barriers, educational levels, and networking possibilities among women business owners. It was also possible to test the effects of financial access and education on business success using inferential statistics (Chin, 1998). The numbers were shown in charts and graphs to make them easier to understand (Price, Stoica & Boncella, 2013). In qualitative interview data (Braun & Clarke, 2006), thematic analysis was used to find problems with being a business. Problems with money, unfair treatment of women, and limited access to markets were written down in records (Halkias et al., 2011). For a more complete analysis of the data, thematic coding combined qualitative and quantitative results. Using a variety of research methods, the study showed the complex link between financial, educational, and networking factors and Zambian women's business ownership (Thurik, Verheul & Van Stel, 2006).

### 3.5 Ethical Considerations

Ethical concerns were prioritised to ensure study ethics and participant rights. Before collecting data, all participants received written permission explaining the study's purpose, hazards, and their participation (Burns & Grove, 2001). Participants' answers were anonymous and data was securely saved to preserve privacy (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003). To ensure study compliance, the University of Zambia Ethics Committee was consulted (ILO, 2008). The study participants could quit at any time without harm (Bradley et al., 2012). To reduce bias and ensure unbiased data collection and analysis, efforts were taken. The study has an open-door policy to hear all entrepreneurial ecosystem viewpoints (ILO, 2017). Researchers observed professional ethics and presented results without bias (Sekaran & Bougie, 2010). Claims were supported by credible sources, keeping data reporting transparent (Ewere, Adu & Ibrahim, 2015). The study used its findings to influence policy reforms that would enable Zambian women entrepreneurs manage their enterprises ethically (ILO, 2015).

## IV. DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

Kombo and Troup (2006) define data analysis as critical evaluation and inference. During and after data collection, data were manipulated. Erratic responses were deleted at this

stage. Several missing data points were fixed. The manual was used to code the edited questions. Before entering the computer, the data was minimized. We established codes for open-ended questions, missing cases, non-response, and not applicable examples. Closed-ended questions were given numerical values based on respondent responses to simplify data entry.

When people fill out the surveys, they send both quantitative and qualitative data to the computer's SPSS software. Once the data was entered, it was cleaned up to make sure that only good data was in the system. After the material was cleaned up, it was analyzed. The data was then put into tables and graphs to make sure the study's findings were in line with its research goals.

Randomly selected 100 persons participated in the survey. Table 4.1 lists ten Lusaka City Council members, 80 female company owners, and 10 PACRA employees. SPSS was used to enter survey quantitative and qualitative data. Data analysis followed. The data was shown in tables and graphs to ensure the study's conclusions met its goals.

TABLE 4.1: Positions of respondents

Respondents	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Women Entrepreneurs	80	80.0	80
Lusaka City Council	10	10.0	90
PACRA	10	10.0	100
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Field data 2025.

The results also indicated that the most 49 (49%) of the respondents were between 20 and 25 years, followed by those who were above 31 to 35 years who were 25 (25%), then those who were 20-25 years were 20 (20%) and between 36-40 years were 6 (6%).

TABLE 4.2: Age of respondents

Age	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
20-25	49	49.0	49
26-30	20	20.0	69.0
31-35	25	25.0	94.0
36-40	6	6	100.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Field data 2025.

The number of females who participated in answering the questionnaires were eighty-four (83) and males were seventeen (17). There were more females than males as indicated in table 4.3.

TABLE 4.3: Gender of respondents

Gender	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Female	83	83.0	83.0
Male	17	17.0	100.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Field data 2025.

The respondents were also asked about their marital status, and their responses were recorded in table 4.4 below. Out of

100 respondents, 69 were married, 11 single, divorced were 4 and 16 widowed.

TABLE 4.4: Marital status of respondents

Status	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Divorced	4	4.0	4
Single	11	11.0	15
Married	69	69.0	84
Widowed	16	16.0	100
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Field data 2025.

In order to find out what the respondents were specialised in based on their advanced degrees, the survey asked them about their qualifications. Table 4.5 shows that most of the respondents (50) had Grade 12 certificates, 28 said they couldn't read or write, 10 had diplomas, 7 had degrees and 5 had master's degrees. This shows that most of the people who answered have at least a Grade 12 certificate. This is different from the past, when more women who weren't educated ran businesses. This means things are getting better for women who want to start their own businesses.

TABLE 4.5: Qualifications of respondents

Qualification	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative
Can't read and write	28	28.0	28
Grade 12	50	50.0	78
Diploma	10	10.0	88
Degree	7	7.0	95
Masters	5	5.0	100.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Field data 2025.

Table 4.6 shows that 20 (20%) of 100 respondents have less than 1 year of business experience. 30 (30%) said they have 1-5 years of business experience, 25 (25%) said 6-10 years. Twenty-five percent of respondents had 11-15 years of company experience, while none had more than 15 years. Most responders have fewer than 1 to 5 years running the firm.

TABLE 4.6: Specialization of respondents

Work experience	Responses		Percent of cases
	N	Percent	
Less than 1 year	20	20.0	20
1-5 years	30	30.0	50
6-10 years	25	25.0	75
11 -15 years	25	25.0	100
Greater than 15 years	0	0	100
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Field data 2025.

#### 4.3.2 To assess the performance of women enterprises in Lusaka

People were asked to list the category or field that their business is in. Based on the data shown in the table below: 57 (71.25%) of those who answered said their business is in the selling category, and 13 (16.25%) said their business is in the production category. The other seven responders (8.75%) said their business was in services, and two (3.75%) said they were into handicrafts. Based on what the respondents said about

their business, it was found that most of the women were in sales, compared to other groups.

TABLE 4.7: What sector is your business in?

Rank	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Trade	57	71.25	71.25
Production	13	16.25	87.5
Services	7	8.75	96.25
Handcraft	2	3.75	100.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Field data 2025.

Table 4.8 shows that 50 (62.5%) of 80 questionnaire respondents claimed their company had fewer than 5 employees. The other 17 (21.25%) reported 6–10 employees. The remaining 13 (16.25%) reported 11–15 employees. No one reported having more than 15 employees.

TABLE 4.8: Number of employees in the enterprise?

Number of employees	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Less than 5	50	62.5	62.5
Between 6 to 10	17	21.25	83.75
Between 11 to 15	13	16.25	100.0
All the above 15	0	0	100.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Field data 2025.

People were asked what their official ownership status of the business was. Seventy (87.5%) said sole ownership, seven (8.75%) said joint ownership, and three (3.75%) said the business was for the family. However, none of the respondents said that the business was a company.

TABLE 4.9: What is the legal ownership status of the establishment?

Rank	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Sole ownership	70	87.5	87.5
Joint ownership	7	8.75	96.25
Family Business	3	3.75	100
Cooperative	0	0	100
<b>Total</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Field data 2025.

About 80 people answered the questionnaire on why they wanted to establish a business. 58 (72.5%) said they started their own income since there was no other option, 14 (17.5%) said it was since they thought it would bring high income, 5 (6.25%) said they wanted to be self-employed, and 3 (3.75%) called it family tradition. As shown in table 4.10, none of the respondents began their own firm since of the legal investment required.

TABLE 4.10: Why did you prefer to start your own business?

Reasons to start own business	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
No other alternative	58	72.5	72.5
Bring more income	14	17.5	90.0
Self-employment	5	6.25	96.25
Family tradition	3.0	3.75	100.0
Investment is low	0	0	100.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Field data 2025.

When people were asked who started the business, 51 (63.75%) said they did it themselves, 12 (15%) said they did it with family, and 17 (21.25%) said they did it with a partner. As shown in Table 4.11, this is the case.

TABLE 4.11: Who initialed and started the business?

Response	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Myself	51	63.75	63.75
With a family	12	15.0	78.75
With a partner	17	21.25	100.0
Others specify	0	0	100.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Field data 2025.

When asked to describe the performance of their business in the last six months of running the enterprise, 59 (73.75%) said it was doing badly, 10 (12.5%) said it was doing fairly, and 11 (13.75%) said it was doing good. However, none of the respondents reported their business was performing severely poorly (table 4.12).

TABLE 4.12: How can you describe the performance of your business in the last 6 months of running your enterprise?

Response	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Good	11	13.75	13.75
Fair	10	12.5	26.25
Bad	59	73.75	100.0
Extremely bad	0	0	100.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Field data 2025.

The question is about a successful man business owner in the family or the market. According to Table 4.13; 43 (53.75%) of respondents agreed that men are doing better in business than women, while 18 (22.5%) disagreed. 14 (17.5%) respondents strongly agreed, and 5 (6.25%) strongly disagreed.

TABLE 4.13: Is there any male in the family or market place who is entrepreneur or owner of some related business activities and is doing well?

Response	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly agree	14	17.5	17.5
Agree	43	53.75	71.25
Strongly disagree	5	6.25	77.5
Disagree	18	22.5	100.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Field data 2025.

According to respondents' opinions on why men-owned businesses perform better than women-owned businesses, 59 (73.75%) said loans are given to male entrepreneurs, 11 (13.75%) said women do not have tangible collateral like cars, houses, etc., 7 (8.75%) said women are weak in business, and 3 (3.75%) said men are hard-working.

TABLE 4.14: If agreed to the above statement, in your opinion what is the reasons?

Response	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Loans are given to Male entrepreneurs than women	59	73.75	73.75
women do not have tangible collateral such as cars, house etc	11	13.75	87.5
women are considered to be weak in terms of doing business	7	8.75	96.25
Men are hardworking	3	3.75	100.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Field data 2025.

It was looked at where the money for women-owned businesses came from. It was found that 64 (80%) said they got their money from personal savings and 16 (20%) said they got their money from their family. Table 4.15 shows that none of the respondents said they had any other sources of income.

TABLE 4.15: What was your main source of start-up funding?

Respondents	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Personal savings	64	80.0	80.0
Household	16	20.0	20.0
Borrowed from friends	0	0.0	100.0
Micro finance loan	0	0.0	100.0
NGOs	0	0	100.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Field data 2025.

#### 4.4 The Factors Affecting the Performance of Women Entrepreneurship in Lusaka DISTRICT

4.4.1 Key Informants Ten Lusaka City Council personnel and Ten PACRA officers were interviewed about the primary elements that affect women entrepreneurs' performance in MSEs. Each aspect was rated from 1 to 5, with 1 being the lowest and 5 being the highest. The results were in table 4.16.

TABLE 4.16 Economic Factors

Item Agreement	Scale					remark
15 social factors	1	2	3	4	5	
15.1 Business in DISTRICT have no conflicting gender roles	3	0	0	0	17	Out of 20 officers indicated that business in the Lusaka district is affected by gender conflicts
15.2 Business and access to micro finance is not affected by gender inequalities	0	0	0	20	0	All the 20 officers indicated that access to Micro finance in Lusaka district is affected by gender inequalities
15.3 Performance of women business has a lot of cultural influences	3	0	14	2	1	14 out of the 20 officers who attended the interviews indicated that culture has influence on the performance of business.
15.4 Women have encounter harassments in registering and operating business in Lusaka.	18	0	2	0	0	Out of 20 officers, 18 disagreed that women face difficulties in running and registering their business.

The response on performance of women owned enterprises from key Informants, each of the factors, was evaluated on a

scale of 1 to 5 and 1 being the lowest and 5 the highest. This is reflected in table 4.17 below.

TABLE 4.17: performance of women owned enterprise

Response on Performance of women owned enterprise			Scale			remark
1	2	3	4	5		
16.1 I am satisfied with the financial access given by micro finances and other lending institutions.	0	1	0	16	3	Majority of Officers were not satisfied
16.2 Women have access to market for their products	7	13	0	0	0	Majority of Officers rated the statement fair
16.3 Women have access to different business trainings	0	0	20	0	0	Majority of Officers rated this statement with fair
16.4 women have their own premises (land) to run my business	9	0	0	0	11	Majority of officers disagreed to this statement
16.5 Women have access to information to exploit business Opportunities	6	7	0	7	0	The was a natural balance in terms of response, officers rating was neither bad nor good
16.6 Women have managerial skills	2	0	0	0	18	Majority of officers disagreed to the statement
16.7 Women have access to necessary technologies	3	17	0	0	0	Majority of officers agreed to this statement
16.8 There is no stiff competitions in the market place	0	0	0	0	20	Majority of officers disagreed to the statement
16.9 Adequate infrastructures are available for women in business	14	3	0	3	0	Majority of officers agreed to the statement
16.10 women in business have access to necessary inputs (raw materials)	0	0	0	0	20	Majority of officers disagreed to the statement

The study's results show that most of the Lusaka City Council and PACRA officers who were asked said that women-owned businesses need to be upgraded and treated fairly in order to do better. The economic and performance scores show that women-owned businesses have had to deal with big problems that need quick solutions, like making sure they keep learning how to run a business and getting the same access to funding as men-owned businesses. This is good for the performance of businesses run by women. The study also found that many things have an effect on women-owned businesses, such as access to raw materials, tough competition, infrastructure, technology availability, gender inequality, and more. These things make it harder for businesses, especially new ones, to do well.

#### V. DISCUSSION AND INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS

##### 5.1 Demographic Characteristics of Women Entrepreneurs

The study found that 49% of Respondents were 20–25 years old. Previous research have shown that younger women become businesses due to limited work opportunities (FSD Zambia, 2021; Shaikh, 2020). Most respondents were married, with a small number divorced, demonstrating how family obligations might influence business decisions (Cesaroni,



Pediconi & Sentuti, 2018). 50% had Grade 12 credentials, whereas 28% were illiterate. As prior study has shown, formal education improves business management skills but does not guarantee entrepreneurial success (Seshie-Nasser & Oduro, 2018). The findings suggest that Mandevu Business Centre women entrepreneurs need specific business training. The study also found that most women entrepreneurs in Mandevu company Centre had fewer than five years of company experience and 25% had more than ten. According to Bala and Feng (2019), women-led enterprises in underdeveloped nations generally struggle with sustainability beyond five years. Lack of long-term business experience suggests financial management, market adaption, and economic shock resistance vulnerabilities. According to Rahman, Rahman & Ključnikov (2016), 70% of businesses were sole proprietorships, indicating that women often operate independently due to limited partnerships and networking opportunities. Policy interventions and capacity-building initiatives are needed to address these systemic challenges.

### *5.2 The Effect of Limited Access to Finance on Business Performance*

The study pointed out that one of the biggest problems is that women businesses have a hard time getting money. The findings showed that 69% of those who answered had trouble getting business loans, which made it much harder for them to grow. These results support the idea that women-owned businesses in Africa are often unable to get loans since they don't have enough security or aren't seen as creditworthy (Blackden, Bardasi & Guzman, 2007). The study also found that men got loans more often than women, which adds to the fact that women and men have different access to money (ILO, 2017). Since of this inequality, women can't invest in new technology, hire skilled workers, or make more products. Respondents often used alternative sources of funding, like savings and informal loans, but these weren't enough to keep growth going in the long term. When women entrepreneurs use informal financing, they have to deal with high interest rates and unstable loan terms, which makes their businesses less profitable (FSD Zambia, 2021). The results show that formal financial institutions should make lending policies that take gender into account so that women-owned businesses can get credit in a fair way. Also, programs that teach women about money should be pushed so that women can manage their money well and look into good investment choices.

### *5.3 Influence of Education on Business Performance*

Higher-educated women had superior financial management and growth strategies, according to the study. According to Alam, Jani, and Omar (2011), respondents with tertiary education had better revenue margins than those with primary or secondary education. Education helped entrepreneurs grasp market dynamics, client preferences, and financial management, which helped them grow and stabilise their businesses. However, many responders lacked formal education, making record-keeping, digital marketing, and financial resources difficult. Mehta et al. (2021) found that insufficient education prevents women entrepreneurs from using technology to improve business efficiency. These

findings highlight the need for business literacy, financial planning, and digital skills training to close the educational gap and boost entrepreneurial success.

### *5.4 The Impact of Poor Networking on Women's Business Growth*

Networking was very important for the women who ran companies in the Mandevu Business Centre. About 52% of the people who answered the survey didn't have good business networks. This meant it was harder for them to find market chances, mentors, and people to invest with. Another study from 2020 by Shakeel, Yaokuang, and Gohar shows that women business owners who don't network well can't grow their companies, especially in male-dominated fields. People who don't have strong professional networks can't get as much access to strategic partnerships, supply lines, and places to share knowledge. People said that the lack of networking opportunities was due to cultural differences and time constraints caused by family responsibilities. Cesaroni, Pediconi, and Sentuti (2018) discovered that women business owners often have trouble balancing work and family life. This makes it harder for them to go to events and meetings for their field. To fix these issues, we need training programs, business groups, and online places where women business owners can connect and share information.

again.

## **VI. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### *6.1 Conclusion*

The poll indicated that Mandevu Business Centre women entrepreneurs face financial, educational, and networking challenges. Finance hindered company growth and sustainability. Women with higher education excel at financial management and strategic planning, which boosts corporate performance, according to research. Weak professional networks exacerbated company issues, limiting market access and investment. The study showed that women entrepreneurs, who relied on personal resources and informal finance, were resilient despite these challenges. Long-term sustainability requires systematic interventions. The findings emphasise the need for inclusive finance policy, skill development, and mentorship for Zambian women entrepreneurs. Addressing these issues comprehensively will empower women economically and boost their participation in national development.

### *6.2 Recommendations*

Based on the study's findings, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. **Enhancing Access to Finance:** Financial institutions should offer flexible loan products for women business owners, such as loans with lower interest rates and fewer security requirements (Rahman, Rahman & Ključnikov, 2016). Also, government-backed credit guarantee programs should be made bigger to make it easier for people to get money.
2. **Improving Entrepreneurial Training and Education:** Financial literacy, business management, and digital skills



capacity-building programmes should overcome educational gaps (Alam, Jani & Omar, 2011). Community-based training should be available to women of all educational levels.

3. Strengthening Networking and Mentorship Programs: To improve knowledge-sharing and market connections, women entrepreneurs should be included in business groups and mentoring programs (Shakeel, Yaokuang & Gohar, 2020). Digital networking tools can also help people meet for business purposes.
4. Addressing Socio-Cultural Barriers: Awareness programs could combat gender biases in entrepreneurship and support women in company leadership (Cesaroni, Pediconi & Sentuti, 2018). Policymakers should promote equal finance, training, and market access.
5. Monitoring and Evaluation: Monitoring systems should be set up by government agencies and business development groups to see how entrepreneurship programs are working and to make sure that women-owned businesses always get help (FSD Zambia, 2021).

Women business owners in Zambia will have better chances to deal with problems, grow their companies, and make a big difference in economic and social progress if they follow these suggestions.

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