

**FACTORS THAT CONTRIBUTE TO THE SUSTAINABILITY OF WOMEN  
ENTREPRENEURS IN THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY IN CAPRICORN  
DISTRICT, LIMPOPO PROVINCE**

by

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## **DEDICATION**

This mini-dissertation is dedicated to two men who were very dear to me and have left footprints in my heart.

- My late father, Mr Modikeng Emmanuel Motsei who passed away in 2018/06/14. Your teachings and guidance and love will forever stay with me. Continue to rest in peace.
- Dr Nthambeleni Kaini Phalanndwa who passed away in 2020/07/21. Your love for education was very evident and has encouraged me to go for my second Master's degree. You served as reference that whatever one dreams can be achieved. You wholeheartedly adopted me as your son in law and became my motivator and cheerleader. I will forever remember you. May his soul rest in eternal peace.

## **DECLARATION**

I, Mpho Solomon Motsei, declare that “Factors that contribute to the sustainability of women entrepreneurs in the construction industry in Capricorn District, Limpopo Province” is my own work in design and execution and that all material referenced in this mini-dissertation has been acknowledged duly. I additionally declare that this work has not been submitted before for a degree to this, or any other university.

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**Mpho Solomon Motsei**

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**Date**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Statistics from European region and sub-Saharan African countries, including South Africa, indicate that the construction industry is distinctly dominated by males and that women representation is very low. Literature indicates that gender-based discrimination, harsh work environment, insufficient knowledge about the construction industry and the shortage of women who are successful in construction are some of the barriers that discourage women from entering the industry. Therefore, this study focussed on the examination of the factors that contribute to the sustainability, or lack there-of women who are already in the construction industry. This study sought to find out how the women entrepreneurs who are in the industry of construction sustain themselves regardless of the many challenges they face. The study applied qualitative design and used of an interview guide as a tool for collecting data in semi-structured interviews with women entrepreneurs in the Capricorn district of Limpopo Province.

Data was analysed using the thematic content analysis method. The discovery was that women entrepreneurs tend to give away tenders to male counterparts in order for them to do the actual work. The giving away of contracts in turn builds the experience of their male counterparts and their businesses which contributes to the women not being able to have confidence and be sustainable in the construction industry. Women entrepreneurs who managed to sustain themselves in the industry for longer periods attribute their sustainability on hiring the right people with the right skills and qualifications. These women entrepreneurs recommend that support programmes should be made available and accessible to women in the industry as well as those who are entering so that they do not fall into the trap of giving away or surrendering contracts. This study recommends that new women entrants into the industry should be mentored by women entrepreneurs who are actually doing the job to ensure their sustainability in the industry. It also recommends that the existing structures be more visible and to strengthen their support of these women.

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## ACRONYMS

|          |   |
|----------|---|
| BEE      | Black Economic Empowerment  |
| BBBEE    | Broad Based Black Economic Empowerment  |
| CC       | Competition Commission  |
| CIDB     | Construction Industry Development Board   |
| CoGHSTA  | Department of Cooperative Governance, Human Settlements and Traditional Affairs |
| DSBD     | Department of Small Business Development  |
| DTI      | Department of Trade and Industry  |
| EBC      | European Builders Confederation   |
| FIEC     | European Construction Industry Federation                                       |
| FIFA     | Federation Internationale de Football Association                               |
| GDP      | Gross Domestic Product  |
| GIBS     | Gordon Institute of Business Science  |
| IDC      | Industrial Development Corporations   |
| KNUST    | Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology                              |
| NHBRC    | National Home Builders Registration Council                                     |
| NSBA     | National Small Business Act   |
| NSBAC    | National Small Business Advisory Council  |
| NSDC     | National Skill Development Corporation  |
| PDIs     | Previously Disadvantaged Individuals  |
| POI      | Previously Disadvantaged Individuals  |
| RDP      | Rural Development Project   |
| SA       | South Africa  |
| SAWEN    | South African Women Entrepreneurs' Network                                      |
| SAWIC    | South African Women in Construction   |
| SEDA     | Small Enterprise Development Agency   |
| SEFA     | Small Enterprise Finance Agency   |
| SMME     | Small, Medium and Micro Enterprises   |
| Stats SA | Statistics South Africa   |

|       |   |
|-------|---|
| TVET  | Technical and Vocational Education and Training |
| UK    | United Kingdom                                  |
| USA   | United States of America                        |
| WBHO  | Wilson Bayly Holmes Ovcon                       |
| WiEBE | Women in Engineering and Built Environment      |
| WEC   | Women Empowerment Council                       |

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# **CHAPTER 1**

## **INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY**

### **1.1. INTRODUCTION**

This study was designed to explore factors that contribute to the sustainability of women entrepreneurs in the construction industry in Capricorn district, Limpopo Province. The overview or the background of the study is presented in the chapter. The chapter also outlines the problem statement, rationale, significance as well as aim and objectives of the study. Lastly, operational concepts that underpins the study are defined.

### **1.2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

In South Africa the industry of construction has been identified as one of the main contributors to the country's economy. Billions of rand are invested towards construction projects every year. Figures published in 2015 reveal that the country was investing an estimated R1.4 trillion into infrastructure projects (Construction Industry Development Board, 2015). What was also noted was that the public sector spending was increasing in accord with the implementation of the National Infrastructure Plan (Construction Industry Development Board, 2015). The lucrative nature of the construction industry in South Africa could also be seen through statistics released in 2014 by Statistics South Africa (Statistics South Africa, 2014). It showed the total income for the years 2012, 2013 and 2014 was R15.68 billion, R16.48bn and R15.42 billion respectively (Statistics South Africa, 2014). In 2016, the Construction Monitor Report by the Construction Industry Development Board (CIDB) revealed that the amount spent on construction works was estimated at 305 billion in Rands 2016 (or 420 billion in nominal Rands) (CIDB, 2016).

The construction industry has also been identified as one of the main employers in the country. Statistics show that the sector employed close to 1.5 million people during the last quarter of 2016. Furthermore, the sector had employed close to 1.4 million people by the end of the second quarter of 2017 (Statistics South Africa, 2016 & 2017). These figures are a clear indication of the crucial role that the industry is playing not only towards the growth of the country's economy, but also in assisting government in the creation of much needed employment opportunities. Despite this, recent study findings reveal that the industry is still

characterised by gender disparities with the number of women constructors remaining disturbingly low (Madikizela and Haupt, 2010). These findings by Madikizela and Haupt (2010) are congruent with those of earlier findings by Borch (2011) who found that the industry remains largely closed to women entrepreneurs. Women's inability and/or reluctance to participate in the construction industry is attributed to a cocktail of factors (Madikizela and Haupt, 2010). Madikizela and Haupt (2010) identified several factors that dishearten women from electing careers in the construction industry. These factors include, discrimination against women, cruel work environment, insufficient knowledge about the industry and the scarcity of women role models within the industry. Another challenge is that the industry remains male-dominated. In South Africa the low participation of women entrepreneurs in the construction industry is still witnessed, despite the fact that there are legislations that support the participation of women in the mainstream economy of the country.

Women entrepreneurs in construction are still viewed with scepticism despite the fact that they make the leap into the traditionally male entrepreneurial venture (Borch, 2011). In the construction industry physical strength is deemed as a basic requirement due to the nature of the activities that are involved in construction (Vanags, Begec and Zarina, 2015). Bowen, Edwards, Lingard and Cattel (2014) are of the view that the level of physical strength that is required in the construction industry makes it harder for majority of individuals to participate regardless of gender. The circumstances in this industry are worse for women who are viewed as the weaker gender by society and this makes it even more burdensome for them to be accepted in this industry (Bowen, Edwards, Lingards & Cattel, 2014).

Section 22 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996) and the Employment Equity Act (1998) have provisions for women to be employed and advanced in all sectors of the economy. The National Small Business Act (1996) also layout a guideline for organs of the state to promote and support small businesses, and for measures to related matters. The same Act lays out the process for the establishment of the National Small Business Advisory Council (NSBAC) and Small Enterprise Development Agency (SEDA). On one hand, NSBAC's core business is to act for and promote the interest of small businesses in the country, as envisioned in the National strategy for the development and promotion of Small, Medium and Micro Enterprises (SMMEs). SEDA on the other hand is mandated for strengthening policies in support of small businesses to enhance competitiveness and sustainability, and for establishing

and implementing development support projects that enhances the creation of jobs, entrepreneurship and growth of the economy (Erasmus et al., 2017).

### **1.3. PROBLEM STATEMENT**

Despite the legislations and support initiatives available for SMMEs in South Africa, particularly those owned by women, women still find it difficult to navigate their way in certain industries, and the construction industry is one such an industry. This research was undertaken against this background, to explore the factors that contribute to the sustainability of women entrepreneurs in the building construction industry in the Capricorn District of the Limpopo Province.

### **1.4. RATIONALE OF THE STUDY**

The current study is influenced by the fact that despite all the outcry about women empowerment the world over, and all the agreements entered into to advance the plight of women, they (women) are still invisible in some industries. The industry of construction is one of those industries that seem to have fewer women participating in it. Therefore, an exploration of the factors that contribute to the sustainability of women in this industry may help towards the achievement of women development and support. The rationale of the study is to explore factors that contribute to sustainability of women in the industry of construction, explore reasons for low participation of women entrepreneurs in the construction industry and determining the challenges facing women entrepreneurs in the industry, particularly the building construction industry

A similar study that was conducted in Gauteng Province by Chinomona and Maziriri (2015) indicated that there are several challenges that women entrepreneurs face in the construction industry. Those include lack or unattainable finance, gender discrimination, as well as insufficient education and training in the field of construction (Chinomona and Maziriri, 2015). Accordingly, it is paramount to conduct this type of study in Limpopo province because this province is relatively poor and the challenges of the women in Gauteng province, may not necessarily be the same as the challenges faced by women in Limpopo Province.

## **1.5. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

Findings of the study are expected to assist with gaining insight into the challenges that women face and come up with mechanisms to inspire women to participate in the construction industry, thereby contributing to academic knowledge in this area of interest. It is also envisaged that the following parties may benefit from the study:

- women entrepreneurs who are in the construction industry, including especially those who aspire to enter the industry, in that knowing the challenges will help them prepare themselves and come up with mechanisms of dealing with those challenges;
- the Department of Cooperative Governance, Human Settlements and Traditional Affairs (CoGHSTA) in their support policies and agenda for women empowerment and development especially in the construction industry;
- the National Home Builders Registration Council (NHBRC) Limpopo branch, and perhaps also nationally, as they will be able to develop women support programmes that are informed by research information;
- the Small Enterprise Development Agency (SEDA), also in their women empowerment endeavours; as well as
- any other party who might have interest in women development, particularly in the construction industry.

## **1.6. AIM OF THE STUDY**

The main aim of the study is to explore the factors that contribute to the sustainability of women entrepreneurs in the construction industry in the Capricorn District of Limpopo Province.

## **1.7. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The study is underpinned by specific research objectives listed hereunder:

- To explore reasons for low participation of women entrepreneurs in the construction industry.
- To determine the challenges facing women entrepreneurs in the construction industry.
- To identify success factors that help women entrepreneurs in the construction industry
- To investigate whether women have the requisite skills and experience to enter the construction industry and stay there.

## **1.8. RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The direction of this study was guided by the following research questions:

- What are the reasons for the low participation of women entrepreneurs in the construction industry?
- What are the challenges facing women entrepreneurs in the construction industry?
- What are the success factors that help to sustain women entrepreneurs in the construction industry?
- Do women have the requisite skills and experience to enter the construction industry and stay there?

## **1.9. DEFINITION OF CONCEPTS**

For the purpose of this study, the following concepts are used with the meaning as explained hereunder:

- **Entrepreneurship:** An Entrepreneur is someone who shifts economic resources out of an area of low productivity into an area of higher productivity and greater yield (Herrington *et al.*, 2010). Entrepreneurship is the process of creating and building something of value from practically nothing in the midst of uncertainty and risk, and having the determination to succeed against all odds (Erasmus *et al.*, 2017).
- **Construction Industry:** The term ‘Construction’ covers a wide range of activities, which includes building and civil engineering works. Activities such as installing floors, roofing, water drilling, sandblasting and painting falls within the construction industry (Vanags, Begec and Zarina, 2015).

## **1.10. OUTLINE OF THE MINI-DISSERTATION**

The current study is structured in the following manner:

- Chapter 1 covers an introduction of the study. It encompasses the background and the significance of the study, objectives, the statement of the research problem, research questions and definitions of operational concepts.
- Chapter 2 outlines the literature review related to the topic and scholarly views relating to women in construction.
- Chapter 3 presents a detailed research methodology employed in the study. It covers the nature of the method followed in conducting the study, research design, population and

research area, sampling procedure, data collection and analysis. Ethical considerations that were observed during the study are also presented in this chapter.

- Chapter 4 covers the description and discussion of the results of the study.
- Chapter 5 synthesises the findings in the form of a consolidated general discussion and conclusions. It also covers recommendations for future researchers.
- The references used and crucial appendices are included at the end of this research report.

### **1.11. SUMMARY**

This chapter consist of a background to the study, which gives the reader an overview of the current state of the subject under investigation. It also covers the following aspects: statement of the problem that necessitated the carrying out of the study; motivation and the significance of the study as well as the objectives that the study aims to achieve. The chapter further covers the definitions of key concepts relating to the study. The next chapter deals with the review literature.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1. INTRODUCTION**

This study was designed to explore factors that contribute to the sustainability of women entrepreneurs in the construction industry in Capricorn District of Limpopo Province. In this chapter the existing literature that relate to the subject under investigation is reviewed. Topics reviewed include amongst others: the contribution of the construction industry into the country's economy; participation of women in the construction industry; relevant legislations; the involvement of women in the construction industry as well as challenges confronting women in the construction industry.

#### **2.2. CONTRIBUTION OF THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY TO THE ECONOMY**

Construction sector has been identified as one of the largest industrial employers in the world. Statistics show that the industry currently constitutes about seven per cent of total world employment and twenty eight percent of industrial employment. It is also projected that that the construction spending of the global market is expected to be an estimated 14 trillion U.S. dollars by 2025 (Patel and Pitroda, 2016).

In South Africa, the country's construction industry has also been identified amongst others as the main contributor to the economy of the country over the past decade. According to Statistics South Africa (2011), construction is one industry that continues provide sustainable growth and development to the economy of the country. The construction industry managed to increase its GDP contribution by 8.4 % in 2009. According to Stats SA Report (2011), the GDP of the country expanded by 3.2 percent in the first quarter of 2011, of that 3.2 percent, the construction industry contributed 1.2 percent. In the fourth quarter of 2011, the industry was notably one of the performers expanding by R6 billion from R34 billion. According to Stats SA Report (2014), in the composition of the South African Business world in terms of sector contribution to the gross domestic product (GDP), construction contributed 4 percent to the GDP. It also revealed that the country continue to invest a lot of money into the construction sector. In 2015 it was reported that the country was investing about R1.4 trillion in infrastructure projects. Over and above that, it was noted that the public sector spending was increasing in line with the

implementation of the National Infrastructure Plan (CIDB, 2015). This increase in public sector spending could be attributed mainly to the country's hosting of the 2010 FIFA World Cup, for which the construction industry was very instrumental. For instance, statistics reveal that the industry created employment for 430 000 people in the third quarter of 2009 (Stats SA, 2010). Furthermore, a report that was prepared for FIFA Council in 2009 by Rutter (2010), revealed that about 2 143 jobs were created during the construction of the Green Point Stadium in Cape Town while about 1 179 artisans benefitted by undergoing a training. This impact was in the Western Cape Province alone, this means that more numbers were employed in other provinces during that time when the stadiums were built. This includes Limpopo Province where the new Peter Mokaba stadium was built.

The lucrativeness of the industry could be seen in statistics released in 2014 by Stats SA (2014), which show the total income for the year 2012, 2013 and 2014 respectively. According to the figures, the total income for 2012 was estimated at R15.68 billion. The figures increased by close to a billion rand to an estimated R16.48bn in 2013. These figures slightly decreased in 2014 to an estimated R15.42bn. In 2016, the Construction Monitor Report by the Construction Industry Development Board revealed that the total amount spent on construction works was estimated at R305 billion in 2010 (or R420 billion in nominal Rands) (CIDB, 2016). These figures are a clear indication of the crucial role that the industry is playing not only towards the growth of the country's economy, but also assisting government in the creation of employment opportunities which are much needed. In terms of the employment trend, the construction industry has been identified as one of the main employers in the country. For instance, the sector employed close to 1.5 million people during the last quarter of 2016. In addition, the sector had employed close to 1.4 million people by the end of the second quarter of 2017 (Stats SA 2016 & 2017).

**2.3. ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND SMMEs CONTRIBUTION OF TO THE ECONOMY**

It is important to comprehend the concept of entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurship is defined as the act of initiating, creating, building, expanding, and sustaining a venture, building an entrepreneurial team, and gathering the necessary resources to exploit an opportunity in the market place for long-term wealth and capital gain. Miskin and Rose (2015) define entrepreneurs as the inventors of an innovative economic organisation for the purpose of gain and growth under conditions of risk and uncertainty. Women entrepreneurs have become

important role players in the landscape of the entrepreneurship. According to Iyiola and Azuh (2014), a woman entrepreneur is a woman who plays a captivating part by repeatedly interacting and keenly adjusting herself with financial, socio-economic and support spheres in society. In addition, Manerkar (2015) defines a woman entrepreneur as a woman who initiates, organises and operates a business entity. In other words, women entrepreneurs are women who start, own, manage, operate and bear the risks in their businesses.

Entrepreneurship also refers to the capacity of entrepreneurs collectively, who accept the risks involved in providing products and services for their society. An Entrepreneur shifts economic resources out of an area of low productivity into an area of higher productivity and greater yield (Herrington, Kew and Kew, 2010). Entrepreneurs take the risk of providing knowledge and capital in setting up a business with the expectation of being rewarded with significant profits if they are successful.

Entrepreneurs contribute greatly to the creation of employment in the country. Those with talents and skills for entrepreneurship and an entrepreneurial orientation are able to achieve more than others. They are able to mobilise productive resources by starting enterprises that will grow. They comprise a resource that contributes greatly to the production of products and services. They activate the creation of opportunities for employment (Erasmus *et al.*, 2017). Entrepreneurs contribute significantly in especially the SMME sector in any country. SMMEs play an important part in the economic growth of countries, particularly the developing economies (Muller, Gagliardi, Caliandro, Bohn & Klitou, 2014; Chowdhury, 2011). Small and Medium companies are credited for creating real growth in gross domestic product (GDP) growth, employment creation and reduction of poverty in some of these developing countries. Narteh (2013) argues that this part is particularly visible in developing economies, where there are comparably a fewer number of large corporations. The consequence is that SMMEs often lead to a larger impact of these economic units on the socio-economic development through reduced poverty and balanced income distribution. For instance, Karadag (2016) notes that SMMEs in emerging economies such as Brazil, India and Russia have showed remarkable performances in recent years. In particular, SMMEs in both India and Brazil have led to the growth in employment and enterprise numbers. For instance, statistics reveal that the value added of Brazilian SMMEs increased by an incredible 40% between 2009 and 2010 (Karadag, 2016).

According to Roland (2018) revealed that SMMEs do not contribute towards the economic growth of developing countries only, but developed countries also rely heavily on them for their economic growth as it will be shown below. For instance, the United Kingdom (UK) has been termed the nation of SMMEs because of the number of SMMEs operating in that country. According to Roland (2018), SMMEs accounted for about 99.9% of all private sector businesses at the start of 2017. There were about 5.6 million small businesses operating in the UK at the start of 2018. These businesses contributed a combined total of £16.3 million or 60% of all private sector employment in the UK with a combined annual turnover of £2.0 trillion. This turnover contributed about 52% of all private sector turnover.

Japan is another developed country where SMMEs are regarded to be the key drivers of the growth of the economy of the country, particularly with regard to its technological development. SMMEs in Japan have, over the years contributed towards a stable development of its national economy and revitalisation of the society which enjoys free competitions (Wignaraja, 2015). As with the United States of America (USA), SMMEs operating in Japan account for about 99% of all private sector business and provide about 70 percent of the country's total employment (Economist Intelligence Unit, 2010). The small and medium enterprises respectively appointed approximately 11.27 million and 22.34 million Japanese while according to Wignaraja (2015), these companies contribute about 50% of the country's national Growth Domestic Product. The small enterprises employed about 33 million Japanese while the medium-sized enterprises contributed about 80 trillion Yen into the country's GDP (Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry, 2016). These figures are a clear indication that SMMEs play a pivotal part in both creation of employment and growth of the economy regardless of the country they operate in.

In Malaysia, SMMEs have also been found to play a critical part in its growth economically. Apart from providing job opportunities to the country's citizenry, SMMEs contribute to the establishment of big and multinational corporations as noted by Aman, Tahir, Majid, Aziz and Rahmaiti (2011). Furthermore, SMMEs delivered about 59.5% of total employment and contributed about 28.4% to the exports of the country in 2010. It is also estimated that the country's SMMEs will signify about 97.3% of the country's total business establishments and will contribute about 33.1% of the GDP of the country.

In South Africa, SMMEs have been playing a pivotal role in the creation of job opportunities in a country that has witnessed high unemployment rates in recent years (Malefane, 2013). The development of SMMEs has the potential to aid in the lowering of the unemployment rates and “address the demographic challenges caused by rapid population growth” (Malefane, 2013). According to Sibanda (2013), South Africa’s SMMEs contribute an estimated 45% to the country’s growth domestic product (GDP). This contribution indicates that SMMEs are an important segment of the macro-economic growth in the developing world. Due to the fact that the success of SMMEs is undeniably dependent upon the capabilities of the owner than is the case with larger enterprises, it is paramount to develop competencies among entrepreneurs to give SMMEs a sustainable competitive advantage (Mitchelmore and Rowley, 2013).

## **2.4 SKILLS REQUIRED TO RUN SMMEs EFFECTIVELY**

Several studies, such as studies by Nkosi, Bounds and Goldman (2013) and Mamabolo, Kerrin and Kele (2017) have been conducted to determine the skills required to effectively run SMMEs. There is concurrence amongst researchers that financial management skills, marketing skills and general management skills are critical in ensuring that SMMEs operate in a profitable and sustainable manner (Mamabolo *et al.*, 2017). Mamabolo *et al.* (2017) justify why owners of SMMEs need to possess the above-mentioned. Firstly, they contend that business management skills such as, problem solving, decision-making, planning and strategic competence are key for the running of the business effectively on a day-to-day basis. Secondly, they argue that financial management skills such interpretation of financial statements and cash flow management will ensure that owners manage capital efficiently and effectively, so as to accomplish the financial obligations of the business. These views are congruent with those of Burgess (2007) who argues that good financial skills ensure that owners are able to use the information at their disposal to predict and plan their costs and income. Furthermore, owners with financial skills are more likely to make sound decisions that will increase profitability and satisfy their customers’ needs. On the other hand, marketing skills such as market research and benchmarking competition will ensure clear communication of company’s tangibles and service products to its customers. Lastly, human resource management skills such as recruitment and performance management will equip SMMEs’ owners with the ability to manage their employees and businesses (Mamabolo *et al.*, 2017). In addition to the above skills, Brière, Tremblay and Daou (2014) argue that South African entrepreneurs further needs three types of support. These include, human, financial and social capital.

## **2.5. PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY: INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE**

This sub heading will be discussed in terms of women's participation in European countries, the East Asian region, and African countries, as well as their participation in the construction industry particularly in the South African perspective.

### **2.5.1. The participation of women in Construction Industry in European Countries**

The European Builders Confederation (EBC) research findings identified the construction industry as one of the top industries in most countries (EBC, 2016). In Europe, the European Construction Industry Federation (FIEC) reveals that in 2015 the construction sector had employed just over 14.1 million workers. This accounted for 6.5% of the region's total employment (FIEC, 2015). However, of the 14 million workers, only 1.5 million were women which constitute only 10.71% of the total construction workforce (EBC, 2016). These figures, which show the under-representation of women in this sector, are consistent with those earlier released by Labour Statistic (cited in Aulin & Jingmond, 2011).

The situation seems to be consistent with those of individual countries. For instance, in the United Kingdom figures reveal that women account for about 49.5% of the country's total workforce with over 11 million women employees. Despite constituting about half of the country's workforce, women continue to be grossly under-represented in the industry of construction. Women make-up only 13% of the industry's workforce (Fielden, Davidson, Gale & Davey, 2010). In Austria and Germany, statistics reveal that the countries had 13.5% and 12% of women who participate actively respectively in this sector. Greece, Malta and Portugal have been found to have the lowest numbers of women who are participating in the construction industry amongst the European countries. The figures show that Malta had only 4.3% of women participating in the industry while Greece had the lowest women involvement at 2% (Jimoh, Oyewobi, Adamu and Bajere, 2016).

### **2.5.2. Participation of women in Construction Industry in the East Asian Region**

In Australia, the industry has been identified as the third largest industry. According to the Government Department of Employment, in 2015 the industry had employed just over one million construction workers. This accounted for about 9.1% of the country's total employment (Australian Government Department of Employment, 2016). Nonetheless, the industry remains

male-dominated, with women workers only making up 11% of the industry's workforce (Australian Government Department of Employment, 2016).

In India, research findings on women's involvement reveal that the industry remains male-dominated (Jimoh, Oyewobi, Adamu and Bajere, 2016). The findings reveal that while men occupy top and strategic positions within the industry, women's representation in every aspect of the construction profession and the jobs involved remains low (Jimoh *et al.*, 2016). The status quo remains, despite many countries around the world advocating for women to actively participate in businesses either as leaders or owners of such businesses (Cilliers and Strydom, 2016). Instead, their participation is mostly limited to unskilled and low-paying jobs. For instance, Patel and Pitroda (2016) found that in India the majority of women in the construction industry worked as unskilled labour. This is despite the fact that women constituted an estimated 30 per cent of the industry's workforce. These findings confirm those of Herrington, Kew and Kew (2012) who found that while men are mostly tasked with managing projects, women's daily duties involve carrying cement, sand, water, bricks, digging earth, mixing cement and breaking stone.

### **2.5.3. Participation of women in Construction Industry in African countries**

Research findings coming from the African Continent are consistent with other regions regarding the under-representation of women in the construction industry. The participation of women in the construction industry in most African countries remain very low. This is regardless of the fact that many of the African countries have since implemented programmes geared at empowering women. The figures coming out from Nigeria reveal that just in European and Asian countries, women involvement in construction remains significantly low (Jimoh *et al.*, 2016). In Ghana, the under-representation of women in the industry is attributed to the low enrolment of female students in courses that are related to construction. For instance, the enrolment figures from the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology released in 2010 show that in this sector male-female student ratio was at 4:1 (Department of Architecture, 2011).

A report by Welfare (2016) reveals that the number of women participating in the construction industry remains overwhelmingly low. Although the number of working women has increased to nearly half the workforce in recent years, the construction industry remains a very difficult

one for women to break into (Wefare 2016). In Kenya, recently published data show that women constitute less than 10% of the labour force in the construction industry (Jamenya, Nzulwa and Kwena, 2018). As with many African countries, the representation of women that is low in the construction industry is attributed to the long-held societal attitudes. In Kenya, women who are working in the industry of construction are considered by society to be the wrong gender to be around (Jamenya *et al.*, 2018). Such attitudes are fuelled by the nature of work associated with the industry. The view that professions in construction involve not only labour-intensive dexterity and physical strength does not help the situation (Jamenya *et al.*, 2018). Women are therefore considered a weak gender as compared to their male counterparts to make a meaningful contribution within the industry.

Looking at the evidence presented above, it is therefore safe to conclude that women in both developing and developed countries are still viewed with scepticism when it comes to their participation in the industry of construction. The challenge women face in participating with their male counterparts on an equal footing relates to the long-held belief that the construction industry is a male-oriented field. As a result, those who get involved in the industry are perceived to be encroaching into a space they are not supposed to be in. There is therefore a need for governments across the world to consider implementing programmes that would not only change the society's mind-set about women's involvement in the industry, but will also facilitate their (women) entry into the industry.

#### **2.5.4. Participation of women in Construction Industry: the South African Perspective**

The country's construction industry in South Africa has also been identified as one of the main contributors to the economy of the country with billions of rand being invested towards construction projects every year. It was reported in 2015 that the country was investing about R1.4 trillion in infrastructure projects. It was eminent that the spending of the public sector was increasing in line with the implementation of the National Infrastructure Plan (Construction Industry Development Board, 2015).

To ensure equal participation by both genders in the industry, the government has created several platforms for women to participate in professions which used to be considered as exclusively for men. These platforms include the implementation of policies and prescripts such as the Affirmative Action, Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) and recently introduced

Broad Based Black Economic Empowerment (BBBEE). The implementation of these policies has resulted in an increase in the number of women who have joined the country's formal economy space. Despite this, the number of women who are participating in the construction industry continues to be very low. This submission is consistent with earlier findings by Moodley (2012). In studying the role of women in the country's construction industry, Moodley found that women still felt restricted and they are always treated with disdain by their male-counterparts. Moodley (2012) further found that women felt they constantly needed to prove that they can do the actual work in order to be recognised and acknowledged by male in the industry. This is regardless of the fact that women have been found to have a significant role to play in the construction industry in the country. Their challenges breaking into the industry are compounded by the many barriers that they are still confronted with. In their study, Madikizela and Haupt (2010) find that gender-based discrimination, harsh work environment, inadequate knowledge about the industry and the lack of women who are successful in construction as role models negatively impacted on careers choices in construction by women in South African.

## **2.6. LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK**

Internationally, there have been treaties that promote women empowerment that countries, South Africa (SA) included, have been party to. These agreements which include the 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action have been entered into to mandate countries to address issues of gender equity and women development as a matter of priority. The government of South Africa, by virtue of being party and participant in the Fourth World Conference on women, was agreed that women's rights are equal and as important as human rights and that alleviation of poverty needed the involvement of women in economic and social development and the opportunities that are equal for women and men in sustainable development (Beijing Declaration, 1995). The SA government seeks to promote the goals of equality, development, and peace for all the women and the government recognises that regardless of the progress, women still face obstacles to achieving and enjoying equality with men, and that further progress is impeded by the poverty that so many women and children suffered (Beijing Declaration, 1996).

Over and above being party to the international agreements and treaties, nationally the SA government is also doing something. Businesses were called on to offer redress to previously

disadvantaged individuals (PDIs) when South Africa became a democratic republic in 1994. These programmes that were put in place required the appointment of PDIs, increasing their shareholding in businesses and that there should be preferential procurement from black-owned businesses. However, businesses were very slow to respond to this call and as a result the government instituted legislation that compelled the business world to transform its organisations so that PDIs are included at all levels (Erasmus *et al.*, 2017).

The South African government has also not turned a blind eye entirely when it comes to discrimination and inequality. The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996), Section 9, schedule 6, was passed to prevent and prohibit unfair discrimination and harassment, to eliminate unfair discrimination, prevent and prohibit unfair discrimination against other. This act was passed after democracy to deal with aftermath left behind by the apartheid system. This was aimed at alleviating discrimination against South African's citizens. It is to ensure that no person is treated in an unfair manner based on their gender, marital status, education, race, or social background.

The National Small Business Act 102 of 1996, The Employment Equity Act (1998) and the Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment Act (2003) are examples of South African society's response to the exclusion from business of PDIs, women and people with disabilities (Erasmus *et al.*, 2017).

The need to support entrepreneurship in order to boost the growth of the economy and job creation has long been recognised by South Africa, but the problem is that the policy interventions and programmes that exist are not producing the anticipated impact. The reduction of the gap between the growth in women entrepreneurship and the contextual reality is dependent on skills training and tertiary education; removal of hidden and subtle gender discrimination; change in existing prejudices and stereotypes regarding the role of women in a male dominated economy; the demand for socio-economic rights; and policy and advocacy (The DTI 2000)

The Constitution was passed about 22 years ago in this country, but the question is, has enough been done to address the challenges that women face in their attempt to be involved actively in the economy of the country, particularly in the industry of construction?

The following are some Acts that the South African Parliament have passed and structures that the South African government established to level the ground for women. Whether they are effective or not, is a question for another time.

### **2.6.1. National Small Business Act 102 of 1996**

The custodian of this Act is the Department of Small Business Development. Section 2 of the Act provides for the establishment of the national small business council (NSBC), with the main function of representing and promoting the interests of small businesses. Major parts of this act were amendment by National Small Businesses Amendment Act 26 of 2003, which was later amended by the National Small Businesses Amendment 29 2004; which provides for the establishment of the Small Enterprises Development Agency (SEDA).

The function of the agency amongst others is to design and implement small enterprises development support programs with the aim of facilitating the building of sustainable and competitive enterprises. Facilitating the promotion of entrepreneurship; facilitating the creation of the enabling operating environment for small enterprises; and facilitating access by small enterprises to non-financial resources, capacity building services, products and services (NSBA 1996).

The department support the establishment and running of small businesses by women and they make use of SEDA as a vehicle to empower them.

### **2.6.2. Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment Act Amendment 42 of 2013**

In terms of section 1 (c) of the Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment Act Amendment 42 of 2013, Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment (BBBEE) refers to the viable economic empowerment of all black people, in particular women, workers, youth, people with disabilities and people living in rural areas, through diverse but integrated socio-economic strategies that include but are not limited to increasing the number of black people that manage, own and control enterprises and productive assets; preferential procurement from enterprises that are owned or managed by black people; and investment in enterprises that are owned and managed by black people.

This is one piece legislation that gives authority and support to women and other previously disadvantaged groups to look for and find their place and the relevant support from the

government in South Africa and large entities, so that their businesses can grow and become sustainable.

### **2.6.3. The Commission for Gender Equality**

The country of South Africa has a Commission for Gender Equality, which is one of the chapter 9 institutions and these are the institutions that are established mainly for strengthening constitutional democracy in the country. Section 187 (1) of the constitution empowers the commission for gender equality to promote respect for gender equality and the protection, development and attainment of gender equality. There would be no need for the drafters of the constitution to think about the commission for gender equality if discrimination on the basis of gender was not a matter of concern, but sadly, women are the ones who are on the receiving end. This also extend to the construction industry where men tend to think and act like women do not have much to offer in this country. Despite the existence of the commission, women still are treated differently than their men in the industry.

### **2.6.4. Small Enterprise Development Agency (SEDA)**

The Small Enterprise Development Agency (SEDA) is a public institution established in accordance with the National Small Business Amendment Act, Act 29 of 2004. Its mandate is three-fold: firstly, the institution was started for the purpose of spearheading the implementation of the state's small business strategy; secondly, it is envisaged that its existence should lead to the blue print and execution of a standard and shared national delivery network for small enterprise development; lastly, it is expected that SEDA should, through its many activities, unify government-funded small enterprise support agencies across all ranks of government (<http://www.seda.org.za>). As agent of entrepreneurial development, SEDA is anticipated to play a central role in reinforcing and accelerating the establishment of entrepreneurship opportunities for those who do not have start-up capital (Madzivhandila and Dlamini, 2015).

### **2.6.5. Industrial Development Corporation (IDC)**

Industrial Development Corporations (IDC) is a public finance institution started in 1940. The institution was started with the sole purpose of promoting the growth in economy and industrial development. Its directive is to contribute mainly to creating a balanced, economic growth that is sustainable in South Africa and in the rest of the African continent. This is done by fostering

entrepreneurship through the construction of competitive industries and enterprises based on good business principles (<http://www.idc.co.za>).

The IDC has been playing a central role in funding women-owned businesses as indicated in their 2016 annual report. The report reveals that the corporation introduced certain targets for the funding of women. The targets were intended to increase the funding support for enterprises run by women. The reports note that the introduction of these targets had an instant impact. An estimated R1.2 billion in funding was approved as opposed to a target of R600 million. This was a huge increase from the R756 million approved in the preceding year. It is expected that the IDC will have funded women owned businesses to the value of R4.5 billion over the five years leading to the year 2020 (IDC, 2016). The above information is a clear indication of IDC's commitment to funding financially viable, women-owned businesses. One can therefore, conclude that the institution is playing a critical role in developing women-owned businesses.

#### **2.6.6. South African Women Entrepreneurs' Network (SAWEN)**

South African Women Entrepreneurs' Network (SAWEN) is a network forum identified and adopted by the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) to accelerate the progress of support given to women in dealing with the challenges they faced when establishing, strengthening, and sustaining their enterprises. Support services that women can access from SAWEN include; effectual network forums; capacity building and training; the provision of relevant business information and counsel that leads to business opportunities; as well as enabling trade missions and exposure to global economy ([www.dti.gov.za](http://www.dti.gov.za)).

### **2.7. REASONS FOR LIMITED PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY**

According to Jimoh, Oyewobi, Adamu & Bajere, (2016), findings around the world reveal that low participation by women in the construction industry is attributed to women's unwillingness to join the industry. Countries like Australia and England have been trying to recruit women into the construction industry with limited success (Gurjao, *et al* 2016). These findings are consistent with those of Nigeria where Jimoh *et al.*, (2016) find that the industry remains an unattractive career choice for Nigerian women. The extent of the problem can be seen again in Ghana where the country's Department of Architecture reveals that the ratio of males to females at the Department of Architecture of the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST) in 2010 was at 4:1 (Department of Architecture, 2011). The challenge

is that many women continue to choose occupational sectors such as education, health and service sectors over the construction industry (Mutandwa, Sigauke and Muganiwa, 2008).

Women's lack of interest in the construction industry may be attributed to several challenges confronting aspirant female contractors. English and Le Jeune (2012) argue that it is essential to have a comprehension of the most common obstacles confronting women who are so far in the industry as well as those looking to enter it. It is trusted that comprehending these obstacles will result to their removal, opening ways for more women to meaningfully participate in the industry.

The following are some of the common barriers hindering women participation in the construction industry. This includes amongst others, physical demands associated with the industry; discrimination and sexual harassment; collusive and anticompetitive behaviour; limited access to finance; and lack of knowledge relating to the industry.

### **2.7.1. Physical Demands Associated with the Construction Industry**

The construction industry has long been associated with hard labour. Research findings by Martin and Barnard (2013) show that women stay away from the industry because of its physical demands. In studying challenges to female retention in the Ghanaian industry, Ayarkwa, Acheampong and Agyekum (2012) find that females identified the physical strength required to perform duties relating to the industry as a serious impediment to retention of women in the industry. The demanding nature of labour intensive work related to the industry as well as often triggers physical and mental stress (Martin and Barnard, 2013). It is therefore, safe to conclude that the construction industry is struggling to convince women to participate in what is deemed a male-dominated field. To resolve this problem, Moodley (2012) recommends the implementation of training programmes aimed at empowering girls with construction and business related skills. Such skills will ensure that young women make well informed decisions with regard to their participation in the industry (Moodley, 2012).

### **2.7.2. Gender-based Discrimination**

Gender-based discrimination remains one of the main barriers preventing women from entering what the society perceives to be male-dominated occupations such as the construction industry. This has led to Pickerill (2014) to declare that "gender stubbornly remains a marker of division" in the construction industry. Recently published research studies have consistently highlighted

the issue of gender discrimination against women participating in the construction industry (Galea, Powell, Loosemore and Chappell, 2015; French and Strachan, 2015). This is regardless of the fact that the discrimination of women regarding their participation in industries are generally perceived as masculine as has been widely reported (Fielden, Davidson, Gale and Davey, 2001; Madikizela and Haupt, 2010). Women continue to face challenges in their attempt to penetrate and persevere in historically male-dominated work environments successfully, including the construction industry (Martin and Barnard, 2013).

As Martin and Barnard (2013) observed, “discrimination and bias seem to be the predominant challenges women face, whether they are evident in formal policies and tangible resources or in covert aspects of the organisational culture that reflect debilitating stereotypes and male resistance”. According to Madikizela and Haupt (2010), gender-based career stereotyping often results in younger girls struggling to establish their own career choices other than those dictated to them by their parents.

One reason for the existence of discrimination against women is the patriarchal attitudes displayed within the industry. According to Martin and Barnard (2013), the problems currently facing South African women stems from traditional gender hierarchies and norms that prevail in the family and society. Simpeh (2011) notes that the construction industry is largely connected to men, and this gives rise to a yawning gap between men and women. This could then lead to men feeling the need to exert their power against their female counterparts. These views are congruent with those of Aneke (2015). In exploring challenges that women entrepreneurs face in the construction industry in Kwazulu-Natal, Aneke (2015) found that women in construction, both at start-up and advanced stages are often faced with patriarchal attitudes.

Another challenge that women face is that they are expected to be primary caregivers in the home while men are expected to be providers. According to Ascher (2012), generally men are more viewed to be more willing to work longer hours, taking financial risks and relocating to remote areas far from family. This can be ascribed to the fact that most of them do not have the responsibility assigned by society that women are expected to fulfil. For an example, women are expected to take care of the children and other family responsibilities. If a woman is more willing to work longer hours and is willing to leave her family to pursue a business venture,

she is often frowned upon by society and sometimes experiences resistance even in the family (Ascher, 2012).

### **2.7.3. Collusion in the construction industry**

Collusion has been pinpointed as the main threat that prevents small and emerging contractors from entering into the construction sector. In South Africa, the extent of the collusive and anticompetitive conduct by big construction companies was revealed by the Competition Commission through its Construction Fast Track Settlement Process (Competition Commission, 2012). The process was initiated in 2011 as a way of incentivising companies that would voluntarily make full and truthful disclosure of their involvement in bid-rigging (Greve, 2013). Through this process, the Commission unearthed what it termed “rampant” collusive tendering related to projects that were completed between 2006 and 2011 (Greve, 2013).

The extent of the collusive and anticompetitive behaviour was revealed during the Commission’s 2013 briefing to the committee for Public Works. The Competition Commission (CC) reported that in 2010, 21 construction firms had applied for settlement relating to about 300 separate contraventions. Such contraventions involved about 300 public- and private-sector projects valued at an estimated R47-billion. This resulted in 15 of the country’s major construction firms receiving fines amounting to R1.46-billion (Competition Commission, 2012). The guilty companies included some of the biggest construction companies operating in the country. These include: Wilson Bayly Holmes Ovcon (WBHO), which was fined R311.29-million for 11 projects; Murray & Roberts, which was fined R309.05-million for 17 projects; Stefanutti Stocks, which was fined R306.89-million for 21 projects; and Aveng, which was fined R306.57-million for 17 projects (Competition Commission, 2012).

Collusive and anticompetitive actions have been found to have a negative impact on small and emerging contractors who are still trying to find their space within the highly competitive industry. For instance, in 2013 members of the Public Works Committee raised concerns over the knock-off effects of collusion within the industry. They noted that such practice alienates small and emerging contractors, effectively blocking their entry into accessing major construction projects. This in turn slows down the pace of transformation (Parliamentary Monitoring Group, 2013).

#### **2.7.4. Limited or no access to finance**

Singh, Bhandarker and Rai (2012) is of the view that finance is the “life blood” for any business, whether the business is big or it is small. Women who are entrepreneurs in South Africa have especially been disadvantaged in the past due to the fact that they do not own any property that they can use as collateral on loans and they often need the permission of their husbands to enter into a financial arrangement (Philips, Moos and Nieman, 2014). Women who are entrepreneurs suffer from limited financial resources and working capital because they are unable to get external financial assistance as a result of the lack of tangible security and credit in the market (Philips *et al.*, 2014). This is the challenge that many women in South Africa face.

#### **2.7.5. Lack of resources**

Entrepreneurs need to have adequate resources to start a business, or they must be able to access the resources to be able to enter into business. In broad terms, there are three kinds of resources that entrepreneurs need to build their ventures: financial resources, human resources and operating resources or physical resources (Erasmus *et al.*, 2017). Women entrepreneurs in South Africa lack resources as they fall under the designated groups and overcoming this challenge is the battle they continue to fight on a daily basis.

#### **2.7.6. Lack of Support Structures**

Women entrepreneurs in South Africa are still faced with challenges that are typical in developing countries. These range from inadequate access to finance, uneasy access to markets, inadequate information technology skills, lack of management and marketing skills and inappropriate infrastructure (Deborah, Wilhemina and Ibrahim, 2015). Although the government has started to target women entrepreneurs and established structures such as SEDA, Small Enterprise Finance Agency (SEFA), NSBC, and the Department of Small Business Development (DSBD) to deal with the challenges that entrepreneurs especially youth and women face, women are less likely to benefit from the offering of these structures as their male counterparts take advantage because they have established businesses and networks (Nxopo and Iwu, 2015).

In conclusion, the researcher concurs with Navarro-Astor, Román-Onsalo and Infante-Perea (2017) who argue that most barriers are “multi-level, interdependent and can reinforce each

other”. For instance, masculinised workplace cultures within the construction industry significantly contribute towards the disrespect and harsh treatment that women are regularly subjected to. Furthermore, harsh working conditions that women within the industry are subjected to increase the multiple role conflict by putting more pressure on the work–family balance. It is therefore, important for relevant measures to be put in place to ensure that these barriers are eliminated. Such measures will pave way for more women to enter and actively participate in the industry.

## **2.8. SUPPORT PROGRAMMES FOR WOMEN IN CONSTRUCTION**

Both the government and the private sector developed programmes geared at fast-tracking the entrance of women into the construction sector in South Africa. These support programmes for women in construction are discussed in this section.

### **2.8.1. Support from the Private Sector**

One of the organisations spearheading the development of women in construction is the National Home Builders Registration Council (NHBRC). The organisation has, over the past few years introduced programmes such as “the ‘Women in Construction” programme. This four month academic programme provides women participants with both networking and mentorship support. It is envisaged that participants’ businesses will have exposure to business leads upon their completion of the course.

The country’s construction industry has also witnessed the establishment of organisations whose main purpose is to advance the interests of women in the sector.

Organisations such as the South African Women in Construction (SAWIC) as well as the Women’s Achievement Network for Disability and Women in Engineering and Built Environment (WiEBE) were established for the sole purpose of advancing the needs of women in the construction industry. The existence of such organisations has resulted in the establishment of the Women Empowerment Council (WEC). The mandate of this Council is twofold, namely; to address the marginalisation of women in the built environment and to confront the lack of transformation within the property and construction industries (CIDB, 2015).

### **2.8.2. Support from the government**

South Africa recognised the need to support entrepreneurship to boost economic growth and job creation a long time ago, but the problem is that the programmes and the existing policy interventions are not yielding impact that was anticipated. The diminishing of the gap between the growth in women entrepreneurship and the contextual reality is dependent on skills training and tertiary education; removal of invisible and subtle gender discrimination; change in existing prejudices and stereotypes regarding the role of women in a male dominated economy; the demand for socio-economic rights; and policy and advocacy (The DTI, 2000). In 2017, the Minister of Economic Development, Mr Rob Davies signed off the Amended Construction Sector Code. The aim of the code is to support many initiatives aimed at advancing the economic emancipation of the historically marginalised groups. One such initiative is “the setting aside of minimum levels of procurement spend from suppliers that are at least 51% Black Owned or at least 35% Black Women Owned” (The DTI, 2017).

## **2.9. SUMMARY**

The aim of this chapter was to review the literature that exists with regard to the subject under investigation. The literature review reiterates the fact that women across the world continue to be grossly under-represented within the construction industry. This is despite many governments’ putting measures in place to expedite the entry of women into the industry. The biggest challenge facing women is that the construction field is still viewed as a men’s industry. The result of this is that women who enter the industry are often treated with suspicions and scepticism. The review further reveals that women’s under-representation is as a consequence of many barriers to entry that women still face. These barriers include; gender discrimination; lack of skills; lack of financial support and resources and collusion and anticompetitive behaviour.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1. INTRODUCTION**

This study was designed to explore factors that contribute to the sustainability of women entrepreneurs in construction industry in Capricorn district, Limpopo Province. This chapter presents a description of the methodology, which in general terms are the means or methods used to conduct research. It includes the design, research setting, sampling method, data collection method and analysis techniques. The chapter also describes the study area, the research design and population of the study. Lastly, the chapter outlines the ethical considerations adopted for this study.

#### **3.2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

According to Creswell (2008) research is a process of steps used to collect and analyse information to increase our understanding of a topic or an issue. The process of research consists of three steps, namely; posing a research question, collecting data to answer the question and presenting an answer to the question. Burns and Grove (2001) define research methodology as the total strategy, from the identification of the problem to the final plans for data gathering and analysis. As Kumar (2011) notes, “a researcher has an obligation to use appropriate methodology, within his/her knowledge base, in conducting a study”. The research methodology as outlined below was used in this study and, was deemed appropriate for this study.

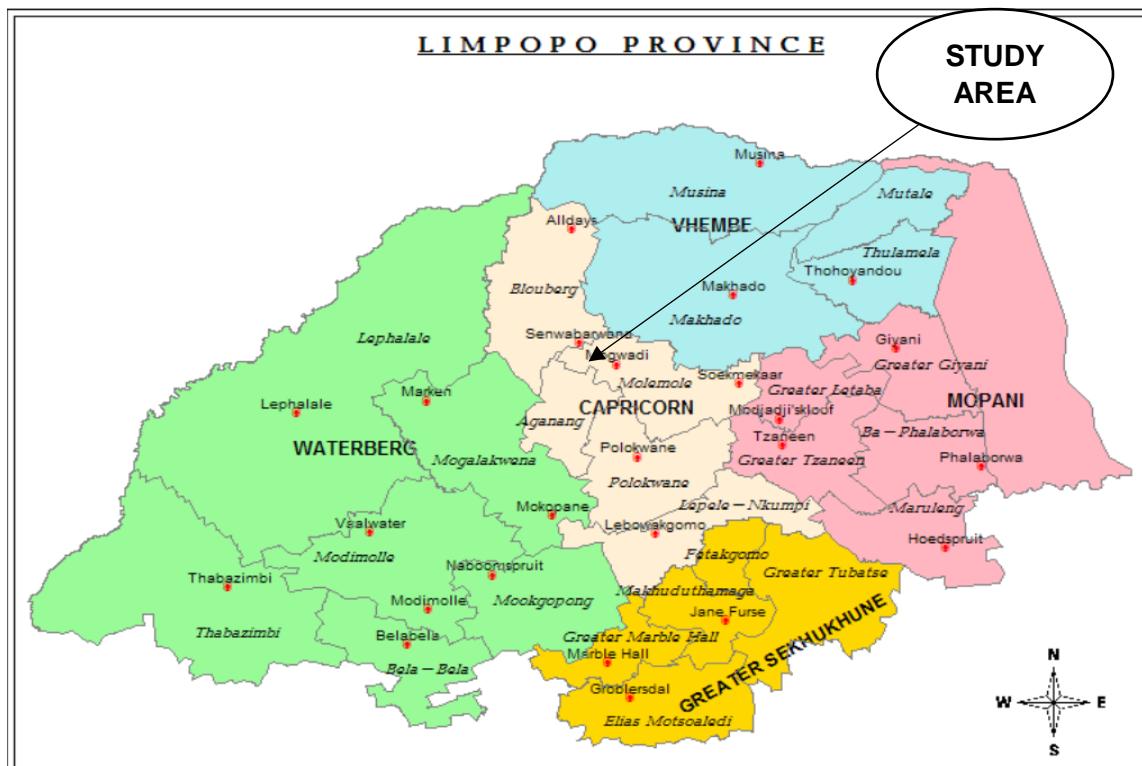
#### **3.3. RESEARCH DESIGN**

Research design is a formula or procedure based on the researcher’s notional beliefs, which describes the choice of participants, the approaches to be employed to gather information, as well as how the data will be anatomised” (Maree, 2007). For this study, a qualitative research design was adopted. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2005) qualitative research is “a situated activity that locates the observer in the world”. It comprises of a set of interpretive material practices that makes the world visible. These practices turn the world into a series of representations including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings and

memos to the self. At this level, qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. According to Bryman (2003), “the way in which people being studied understand and interpret their social reality is one of the central themes of qualitative research”. A qualitative research methodologies were employed in this study to gain an in-depth insight into what the respondents viewed as factors that contribute to the sustainability of women entrepreneurs in the construction industry.

### **3.4. STUDY AREA**

The study area was the Capricorn District of Limpopo Province of South Africa. Capricorn District Municipality comprises of four local municipalities namely, Blouberg Local Municipality, Lepelle-Nkumpi Local Municipality, Molemole Local Municipality and Polokwane Local Municipality. Polokwane city, which is the Province’s capital, is at the heart of this district municipality and it is connected to the Gauteng province which is the host of the capital of South Africa by the N1. This district municipality is predominantly occupied by Bapedi at 84.90% (Stats SA, 2011). This was an advantage for the researcher since he understands language perfectly (Motou, 2016). Figure 3.1 below shows the map of Limpopo Province with the study area pointed out.



**Figure 3.1. Map of Limpopo Province showing the study area**

### 3.5. TARGET POPULATION

Babbie (2011) defines a population as the “the subjects that will be the focus point to draw conclusions”. The targeted population for this study were women entrepreneurs in the building construction industry who live in the Capricorn District Municipality of Limpopo Province. According to the National Home Builders Registration Council (NHBRC), there were about thirty-three (33) registered women-owned construction companies in Capricorn District Municipality at the time of this study.

### 3.6. SAMPLE AND SAMPLING METHOD

A sample is a smaller selection of individuals from the whole population (Neuman, 2011). A Purposive sampling method was employed for this study to elect ten respondents who participated in the study. Purposive sampling relates to a process of “selecting a sample on the basis of researcher’s own knowledge of the population, its elements, and the nature of aims of the research” (Nayak and Singh, 2015). Maxwell (2008) notes that “particular settings, persons, or events are deliberately selected for the important information they can provide that cannot

be gotten as well from other choices.” Therefore, the researcher purposefully selected a sample of ten construction women entrepreneurs, who live within the Capricorn District Municipality of Limpopo Province and were in the NHBRC register. The size of the sample was guided by Leedy and Ormrod (2015) who argue that “qualitative researchers tend to select a few participants who might best shed a light on the phenomenon under investigation”. Of the total sample size, five (5) were women whose companies were less than five years old at the time that the data was collected for this study. The other five (5) respondents were women whose construction companies had been in operation for more than five (5) years at the time that the data was collected for this study. This study refers to the former group of respondents as the start-up group while the latter are referred to as established. The rationale behind choosing the two categories is to see the challenges confronting especially the women who are still entering this industry on the one hand while on the other hand checking factors that sustained those that have been longer in the industry.

**Table 3.1. A Summary of the Sampling Procedures**

| <b>Locality</b>                   | <b>Type of business</b> |                    | <b>Total</b> |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------|--------------|
|                                   | <b>Start-up</b>         | <b>Established</b> |              |
| Polokwane Local Municipality      | 3                       | 2                  | 5            |
| Blouberg Local Municipality       | 1                       | 1                  | 2            |
| Molemole Local Municipality       | 1                       | 1                  | 2            |
| Lepelle-Nkumpi Local Municipality |                         | 1                  | 1            |
| <b>Total sample size</b>          | <b>5</b>                | <b>5</b>           | <b>10</b>    |

### **3.7. DATA COLLECTION**

Data collection is defined as the process in which the researcher gather the information to be utilised in the study after the research problem is put together, the study design is developed and the study sample has been selected (Kumar, 2011). Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2005) define data collection as a process of acquiring evidence in a systematic way to validate answers to the research problem. For this study, semi-structured interviews were utilised to gather information from respondents. Semi-structured interviews are “those in-depth

interviews where the respondents answer pre-set open-ended questions” (Jamshed, 2014). The semi-structured interview method was relevant in this study as it permitted the researcher to gain comprehensive information about the respondents’ perceptions about the subject under investigation. The method further gave the researcher the flexibility of rephrasing the questions in cases where respondents gave vague answers (De Vos, 2005). A research interview guide was designed before the commencement of the interviews (see Annexure D). The guide contained questions aimed at eliciting answers from respondents regarding the subject under investigation. A digital audio recorder was used to record all the interviews. All respondents gave verbal permission for the interviews to be recorded as the researcher asked for it verbally.

### **3.7.1. Pre-interview preparations**

Initial contact was made with individual respondents before the actual date of the interview. The contact was done either through a telephone call or an email to the respondent. The initial contact was necessary for several reasons. Firstly, the contact allowed the researcher to introduce himself to individual respondents and to give them an overview of what the study is about. The overview included amongst others, explaining the objectives of the study, its significance and its likely benefits. The overview was followed by a formal request for individuals to participate in the study as respondents. Secondly, the initial contact also afforded respondents to ask clarity-seeking questions they had about the study. Lastly, the researcher used the initial contact to secure respondents’ informed consent.

### **3.7.2. Interview process**

All interviews were conducted at respondents’ places of work. This was done for convenience purposes since respondents spend most of their time at their respective businesses. The interviews lasted between thirty and forty minutes. English language was used as a medium of instruction since all respondents were conversant with the language. All interviews were digitally recorded through the use of an audio recorder. Informed verbal consent to record the interview was obtained from individual respondents before the commencement of each interview. It was however, emphasised that the recordings were only for academic purposes and would not be publicly shared with outsiders.

### **3.8. DATA ANALYSIS**

According to Klenke (2008) data analysis is a process of synthesizing data, searching for patterns, discovering what is important as well as what is to be learned and deciding what to tell others. De Vos (2005) views data analysis as the process of bringing order, structure and meaning to the gathered data. For this study, a thematic content analysis method was used to analyse the collected data. This was done through the use of the seven-step analysis proposed by Creswell (2009). The researcher firstly prepared the collected data for analysis. The process of preparing data included the researcher writing out the audio recordings verbatim into an Ms Word file. Secondly, the researcher engage in reading of text and noting items of interest that came out from the data. The researcher carefully read the transcripts in their entirety, jotting down ideas as they come to mind. Transcripts were then placed in a ranking order, with those with interesting ideas placed on top of the pile. Thirdly, the next step involved sorting out of emerged items into themes. Themes in this case were the main findings emerging from the data that relate to the academic and social skills challenges identified by respondents. Different colour pens were then used to highlight and categorise the emerging themes. Fourthly researcher examined the emerged proto-themes. Step five involved re-examining text for relevant incidents of data per theme. In step six, the researcher engaged in the construction of the final form of each theme. Lastly, direct quotes were extracted from the original data to help communicate the meaning.

In this study the data were analysed trough thematic analysis and the information collected were presented in a narrative format. The data will also be analysed with the assistance of the Nvivo statistical package.

### **3.9. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

Hereunder is the explanation of the main ethical issues which were addressed in this study:

#### **3.9.1. Ethical clearance**

The required ethical clearance was obtained from the University's Research Ethics Committee before this study could be carried out.

#### **3.9.2. Informed consent**

It is important to secure permission from the respondents to involve them in the study. The objectives of the study should be explained to the respondents so that the respondents should

give informed consent. It is considered unethical to collect information without the knowledge of participants, and their expressed willingness and informed consent (Kumar, 2011). It is therefore important to inform respondents at the beginning about the aim and nature of the research, who is conducting it, who is funding it and the duration it will likely take, as well as the possible consequence of the research. In this study, the researcher explained to all the participants the nature and purposes of the study. Participants signed an informed consent as an indication that they knew what the study was all about and that they were willing participants. When the participants signed the consent form was an indication that they understood the purpose of the study as it was explained to them and that they were given the chance to ask clarity seeking questions before the start of the interviews. A verbal consent was also obtained to have the interviews with the respondents recorded using a digital audio recorder.

### **3.9.3. Voluntary participation**

It was also emphasised to the participants that participating in this study was voluntary and that they would not be remunerated in any way or form for participating. In addition, they were also informed that they were free to withdraw their participation at any time they wanted to or felt uncomfortable.

### **3.9.4. Privacy and confidentiality**

According to Ritchie and Lewis (2003), confidentiality on the one means, “avoiding the attribution of comments, in reports or presentations, to identified participants” while anonymity on the other means, “the identity of those taking part not being known outside the research team”. Confidentiality of the respondents was preserved in this study by ensuring that both direct attribution (comments linked to a name or a specific role of participants) and indirect attribution (reference to a collection of characteristics that might help identify participants) were avoided. Also, anonymity was ensured by using artificial names to identify the participants instead of their real names. The participants were identified as P1 up to P10. Secondly, information that could have revealed the identity of the participants easily identifiable was not included from the interviews. This included physical and postal addresses as well as the telephone numbers of the participants. This information was explained to the participants before the start of every data collection activity.

### **3.9.5. No harm to participants**

The participants were guaranteed that the information gathered from them would not be utilised to harm them in any way. The information would be used solely for study purposes and their names would not be mentioned anywhere to avoid any potential victimisation. The participants were treated with respect and sensitivity during the interview process.

### **3.9.6. Dissemination of results**

The participants were informed that the results of the study will be written up in the form of a mini-dissertation and would be made available to them should they wish to read it.

## **3.10. SUMMARY**

Chapter three outlines the methodologies used in carrying out the study. The chapter covers the following aspects in particular: Firstly, the sampling methods that was used to sample the respondents who participated are outlined. Secondly, data collection methods used to gather data from respondents are explained. Thirdly, the methods used to analyse the gathered data are outlined. Lastly, the chapter further outlined the ethical considerations which were considered during the carrying out of the study.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION**

#### **4.1. INTRODUCTION**

This chapter outlines the results of the study. Analysis of data obtained from interviews conducted with the participants was done through identifying common themes from the participants' description of their experiences. The research results will be presented in tables in terms of especially biographical information and narratively based on identified themes. During data collection the researcher introduced himself prior to collecting data, followed by a thorough explanation of the purpose of the study and of the interview. The significance of voluntary participation and contribution were also discussed. The researcher asked for participants' consent to participate in the study and for interviews to be recorded. The participants were assured of confidentiality and anonymity. The research, as indicated in chapter one of this study, is focusing on the sustainability of women entrepreneurs in the construction industry in Capricorn District of Limpopo Province. The results are presented in line with the research objectives as outlined in chapter one. The presentation starts with the biographical information of the participants.

#### **4.2. BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION OF THE PARTICIPANTS**

This study is about exploration of factors that contribute to the sustainability of women entrepreneurs in construction industry in Capricorn District of Limpopo Province. The Capricorn District Municipality has the following local municipalities: Polokwane, Blouberg, Molemole, and Lepelle-Nkumpi Local Municipalities. The participants reside in the various local municipalities. The total number of women interviewed for the current study was 10, and for analysis purposes the participants will be identified as Participant 1 up to 10 (P1 to P10). The biographical information of the participants is outlined hereunder.

#### **4.2.1 Participants age range**

Table 4.1 below indicates the ages of the women who participated in the study:

**Table 4.1 Age range of participants in the study**

| <b>Age range in years</b> | <b>Number of participants</b> | <b>Identification of participants</b> | <b>Percentage (%)</b> |
|---------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| 30 - 34                   | 01                            | Participant 1 (P1)                    | 10%                   |
| 35 - 39                   | 02                            | Participant 2 & 3 ( P2 & P3)          | 20%                   |
| 40 - 44                   | 01                            | Participant 4 (P4)                    | 10%                   |
| 45 - 49                   | 01                            | Participant 5 (P5)                    | 10%                   |
| 50 – 54                   | 03                            | Participant 6,7 & 8 (P6, P7 & P8)     | 30%                   |
| 55 and above              | 02                            | Participant 9 & 10 (P9 & 10)          | 20%                   |
| <b>Total</b>              | <b>10</b>                     |                                       | <b>100%</b>           |

Women whose age ranged between 30-34 years constituted 10% of the sample. 20% were participants aged between 35-39 years. Women entrepreneurs aged between 40-44 years constituted 10% of the sample. Those whose ages ranged between 45-49 years represented 10% of the sample. The majority of women entrepreneurs in the study were aged 50-54 years and they constituted 30% of the sample. The remaining 20% was those 55 and above years of age.

#### **4.2.2. Number of years of operating the business**

50% of women had been in the businesses for a period of between three and five years, while 30% had been participating in the construction industry for a period of between six and ten years. The other 10% had been operating their businesses for more than fifteen years and the remaining 10% of women had been in the construction industry between eleven to fifteen years. These data are presented in table 4.2 underneath. These current findings disclose that most participants were relatively new in the construction business. Research has shown that the sustainability rate for start-up businesses in the construction industry is very low and most businesses dies within the first four years of establishment (Harding, 2018).

**Table 4.2: Number of years participants has been in business**

| Number of years in business | Number of participants | Percentage (%) |
|-----------------------------|------------------------|----------------|
| 3 - 5                       | 05                     | 50%            |
| 6 - 10                      | 03                     | 30%            |
| 11 - 15                     | 01                     | 10%            |
| 15 and above                | 01                     | 10%            |
| <b>Total</b>                | <b>10</b>              | <b>100%</b>    |

#### 4.2.3 Business category

The term construction encompasses a wide range of activities, which involves building and civil engineering work (Ayarkwa, Acheampong and Agyekum, 2012). However, this study focused on building construction and therefore women entrepreneurs who participated were those in the building construction. There were some women who were involved in building and other forms of construction but the focus was on their experience in the building construction. 80% of the women were engaged in building construction, while 20% were involved in both building and civil engineering.

#### 4.2.4 Education level

Education is viewed as a base where knowledge and skills are developed (Brière, Tremblay and Daou, 2014). According to Brière *et al.* (2014), women who have college and university education are more likely to have successful businesses as compared to women with an educational qualification which is below that level. The results of this study show that the 60% of women had university degrees, while 20% of the women had completed high school and obtained a certificate (i.e. Matric certificate). The other 10% of the participants had a post high school diploma qualification. While the majority of women were educated, only 10% of women had an educational qualification that was related to the construction industry. These results are presented in table 4.3.

**Table 4.3: Education level of participants**

| Level of Education    | Number of participants | Percentage  |
|-----------------------|------------------------|-------------|
| University degrees    | 6                      | 60%         |
| Diplomas              | 1                      | 10%         |
| Senior certificate    | 2                      | 20%         |
| Related qualification | 1                      | 10%         |
| <b>Total</b>          | <b>10</b>              | <b>100%</b> |

#### **4.2.5 Number of employees**

Most of the participants had employees working for their businesses. About 60% of total participants had more than 20 employees. About 20% of participants had less than 15 employees. The participants indicated that mostly they did not hire many employees in the construction business but contracted them per project.

### **4.3. PERCEPTIONS ABOUT PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS IN THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY**

This section will present the results on the perception of participants on their participation in the construction industry. The results are presented in line with the objectives of the study as outlined in the first chapter of the current study.

#### **4.3.1. Reasons for Low Participation of Women in the Construction Industry**

This section answers the first objective of the study that seeks to explore reasons for the low participation of women entrepreneurs in the construction industry. Several subthemes were identified from the responses of the participants.

##### **Subtheme 1: Gender role bias and stereotypes**

The results of this study suggest gender issues, i.e. gender bias and stereotypes as some of the reasons for low participation of women in the construction industry. The general viewpoint of the participants was that the number of women participating in the building construction remains low because there are gender-based issues that they are confronted with in the industry. Moodley (2012) supports this view by noting that women still feel restricted as they are always treated with disdain by their male counterparts.

One participant captured this by saying: “*It is overwhelming how women are treated at tender briefings and other construction business gatherings. It often needs a very strong character to forge ahead regardless of the harsh treatment*” (P6). However, participant 6 also noted that if you are persistent and you stand your ground, people start to respect you and treat you as competition and not just as a woman but a businesswoman.

The participants’ narratives suggest that they believe that entering the construction industry is women owning their space by penetrating a male dominated industry. In addition, participants translated this entry into the industry as suggesting women’s assertiveness in taking up careers in environments that were previously defined and viewed as men’s territory.

This implies that women who wish to enter the building construction industry and those who are already in the industry should develop a thick skin in order to make it in the industry, otherwise they will always find it difficult to navigate or opt not to enter it, which will make it remain the male dominated industry for a very long time.

### **Subtheme 2: Lack of technical skills**

Women tend to lack the skills required to deal with the demands of the industry largely because not many of them engaged in related studies. P2 stated that “*Generally, women participating in construction is not common at all. I have personally come across very few women in the technical side of construction, they are generally found in the sales and administrative side of business*”. Findings of Aneke (2015) also point out a gap in construction education between males and females and acknowledges that men are more qualified than women.

Socio-cultural influences that represents inequalities between women and men are associated with barriers in educational development determined by gender role expectations and the majority contended with this observation.

*“Coming from a disadvantaged background and being forced to assist the family financially left me with no option but to go and find work. Although I knew I wanted to study further, the immediate financial circumstances did not permit me to do so. After grade 12, I had to go and find work so I can provide for the family. Men on the other hand, are always encouraged to further their studies.” P3.*

The majority of participants in this study do possess qualifications, however, their qualification are not related to the construction industry. They are grateful that they have these qualifications but admit that having a qualification that is related to the technical side of the construction industry would give them a competitive advantage that the majority of men have. P3 was of the view that “*if one has a qualification or background in business administration, it is good for running the business and for keeping the books in check, but it does not really help one with technical skills that actually ensures that the job is done, we often find ourselves relying heavily on men for technical support*”.

### **Subtheme 3: Lack of business knowledge**

Lacking business knowledge is one of the grounds why there is low participation by women in the construction industry. Lack of knowledge about business was pointed out and linked to a statement explaining women's unsuccessful attempts to remain sustainable in the construction sector. One of the participants claimed that entrepreneurs tend to start off with ambitious and unrealistic business goals. P6 stated that "*some of the women entered the industry thinking that the government owes them empowerment because they are part of the previously disadvantaged group. When they realised that things were not that easy and simple, they fell on the wayside and now they are just left with a company registration certificate*".

Another participant conveyed a concern regarding the educational gap between female entrepreneurs and male entrepreneurs when it comes to the technical aspect of the construction business.

Some participants who acknowledged the existing inequalities in the sector also recognised the changes that they notice in career choices, especially in Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) colleges in the province. For instance, P6 noted the following in this regard, "*Many girl children are choosing to study towards careers that are related to construction industry, but the challenge is that they are not equipped on how to start and run their own construction companies, our education system is flawed in that regard, it prepares them to get employed not to start own businesses.*" She went on to give credit to women who are currently running construction businesses and praised them for defying the narrative that seems to suggest that men will always do better or stand a better chance of succeeding in the construction than women.

Women need to have business knowledge so that they can prosper in the construction industry. If they do not have it, they must be willing to learn as much as they can about the industry they want to enter, if not they will not succeed.

### **Subtheme 4: Difficult to enter the industry**

The majority of participants concurred with one another on the view that the building construction sector is a tough business environment to crack and penetrate. They seemed to agree that women need to start by doing and completing small projects and then take on big projects as they grow in business confidence. The notion of starting small is also imposed on them by the Construction Industry Development Board (CIDB) as a regulatory institution,

which is the grading board that they must be registered with in order to be considered for government contracts from the national government down to the local government. This grading is determined by amongst other things the financial capability and works capability of the company or business. Financial capability has to do with the financial history (turnover) or the amount of working capital that one can muster to sustain a contract, i.e. available funds in the account of the business. Works capability has to do with the largest contract one has undertaken and successfully completed during the five years immediately preceding the application for grading. P3 echoed this difficulty by posing a question “*How do you expect me to have any turnover when I cannot be considered for any work in the first place?*”

The same sentiments were shared by P8 “*Give me the job, allow me to prove my work capability and judge me based on the result.*”

P7 did not have the same challenge when it comes to entering the industry and she is doing very well and has a higher grading with the CIBD. She credited subcontracting from prominent companies for her success in the industry. “*I used to get subcontract works and that boosted my financial and works capability, which came in very handy when I applied for higher grading.*”

P9 introduced a different view on entrance difficulty in the construction industry and she relates this with lack of trust from the public when it comes to women in construction. She indicated that in the beginning private customers used to come to her and request her to give them a quote for building them a house of their dreams, but would end up just giving her a portion of the project, such as paving or painting but hire her male counterpart for the construction of the house. Her responses suggest that consistency, perseverance, longevity and persistence is crucial for one to enter and be sustained in the construction industry as a woman. The fact that it is a difficult industry to crack does not mean that it is impossible to do so.

### **Subtheme 5: Women within the industry not networking**

There are few women in the industry as evidenced by the narrative from one of the participants that “*I just know of one business that is similar as mine*” P2. However, despite the fact that women are few in this industry, one of the participants mentioned that she does not know other women in the construction industry. She uttered statements such as, “*I personally do not find many women participating in Constructions*”, or “*should I say I only know of a few women contractors*”. However, this was linked to some remarkable pride shown in having been able

to stay long in the industry when the participant continued to state that “*it’s a few of us who have been in construction this long*”. Connected to this statement was the concept of survival in the construction industry which went back to other statements that women do not have longevity in the industry as most of the businesses that are owned by women open and do not even last for a year.

Unfortunately, in addition to the fact that women themselves do not network, they also feel excluded from the male-dominated platforms that are already in existence, naming such platforms as “*men’s clubs*”.

#### **4.3.2. Challenges Faced by Women Entrepreneurs in the Construction Industry**

This section reports on the information that was gathered in relation to the second objective of the study that seeks to uncover the challenges that entrepreneurs who are face in the construction industry. The outcome of the analysis of the data from the in-depth interviews points out that the challenges confronting women in the construction industry are grounded in sociocultural issues which dictates that women should be viewed in a patriarchal context. These findings are in agreement with several authors (Gneezy, Leonard & List, 2009; Mudau & Obadire, 2017; Carbajal, 2018). These challenges that the participants identified include among others, gender based discrimination, shortage of start-up and working capital, inadequate industry knowledge and experience, time mismanagement, sourcing of clients and exhaustion.

##### **Subtheme 1: Gender based discrimination in the construction industry.**

The responses of the participants suggest that women who are operating in the construction industry experience gender-based discrimination. For instance, P8 stressed that “*the general public and customers seem to believe that men can do a better construction work than women, this is because we are still living in a society that is predominantly patriarchal*”. This theme could also be subdivided into subcategories as presented in table 4.4.

**Table 4.4: Category: Women experiencing gender-based discrimination**

| Sub-category  | Explanation  |
|---|--|
| Socio-cultural gender role expectations                     | Women entrepreneurs shy away from leading in technical environments because they are discouraged by gender based stereotypes that promotes a culture of masculinity perceptions of construction being a man's territory or men's industry. This strengthens the gender gap and undermines the contribution that women make in the industry.                          |
| Inaccessible sources of information                         | Lack of access to sources of information limits women who are entrepreneurs from accessing information about business such as technical support of SMMEs, funding and funding institution, tendering information, inaccessibility to government relevant offices and other business support structures.  |
| Networking platforms  | Women are being discriminated against by men who make networking platforms inaccessible for women entrepreneurs and those that make it to these platforms are often exposed to intimidating and degrading behaviour such as sexual harassment.   |
| Gender-based inequities                                     | There is no equality when it comes to accessing opportunities and the BEE scorecard point system is not effective. The playing ground is not level due to irregular procurement processes. Women entrepreneurs by default are economically marginalised from the mainstream economy of the construction industry.  |
| Gender-based educational differences (structurally induced) | Differences in educational orientation are dissociating women from actively participating in the construction in numbers, i.e. not many women are engaged in studies that relate to the industry.<br><br>Under-representation decision-making structures limits women's ability to make inputs and influence decision-making processes in the construction industry. |
| Gender-based career differences                             | Induced inequalities in career development opportunities for women who are aspiring to work their way up into core Construction environments.  |
| Inequalities in accessing funding                           | Lack of accessible funding is a barrier for women entrepreneurs who usually do not have capital to upgrade construction systems and equipment to keep up with industry developments.<br><br>Construction administrative requirements prevent access to loans.  |

Participants in this study, were of the view that enough was not being done by the government when it comes to promoting gender equity in its BEE scorecard rating system by levelling the competitive playing ground between businesses that owned by women and those that are owned by men. Participants felt that they forever face discrimination in this industry and there is not much they can do about it if those who discriminate against them on the basis of gender are not willing to change. However, discrimination should not keep them away but rather motivate

them to ascertain and cement themselves if they are to change the narrative that construction is a male dominated industry.

### **Subtheme 2: Formal education**

This subtheme of formal education has to do with education and qualification obtained at a recognised institution. Most of the participants in the study are educated, however, their qualifications are not necessarily in the construction industry. This study finding is against the findings of Martin and Barnard (2013), who echoed that one of the barriers to the success of the business and sustainability is the lower level of education among women entrepreneurs in their chosen industry.

The participants in this study do not necessarily do business in the field they are educationally trained in, but are rather exploring new markets, searching for better opportunities and finding innovative ways to introduce new products and services within the existing market. They do not necessarily require a formal education to ensure success of the business, however, they may benefit from it especially in the construction industry where knowledge and expertise can be used as a differentiation factor of the business. The findings from the data gathered support the statement and reveal that these women entrepreneurs are not boing business in the field they were educated in although their qualifications somehow assisted them in running their businesses successfully. For instance one of the participants (P7) stated that, “*My degree in law assisted me in negotiating a favourable deal and to interpret tendering documents. When I compare myself with other women entrepreneurs, I realize that I have the added advantage because of my education.*”

Some of these women have not even received any tertiary education, and never intended to study further. They are motivated and encouraged to start their construction businesses by the the passion they have for the business. What this women have in common is that they are highly energetic, they believe in hard work and that having the right attitude contributes to business success. One of them (P3) said that, “*I never went to study for any post matric qualification. I feel you need experience with the right attitude more. All the knowledge I have about the construction industry is self- taught. My hardware business gave birth to my construction business and the rest as they say is history.*”

These results suggest that one of the barriers to entering this industry, or to being successful and sustainable once in it, may be lack of specific education in the industry.

### **Subtheme 3: Women afraid to take leadership positions in the construction industry**

Women are still under-representation particularly in management and leadership positions in the construction industry (French and Strachan, 2015). Participants also affirmed the under-representation of women in leadership positions in the construction industry. This view is reflected in the statement by one participant (*P5*) who seemed to believe that “*there are as many women who are competent and possess a qualification in construction related field but the majority resort to getting employed rather than starting their own construction businesses. They choose to work for other construction companies rather than starting their own as they somehow believe that men stand a better chance of succeeding in this industry than women. Somehow women believe that they do better when serving their counterparts than doing it for themselves.*” *P5*’s narrative suggests that women do not like to take the front stage instead they like to follow men especially in this industry. Jamenya, Nzulwa and Kwena (2018) also agree that women are still occupy just a small fraction in the construction industry, especially in leadership positions.

### **Subtheme 4: Lack of support for women entrepreneurs in the construction industry**

Participants also voiced their concern about lack of mentorship and guidance for start-up construction businesses and pointed out that other SMMEs, government, and established private construction companies in general should make it their responsibility to mentor women who are operating in the construction industry. A participant (*P2*) who is also assuming the role of a mentor to upcoming women entrepreneurs said: “*Most SMMEs do not have mentors for guidance. I feel it is my responsibility to nurture and support others by showing them that there is a space for other women in this industry and make them realise that it is possible to get into this industry and contribute as an employer rather than an employee Rands.*”

Another participant (*P1*) suggested: “*The private sector can also be a source of mentorship for up and coming entrepreneurs and show women entrepreneurs how a construction business is run to avoid a situation where these women fail in their endeavours within the first few years of starting their businesses.*”

Participants declared that they were marginalised from Construction due to certain structural conditions, such as the lack of access to home building information that was linked to inequalities in educational development in Capricorn areas. P5 remarked, “*Organisations such as the South African Women in Construction (SAWIC) do not do much for other women who want to enter the construction industry. The vision and mission of this organisation as highlighted in its website is to enhance the role of women in the construction industry through running profitable and sustainable business enterprises but there is very little that this organisation is doing in the province.*”

#### **Subtheme 5: Lack of skilled labour:**

The major cause for worry for the participants was lack of skilled labour. Entrepreneurs are often dependent on efficient management and competent teams to support the business function, and those are the things that these women do not have. This means that they need to hire skilled people at high cost when they get contracts as skilled people capitalise on the fact that entrepreneurs are desperate. Entrepreneurs sometimes resort to employed unskilled labour but the consequence is that the work will be below standard.

However, a few of them seem to have the skill support they need for their businesses. For instance P2 stated that “*I rely on my management team. I feel you are just as strong as your staff. They will be your pillars. One does not live on an island. You can never live on an island.*” P5 also explained that “*I have good management teams that support me through all my businesses. I have a manager and he sees to everything.*”

#### **Subtheme 6: Lack of management skills**

There is a general agreement amongst researchers that financial management skills, marketing skills and general management skills are critical in ensuring that SMEs operate in a profitable and sustainable manner (Mamabolo, Kerrin and Kele, 2017). In this study, participants voiced out their point of view concerning to lack of skills of women entrepreneurs that are required for the success and sustainability of the business in the construction sector and their views relate with major findings of most authors.

P2 indicated that “*Although some women entrepreneurs have the guts to start new businesses in the construction industry, they often do not have what it takes to sustain it because they lack so many skills that are crucial for the sustainability of the business.*”

### **Subtheme 7: Lack of funds**

In relation to women's lack of access to funding, Greve (2013) reports that women continue to suffer economic marginalisation due to gender stereotypes by investors that promote gender inequalities. The gender inequalities reveal themselves in investment preferences for young, male technicians who have experience in the industry. Some government agencies that offer funding for businesses also perpetuate economic marginalisation by establishing criteria that makes it almost impossible for women to access these funds and thus putting them in a disadvantaged position than their male counterparts. P1 had this to say about challenges of funding: "*I think funding is one of the challenges that women owned companies face right from the beginning. They are simply not trusted until they earn it but it is very difficult to earn trust and prove themselves when they are not given a chance to prove themselves in the first place.*"

### **Subtheme 8: Lack of property land and equipment:**

Some of the participants in the study pointed out that they have property, plant and equipment. However, the majority relied on hiring equipment and equipment operators for their projects. Lack of equipment implies that whenever they secure a contract, they subcontract, and this implies that they share their proceeds with the subcontractors and in most cases the subcontractors end up getting a bigger share of the contract. This renders them vulnerable and they end up not being taken seriously by their male counterparts in the industry who have the equipment. P6, being the only one with equipment, concurred, indicating that she does not face the same challenge as she has everything in-house; in fact her counterparts give her the respect she deserves as an entrepreneur. She went on to add that "*There was a time that I was given 2000 Rural Development Project (RDP) houses in the province and four other contractors got the same amount of units. I completed mine way before deadline and the department ended up negotiating with me to also take up some of the units from my counterparts because they were battling to finish them.*" She emphasised that when equipment and other resources are readily available, it becomes easier to manage the project and deliver on time and it gives one an advantage over other entrepreneurs at the same time earning one's respect and recognition in the industry.

### **Subtheme 9: Use of consultants**

Women entrepreneurs often contract independent consultants to plan and manage their finances and human resource matters. This helps them with the general business management. The study also reveals that they rely on project managers as skilled labours when they get contracts, but

they hire them as consultants per project because they often cannot afford to have them on their company's payroll.

### **Subtheme 10: Change and adaptation**

The need to constantly adapt to changes in the industry was found to be a challenge. The participants referred often to flexibility and the ability to embrace change and continuous improvement to grow and sustain their businesses. This subtheme is an important upcoming theme which goes together with concept of innovation. Entrepreneurs ought to embrace change to respond to external market conditions. This was reflected by the majority of participants for the current study where P9 said: "*It is difficult to have a fixed plan and shy away from flexibility, things change every day, and one needs to adapt one's product and service for one's customer and current market trends. Planning is a continuous process which involves constant change.*"

The participants, in general, indicated that one needs to keep to basics, while also introducing new elements with regards to one's products offerings and services. The participants in the current study claim that they continuously revisit their business models due to changes in technology.

Some participants emphasised that the uniqueness of the product and service that they bring to the market and expatiated that one requires to have the right attitude to drive constant change within one's business. They further recommended that one should continuously assess their own products and services. P5 stated that, "*You need to go the extra mile and take your product to your customers, get their feedback, and change your product when necessary.*"

This implies that the participant acknowledges that change is inevitable in the business world and one needs to keep abreast with what is happening around. One needs to be flexible enough to accommodate and adapt to change to keep one's business afloat and relevant. It is always a wise move to adapt to change and development or else one's business will be left behind and become irrelevant.

#### **4.3.3. Success Factors that Help Women Entrepreneurs in the Construction Industry**

This section will provide the interpretation of data in relation the third objective of the study, which states, "to identify success factors of women entrepreneurs in the construction industry".

Several subthemes emerged when asked about factors that helped the participants to stay in the industry. The subthemes are now presented.

### **Subtheme 1: The need for success and self-fulfilment**

The notion of success and self-fulfilment came up as a subtheme of motivation. Most of the participants concurred that their motivation to start a construction business and stay in the industry is rooted in discovering their true potential through personal growth. They strive to attain self-fulfilment and their businesses help them to realise that. The self-fulfilment aspect relates to the desire of women entrepreneurs to fulfil their ambitions by putting in own efforts to succeed in their businesses. They also get a sense of satisfaction each time they win in their businesses, be it by closing a deal or completing a project. Other respondents indicated that their desire to succeed is what keeps them on their toes and motivates them to work harder because their goal is to succeed regardless of the hardships they may encounter. Participants also noted that success is very relative to the individual entrepreneur because they view success in different ways. As P3 puts it, *“the key to success is the self-determination. It means you need to stand up if you have failed and give it a try until you get the results you want because not all of us get it right the first time.”*

### **Subtheme 2: The need to prove a point**

Some of the participants mentioned that they wanted to prove a point to other people, i.e. to show that they are capable individuals. For instance, for P4, her previous experience in formal employment triggered her desire to start and own a business and become an entrepreneur. P4 revealed that a manager from her previous job once told her that she would never accomplish anything bigger than the position she was holding at the time. This encouraged her to establish her own business as she felt that she had so much to offer the world and that she needed to show her previous boss that she can be more than just an employee. She also felt that she would feel fulfilled through starting and building her own business from the ground up and working hard for it to succeed. She stated that *“I was not going to let her (former boss) preside over my life, I needed to challenge myself and to prove her wrong, and I did.”*

Results from dialogue with the participants suggest that these women also desired to prove that they have the ability to build successful businesses in the Construction industry regardless of the viewpoint that this is a man’s industry. For instance P6 said that *“I wanted to challenge my male counterparts directly in this industry and I have managed to do that over the years. My*

*construction company is doing better than most of the companies that were started before it that are owned by men, and that gives me pleasure and reason to work harder.*" This was also evident in the remarks shared by P5 who stated that, "*I have a strong personality and I always want was to prove my abilities, I always challenge the general narrative and wanted to prove that I can make it as a woman in an industry that is generally perceived as men's*". P9 further stated that "*I know historically women have been undermined and given less consideration but now I see that women are proving themselves. It was very rare to find women you would not find in this industry but the gap is gradually but surely closing.*"

### **Subtheme 3: Religion**

The participants identified their religion as a significant part of who they are and what keeps them successful in this industry. P2 noted that when she goes to meet a client to pitch for business, she prays about it and she trusts that if she does her part, God will finish the rest and that has been her secret to her success. She said that "*I believe in the higher power and I believe that whatever is meant to be will be, no matter how big is the project, I always bid and leave it to God to do the rest, if I get it, I also believe that God will enable me to start it and finish it and my faith has been working for me since the start of my business.*"

Sixty percent of the respondents reflected on their religious belief system. They stated that they have come far with the running of their businesses and how God supported them in their business ventures. They all revealed that they achieved what they have in their businesses because God who assisted them and they keep their relationship with Him by constantly praying. P9 added that "*My only trust is in God and my business thrives because of a lot of prayers*". Some participants also indicated that it is beneficial to have employees who have the same belief system as you because they understand why you do things a certain way in your business and it becomes easy for them to buy into your vision and help you to realise it.

P7 mentioned that she suffered a great loss when her husband passed away. She had to pick up the pieces and suddenly she found herself as the owner of the company that she inherited from her husband. She had to learn fast how to run a business. She credits her success to God as she believes that the business is still here because of God's grace. She said, "*when my husband passed away, it devastated family. I own this business because I inherited it from him and I was not at all knowledgeable in this industry and it was very tough at the beginning. I was forced to take over the business after his death and I strongly believe that it was by the grace*

*of God that I was able to make a success out of it. God is part of my everyday life and influences everything I do.”*

#### **Subtheme 4: Informal education**

Informal education in this study relates to programmes, online short business courses, reading books about business and market survey research. The study produced strong evidence that most of the participants engaged in informal educational activities to broaden their business knowledge. They also attended conferences that relate to entrepreneurial endeavours to gain relevant knowledge. This has helped them and their businesses to thrive even though they did not have formal training in the construction field. The study indicates that women tend to attend these programmes to develop their entrepreneurial skills.

Two of the participants revealed that they also attended a short course which was about skills development for entrepreneurial. One of them (P5) stated that “*I attended an entrepreneurial development program at the Gordon’s Institute for Business Science which was an eye opener for me and I have not looked back since. One is never too old to learn.*”

The women participants indicated the need to attend such programmes and said they would encourage others who intend to enter the construction industry to participate in such programmes.

One participant (P8) also indicated that she would like to empower her workers by sending them to such a programme, however she feels that it is costly. “*I sent one of my employees on a program at a business school. It cost me a fortune and I didn’t reap any benefits from it as the very same employee got a job opportunity from one of the biggest construction companies in our country.*”

Thus, it is apparent that the women in this study feel that they are like a training ground for bigger companies, a fact that may discourage further training of other employees.

In addition to attending courses, the women entrepreneurs in this study state that they read a lot of books about business in general and continue to search for information regarding new developments in the industry they operate in. P8 reported that “*You need to continuously do research. Read books and do online tutorials. There are numerous online educational programmes.*”

### **Subtheme 5: Ability to delegate**

Participants indicated that as women they have more responsibilities than men and therefore it is imperative to have the ability to delegate certain responsibilities for one to succeed. Although delegation is difficult at the beginning, participants acknowledged that it is important to exercise it from time to time. Without this ability, women in the study mentioned that they would find it difficult to create a balance between their work obligations and family responsibilities. The results indicate that the majority of participants would not succeed in this industry if they did not delegate some of their responsibilities to others, be it family or business responsibilities. P4 had this to say, “*At work I delegate most of my admin work to my support staff and at home my husband and mom take turns to assist my kids with homework if I am working away or working late*”. P4 also warned that it is acceptable to ask for help when one is feeling overwhelmed in order to avoid making mistakes that could cost the company a lot of money. She went on to say that “*I always avoid working when I am exhausted, instead I delegate*”.

Forty percent of the participants referred to their husbands as their biggest support especially when it comes to family responsibilities and they feel free delegating them at home as they know that they support them. In this era husbands are able to assist their spouses by preparing supper and collecting children from school. The findings are congruent with the study conducted by Jamenya, Nzulwa and Kwena (2018), which reveal that women are often dependent on their spouses for support. Support from the spouse has a great influence on the success of entrepreneurs world-wide (Jamenya, Nzulwa & Kwena, 2018). This was also proved apparent in the findings of the current research study. For instance P3 stated that “*I am very lucky to have a husband who does not mind preparing food for our family most of the time because he understands that my job can be very demanding, and I am able to focus on my business without worrying about him or the children.*”

Participant 7 does not have spousal support as her husband has passed away and she inherited the construction business from him. However, she stated that she delegates most of the work in the company to the employees that she has retained who were working with her husband in the business, and this allows her to have enough time for her family, especially the children. She also added, “*My ability to delegate enables me to make time for my family, which is important to me because I love planning and organising family vacation trips.*”

### **Subtheme 6: Financial Independence**

According to Allgood & Walstad, 2016, financial independence is the state of having sufficient personal wealth to live, without having to work for basic necessities.

Most of the respondents in this study are married and have families of their own. The common factor that they have is that they did not want to be dependent on their husbands financially and that desire to remain financially independent is what pushes them to work harder in their respective businesses. Although they appreciate the support they get from their families, most of them indicated that it feels good to contribute to the development in the family with the money that the husband had nothing to do with its generation and it feels good to be independent. They further explained that financial independence also earns them the respect they deserve in the family unlike women who are totally dependent on their spouses for everything. Participant 9 concurs and added that “*when you are financially independent, you also make it difficult for your spouse to abuse you because you are empowered and they know that you can still look after yourself with or without them in your life, so in essence, financial independence has a way of earning somebody respect that otherwise would not be given to them if their situation was otherwise. I strive for financial independence and this makes me strive for success in my business because the success of my business is the only guarantee I have for a lasting financial independence.*”

P3 also explained that “*I hate to work for other people and create wealth for them but I also do not want to ask my husband for money each time I want to buy or find myself having to explain what I need the money for. It is for this reason that I dig my head to my business so that I can make my own money and free myself from dependence.*”

P8 voiced out that the income of her husband alone would not be enough cover the university fees for her children and so, she needed to ensure that her children get an education beyond what she had. She explained that she registered her construction company and her first project was to construct RDP toilets because they do not require a higher CIDB grading, and she never looked back since then. Her company has grown; she was even able to complete 2000 units of RDP houses on time. She is financially independent and is sure that she will be able to contribute towards higher education for her children. She said: “*I wanted my children to study at higher learning institutions after passing grade 12 but my husband’s income alone was not enough as the family was solely dependent on him, including his extended family. I knew I had*

*to make a plan to break away from this financial dependence and that is how I started my business and I told myself that I do not have any other option except to make a success of it.”*

### **Subtheme 7: Ability to identify opportunity**

Most participants indicated that the ability to identify opportunities is one other factor that contributes to their success in the construction industry. They further explained that it is difficult to make it in this industry without this ability. P2 particularly indicated that she would not be where she is had it not been for her ability to identify opportunities. As she (P2) puts it: *“At the beginning I had to do a lot of collaboration work which I saw as an opportunity for me to build my company profile, and it paid out.”* P7 and P10 indicated that they entered the construction industry because they saw it as an opportunity to learn how to run a construction business and they never looked back since. They are now known in the industry and are counted amongst people who are doing well in the industry.

P2 emphasised the fact that the industry is regarded as male dominated was an opportunity enough for her. To this day she still enjoys being regarded as a woman who is doing well in a male dominated industry, and this pushes her to always be on the lookout for new opportunities in the industry.

### **Subtheme 8: Commitment**

Starting a business requires one to have the spirit of entrepreneurship and the passion and need to witness an idea becoming a reality. Making a business successful also requires a lot of commitment. The characteristics of successful entrepreneurs include commitment, which is normally coupled with enormous sacrifice (Brodack & Sinell, 2017). The study by Brodack & Sinell (2017) reveals that women entrepreneurs are very committed to their work but they end up neglecting their responsibilities over family. This was particularly the case for two participants where one of them (P3), for instance, said that *“After my husband’s death, I realised I was neglecting my duties as a wife and mother to my children. My business always came first. My husband performed the role of the mother and care giver.”*

The participants were all highly committed to their stakeholders, their customers, their businesses and to hard work. P3 indicated that once she commits to make a payment to her supplier, she needs to keep to her promise. P3 indicated that *“I feel very strong about committing to pay my suppliers. If you are not able to pay your supplier, you need to make*

*arrangements, that is, communicate with them and negotiate for an extension or part payments if possible.”*

Being committed to deliver quality service or product is also very important for the business to be sustainable. One must always ensure that the customer receives the product or service at the right time and of the quality that the customer was promised and is expecting. As several of them uttered the following statements: P5 indicated that, “*I believe you need to commit to your product, if you promise your customer a certain product, you must deliver that product. You need to build trust with your customer and your product.*”

Another statement was uttered P2 who said: “*I strongly believe in committing to the time. If you make a promise to deliver your product at a certain time, you need to stick to it and deliver on your promise. You need to build your customer’s trust.*”

P7 shared the sentiments by saying: “*You need to commit yourself to hard work. Business is hard work. You need to do your research and work hard to grow and sustain your business.*”

P9 also caution: “*I always say you need to work hard on your business, not in your business, there is a difference!*”

In addition, participants consider commitment to the people that they work with to be a very crucial aspect in business. The participants indicated that staff members practically rely on them to maintain their livelihoods, they need their salaries to be paid from the businesses that they work for so that they in turn will be able to provide for their families. They entirely depend on participants. They similarly emphasised the commitment to their business through hard work in the sense that one works on one’s business and not in one’s business. Commitment is viewed as one of the skills that is paramount to the sustainability of business for the participants. The participants agree that there should be some level of commitment on the part of entrepreneurs for them to be successful and sustainable.

### **Subtheme 9: Opportunity for socioeconomic upliftment of the self**

Entrepreneurs are usually captivated by opportunity and are generally market orientated. Although accumulation of material wealth is one of the benefits that of being an entrepreneur, it is not what drives the entrepreneur. Entrepreneurs are driven by the obsession to spot and capitalise on new opportunities. Participant 9 however does not hold the same view, she explained that obtaining wealth for her and her children is the biggest part of what drives her. She explains that she enjoys living comfortably and does not mind working hard to ensure that

she gives her children the life of comfort, and this is why she is always on the lookout for new opportunities. P9 stated that “*I was born and raised in Seshego in a family with very humble background and so I made a promise earlier in my life that my children do not have to grow up the way I did and the people I saw living the life I wanted back in the day were those that had businesses regardless of the type of the business. I decided that owning a business in the way to go.*”

#### **4.3.4. Whether women have the requisite skills and experience to enter the construction industry and stay there**

This section will give an analysis of the interview results with regard to the last objective of the study, which wanted “to investigate whether women have the requisite skills and experience to enter the construction industry and stay there”. The kind of skills required would include technical skills as well as business management to be successful in the construction industry. To answer this objective, firstly, participants indicated that they lack technical skills required to succeed in the industry; secondly, in terms of business skills, several subthemes could be identified from the data collected from the participants.

##### **Subtheme 1: Financial management**

Finances are regarded as mutually the most important aspect in the entrepreneurial process and therefore entrepreneurs should be skilful when it comes to financial management (Chemmanur and Fulghieri, 2014). At the heart of running a successful business lies financial management as it affects all the aspects of the business, ranging from managing the cash flow and tracking the performance of the business to development of plans that ensures that owners of businesses make the most of the opportunities ([www.accaglobal.com](http://www.accaglobal.com)). During interviews with the participants in this study it became very evident that participants were not free to talk about financial strategies that they were employing in their businesses but they focused their responses to their product and service offering. The participants in the study lacked financial strategies for their businesses and relied on outsourced independent financial consultants to help them with the planning and management of their investment portfolios. They highlighted the significance of re-investing the profits back in the business. They gave general answers rather than listing financial strategies that were specific to their businesses. They gave and thorough answers on internal cash flow management systems; re-investing the profit back in the business and performing financial some duties themselves. For instance P5 stated that “*I do not withdraw money from my business. I re-invest all my profits within my Construction*

*business. I do not have a free cash flow. I perform the financial function myself and due to inventory theft and wrong product pricing, have to perform constant check-ups. I also get a salary at the end of the month as opposed to making drawings from the business account.”*

The participants also recommend that entrepreneurs should fight to keep their fixed costs as low as possible. “*I try to keep my overheads low and perform Construction business administration duties myself. I use outside consultants to perform and capture my accounting duties. I also use my husband for maintenance duties, which reduces my costs.*”

Another participant (P4) pointed out that it is beneficial to negotiate favourable prices with suppliers. She pointed out that “*Women require negotiation skills; they need to negotiate prices with their suppliers. Remember, lower input cost gives higher profit margins.*”

They also strongly advise that entrepreneurs take their products as close to the consumers as possible and avoid intercessor expenses and other costs. Participants in this study consider the value of money as very crucial, and explained that in this day and time, it is wiser to commit the money on business activities that are properly researched against the contrary.

Entrepreneurs who are successful are not gamblers, they risks that they take are calculated and they find innovative ways to mitigate the risks by distributing or sharing risks with others (Chemmanur and Fulghieri, 2014). Women in the study also revealed that they sometimes rely on planning and online research before making big business decisions. As P3 put it: “*One cannot afford to spend money on a new business without doing one’s homework properly. In today’s economic climate, one needs to be careful and make calculated decisions before engaging in a new business start-up.*” (P3)

Another form of raising funds is by selling off existing assets in the businesses. Participant (P8) stated that she supplements her capital by selling off old assets and re-investing the money into the business. She said that “*I use the funds from selling one property to buy a new property, I always invest the profits and aim for capital growth.*”

Women entrepreneurs in this study emphasised on the need for strong financial support and they recommend that it is ideal for one should possess an asset for every liability. They stressed that it is important to keep the ratio of asset versus liability balanced, with emphasis on proper

management of cash flow. One of the major concern they had was regarding the interest rates and caution that entrepreneurs ought to be careful and not to underestimate the cost of borrowing money. P10 state that “*Money is expensive. Always have a financial leverage. Debt can cause business failure. Plan to have one asset for every liability.*”

The women also pointed out that they often need to do thorough planning for closing times during the festive season. December is the hardest months for contractors because most families leave their homes to go and spend the holidays elsewhere. The participants explained that contractors close early during this period and therefore good cash flow management strategies are beneficial.

The participants in the current study declared that they often employ financial advisors who are responsible for planning and supporting their short term and long term financial goals for their businesses. They have diverse investments portfolios to help them mitigate business and financial risks. Planning provides one with an opportunity to forest and it is an important business function. “*I use a good financial advisor to help me plan for short and long-term objectives. They also assist me to have a diverse portfolio to distribute financial and business risks*”, as stated by P6.

Some of the women in the study mentioned that they generally prefer to perform the financial function themselves in the business because they do not trust their employees with the finances of the business. They also cut on human resource cost by asking family members for help instead of hiring people to perform daily business administration activities.

It can be deduced that the women in the study tend to rely on their cash flow and sound cash flow management. The findings are congruent with a study conducted by Madikizela and Haupt (2010), which highlights that cash flow is an important factor for women in small business when it comes to sustaining the business.

### **Subtheme 2: Research and planning skills**

Research and planning skills came up as a fundamental theme in this study. The participants in the current study place prominence on continuous research and planning. They recommend that other women entrepreneurs must exercise and improve their planning and research skills for the benefit of their businesses. They insist that proper research and planning helps when it comes to making decisions about the business as one is able to make informed decisions.

Research and planning were also said to be essential in a business as it could be used by entrepreneurs to look for and recognise opportunities in the market. It can also be used launch a new product in the market. Research and planning also assists the entrepreneur to identify the resources that are needed to go after or make use of an opportunity ([www.mindtools.com](http://www.mindtools.com)). It is evident that women entrepreneurs consider research and planning as a strategy geared towards success for any women entrepreneur. It can be used either for new venture start-ups, preparing for unforeseen circumstances, for making long or short term financial objectives or launching a new product in the market. For instance P1 stated that “*You need to plan and do your research constantly. Money is expensive and one cannot afford to do business without proper planning and research.*” In addition, P9 also said that “*You need to do research; I always ask the questions whether there is a market for a product and whether I will use the product myself. You need to test your market through extensive research.*”

The participants also suggested that, before people commit to any business proposition, they need conduct proper research with financial figures to back their decision. In addition, they recommend that market surveys should be performed before starting a business. Once the business is operational, entrepreneurs should make use of the information they gather through customer surveys to improve their products and/or services. P8 said that “*I plan six months in advance. I perform customers' surveys and rely on their feedback for planning purposes.*” Women consider customer surveys as an important strategy for business growth and recommend that businesses should have regular surveys to obtain feedback from their consumers.

Some women said that research and planning becomes particularly helpful during the festive season as they close for an extended period of time. They therefore need to plan and save so that they can be able to pay all expenses even if they are not open for business. For instance P6 stated that “*I need to plan my cash flow for December as not much work is done in December and therefore no money gets in the account.*”

One participant responded in the negative when it comes to planning. Participant (P7) indicated that she does not believe in and does not even have fixed business plan because of the change variable. She also explained that in the economic environment change is inevitable and continuous, and so she adjusts her approach to her business based on what is happening at a

particular time. P7 said, “*I do not have a fixed plan. My plans consistently change because the changes in economy have significant influences on my business decisions.*”

### **Subtheme 3: Marketing skills**

Women in this study seem to lack good marketing strategies. They generally appear to rely on providing quality good services and refer to their customers as their needed resources. The results of the current study show that women entrepreneurs in this study greatly depend on word of mouth and referrals to support businesses growth. When their customers are happy about the services and products of their business, they automatically becomes the ambassadors of the business because they will talk about it. They then becomes the vessel through which the information about the business is communicated. Customer testimonies may convince a potential customer to want to get them save service and can easily become a marketing strategy for the business. Most participants regard word of mouth as their main marketing strategy to foster growth within the business. As one of the participants (P5) put it: “*I rely on my customers' referrals. I do have a woman who helps me with the administration. I believe if you have good staff they will be pillars in any business.*”

The women in the study also use the image of the business as a tool to advertise and market their businesses. They build or renovate the offices of their businesses and use them as show houses for their customers. Customers believe what they see, and so if you show them a house or a building you have constructed, they believe you can do the job. An office is the perfect and more accessible place one can use as testament of their work, the women believe.

Market research is crucial for every business, and should not just be a once-off activity. Businesses that are successful conduct research continuously in order to keep up with new developments in the market and to maintain a competitive advantage. Irrespective of whether the business is starting or expanding, market research is important for understanding the target market and balloning sales (Al-Shatanawi, Osman & Halim, 2014). Having the relevant knowledge and investing in continuous market research, are fundamental attributes for business owners. The entrepreneurs and business owners need to understand their customer needs, the new developments in the market, demands and their competition. This can be achieved by conducting market research and through customer surveys (Oparah, Aghara, Ndubuisi & Chidozie, 2018). This is true for many of the women participants, who indicated that they actually visited other businesses with the sole purpose of benchmarking.

Customer relationship management, related to marketing above is the other issue that the participants were not fully taking into account. The study shows that women entrepreneurs build trust in their customers and believe in the significance of return business to support the growth of the business. Happy customers have the tendency to return even in the face of a recession. It is therefore a requirement to keep the customer happy so that they can always return for more, the participants warned.

Although participants were focusing on their existing loyal customers to retain them for future businesses, they often miss the opportunity to interact with potential customers because they exclude them from their customer relationship management strategy. Similarly, the participants felt that marketing through advertising was not necessary for them, especially where their biggest customer is the government. This is because when the tender is out, the awarding relies on the bid that meets the criteria on paper rather than the actual track record.

In addition, the participants in the current study observe that entrepreneurs need to obtain input from their customers and should be willing to receive and evaluate both positive and negative feedback from the customers. They also need to be willing to plan and improve the product to meet the demands in the market. Women also prefers involving family members to give suggestions and advice, and this helps them enormously. Again, the focus is on existing customers and not potential customers. For instance P5 stated that “*One needs to constantly change. In today's economic and environmental uncertainty one requires to change and improve one's product and sometimes add value to one's product or service offering*”. With regard to responding to customer needs P1 stated that “*Continuously see how you can change and improve yourself. You need to see what is required in the market. You have come this far, use your product and add something new to it, maybe provide an additional service. For example, the Rural Development Project (RDP) houses of 2008 are by far very different from the RDP houses of 2018 and the specification of the client is more detailed and specific than it was ten years ago.*”

P6 is the one who seems to be concerned about retaining the old customers as well as attracting potential customers for her business to continue to grow, and she does not depend predominantly on the government as the major customer. She is able to reach a larger scale of customers by involving young people in her marketing strategies. She stated that “*I'm old, but*

*always try to find innovative ways to market my business. I try to engage the younger people in identifying new and improved ways to market our services. The young workers suggested that we create a business account of different social media platforms and post some of our projects' before and after pictures so that our customers can have reference of our previous work". She went on to say that "This strategy is working wonders for my business as I often receive calls from customers who indicate that they saw our face-book page and would like to visit our offices for a face-to-face consultation. Majority of these sit-downs are usually converted into a business deal."*

#### **4.4. STRATEGIES THAT CAN HELP THE WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS TO COPE IN THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY**

Challenges will always be part of every entrepreneurial journey, when that time come where one is faced with a challenge, one should come up with ways to overcome such a challenge. The question of coping mechanisms was included in the study so as to shed light and empower other women who are in the industry or those that are aspiring to enter the industry. Different themes came up from data set on the strategies that women entrepreneurs adopted to cope in the industry. These themes encompasses: belonging to a networking organisation for business people; continuous personal development through attendance of trainings and workshops; partnering with others on certain projects or partnering with established women in the industry; support from friends and family; perseverance and persistence; hard work; and developing a strong character.

##### **Theme 1: Belonging to a business networking organisation**

There are organisations in South Africa that are focused on support and empowerment of women in construction. Such organisations include for instance, the NHBRC, which has branches in all provinces, as well as South African Women in Construction (SAWIC). The biggest question is whether these organisations serve the purposes for which they were created, whether women in the industry utilise them or if these women can even access them.

P7 had this to say about belonging to these networking organisations: "*Women should belong to women's network or form a business organisation that support businesses owned by women as it encourages them to know what other women are doing and presents one with an opportunity to learn from others.*"

Most of the women in the study (P2, P3, P5, P7, P8 and P9) explained that they have access to the NHBRC. As a result, they benefited from it and were able to grow business wise as a result of the platform that was presented to them via NHBRC. They also expressed gratitude to the organisation (i.e. NHBRC). They mentioned that they were all given an opportunity to attend a fully-paid course, which was specific to the construction industry, at one of the prestigious business schools in the country. P2 pointed out that "*The training I received from Gordon Institute for Business Science (GIBS) as I was part of the delegates from NHBRC Limpopo was very crucial and has helped me to structure my business. I now know how to prepare a business plan, be it for investors or for loan.*"

Most of the participants concurred that being a member of the organisations that give them the platform to network with other people who are in the same industry is helpful. This gives them an opportunity to exchange ideas on how to overcome business related challenges as they are able to share with people who have been there.

### **Theme 2: Attending training and workshops**

All participants in the study were in agreement that undergoing training in the form of short courses or workshops that are industry specific is helpful as things are always changing. As new trends get to the market, the business needs to keep up or it runs the risk of being irrelevant. P7 made reference to the RDP houses, pointing out that the structure has changed much compared to the structure of the last decade, and the specification for RDP houses now is very comprehensive and needs someone with material knowledge and understanding.

Attending workshops and training equips them with knowledge that helps them to cope during challenging and uncertain times in their businesses.

### **Theme 3: Partnering with others or established women in the industry on certain projects**

Some participants believe that entering into partnerships with others, especially men would help them to secure tenders. Most participants expressed their bitterness and disappointments regarding the manner in which tenders are awarded. They suggested that there is a lot of gender imbalance in the manner in which tenders are awarded, especially in the public sector. This is what by P4 and P7's beliefs. P4 remarked that "*In general, men hold prominent positions and are at the hub of affairs in the committees responsible for the awarding of tenders... this gives men the upper hand*", while P7 declared that "*I am of the view that women in the construction*

*industry should form partnerships with men in the industry. This will help to reduce the level of discrimination that women are often exposed to.”*

Such instances create an environment where women are left with not much of options beside partnering with men on projects as pointed out by P5 who voiced out that: “*...men can go for bidding while women work from the background...*”. These findings are supported by literature which argues that, from a skill perspective, the idea of women entering into a partnership with men is necessitated by the attainment of easy entrance into any business situation. Such partnerships are therefore not for social reasons but are more strategic in a bid for creating a more desirable, free of harassment working environment in the industry that is dominated by males (Muller, Gagliardi, Caliandro, Bohn & Klitou, 2014). An opposing argument to this one is that, regardless of the reasons women may put forward for partnering with men, such perceptions and actions actually perpetuate male dominance by women as they appear to be surrendering power to men and accepting that they are less skilled than men.

P9 differs in opinion from P4 and P7 about partnering with men as she believes that women entrepreneurs should partner with women who are established in the industry who will be able to teach them how things are done. She voiced that women who seek partnerships with men are giving men undue power over women in the industry and such partnerships should be discouraged. She stated that “*Women must learn to support each other by forming business partnership where they can make use of joint resources such as equipment, and skills transfer.*”

#### **Theme 4: Support from friends and family**

It is undisputed that the construction industry is generally dominated by men and poses a dire challenge when it comes to equal opportunities for women. Labour market separation also remains to be a serious barrier to gender equality. Women therefore need a strong and dependable support system for them to make it in this industry that is dominated by males (Wright & Conley, 2018). Although women are good at multitasking, it gets overwhelming at times and this is where the support is needed the most (Offer and Schneider, 2011). Most of the participants in the study agreed with the idea that family should also be on board so that they do not add unnecessary responsibility on the schedule of the entrepreneur, and where the family is unable to help, these women rely on the support of close friends. In agreement with this notion of support P6 responded that “*A good support system involving family, friends, and fellow colleagues is critical for survival in male dominated spaces.*” In addition, P3 said that

*“For most of my household chores I rely heavily on my helper who has now become a part of my family, I honestly could not cope without her help.”*

P7 added that the support and understanding of the family is particularly important. When they understand the nature of the business and time demand it has, it becomes easier as many conflicts can be avoided and it allows the entrepreneur an opportunity to worry about work and not having to explain the long hours to the spouse or other family members. P7 stated that *“I have my husband’s blessing and he supports me and this gives me comfort and motivates me to work hard in my business, when the going gets tough, I am able to vent on him and carry on.”* All the participants were in agreement that the support of family and friends is an important mechanism that they use for them to be able to cope in the industry of construction.

### **Theme 5: Perseverance and persistence**

P1 indicated that the strategy that she used and that worked for her is that she started small in order to build her business profile and CIDB ranking. Currently she can bid for any tender without feeling intimidated because her work speaks volumes for itself and so is her grading. Business proposals get rejected more than approvals in this industry, so perseverance is crucial and it goes hand in glove with persistence. The participants were of the opinion that whether people get a rejection or a nod in this industry, they need to develop a thick skin and couple that with persistence. All the participants share the same sentiments with regards to perseverance and persistence, acknowledging that it is not easy to navigate in this industry, more so if you are a woman. For instance, P5 said that *“I always decide that I will try again if my company does not get shortlisted for the job and I always gather strength and go back to the drawing board and try again”*, while P 3 stated that *“Persistence for me means doing it over and over again until I get what I want, and that is the strategy I have adopted in my business from the start, maybe because I understood from the beginning that doors will not always open for me simply because I knocked, sometimes doors will be shut on my face, but I keep on moving on and that have sustained me and my business in this industry.”*

Perseverance and persistence are undoubtedly some of the strategies that women entrepreneurs have used to cope in the construction industry. Without perseverance and persistence, they would have probably given up and succumbed to the belief that construction is a man’s game and not meant for women. It is through perseverance and persistence that these women were able to defeat the odds and build successful businesses in the construction industry.

### **Theme 6: Hard work**

All participants attribute the success of their businesses to hard work. Participant 9 indicated that she lives by a saying that “*a dream does not become a reality through magic; it takes sweat, determination, and hard work. I have adopted hard work as a value for my company and it has sustained us to this point*”. P6 remarked that she has always been a hard worker and she takes after her father, who often used to tell her that “*when hard work goes out of the door, poverty comes in through the window*”. She uses this saying as her personal motto and this also translates to her business.

The fact that all participants agree that hard work is one of the strategies that they have used and are continuing to use to sustain their businesses is suggestive that it takes hard work to make a success out of a construction business.

### **4.5. SUMMARY**

In this chapter, the data which were collected when using an interview guide is presented. Tables are used to present the biographical information of the participants, while data on the opinions of the participants are presented narratively. The opinions are on the factors that contribute to the sustainability of women entrepreneurs in the construction industry within the Capricorn District of Limpopo Province. Furthermore, the information on the participants’ opinions are presented in line with the following study objectives: reasons for low participation of women entrepreneurs in the construction industry, challenges facing women entrepreneurs in the construction industry, success factors that help women entrepreneurs in the construction industry, the requisite skills and experience for entering and staying in the construction industry. In addition, the women participants were asked about the strategies they have used to cope in the construction industry. Their responses are also presented in this chapter.

In the chapter that follows, the summary of the findings of the study will be presented, followed by recommendations and conclusions.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **SUMMARY OF RESULTS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

In this the part of the research report the researcher present the summary of the major findings of the study. The summary of results is followed by conclusions derived from the study results. The researcher will also present recommendations that can be taken into account by women who are in construction and those that aspire to enter the industry so that their businesses can be successful and sustainable. Recommendations presented will hopefully be useful for the following institutions: Department of Cooperative Governance, Human settlement and Traditional Affairs (CoGHSTA); National Home Builders registration Council (NHBRC); Small Enterprise Development Agency (SEDA); Construction Industry Development Board (CIDB). Special recommendation will also be penned for future researchers who may want to explore further and conduct research similar to this one. The chapter ends with the overall summary of the study.

#### **5.2. SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS OF THE STUDY**

The major findings in this study will be presented with regard to the objectives of the study as they were the backbone of this study. The objectives sought to explore the factors that contribute to the sustainability of women entrepreneurs in the industry of construction. This study was underpinned by four specific research objectives which were: firstly, to explore the reasons for low participation of women entrepreneurs in the industry of construction; secondly, to investigate the challenges that are faced by women entrepreneurs in the industry; thirdly, to assess the success factors that help women entrepreneurs in the industry; and finally to find out whether the women entrepreneurs possess the requisite skills and experience to enter the construction industry. The summary of the findings in this study are based on those study objectives and are presented below.

### **5.2.1. Reasons for low participation of women entrepreneurs in the construction industry**

This objective was included in order to explore the reasons for low participation of women in the construction industry. According to participants in the study, there are various factors that are preventing many women from participating in the construction industry, they are as follows:

#### **5.2.1.1. Gender bias and stereotype**

All the participants (10 participants making up 100%) in the study were in agreement that women are treated with disdain by their male counterparts in the construction industry. This hostile treatment is the one that causes the majority of women to shy away from participating in the industry of construction. The study finds that women do not participate in the industry because there is too much hostility to deal with as women in this industry. Other authors have also documented gender bias and stereotypes as some of the impediments to women's entry into the construction industry (Ginige, Amaralunga & Haigh, 2007; Sang & Powell, 2012; Sangweni, 2015). Ginige, Amaralunga and Haigh (2007) argue that because this industry is dominated by men and is labour intensive, society thinks that women are not strong enough to succeed in the industry.

#### **5.2.1.1.1. Lack of technical skills**

The majority of the participants (eight, which equates to 80%) believed that lack of technical skills keeps women away from the construction industry. Overall it is believed that lack of technical skills contribute to lower levels of participation by women in the construction industry. This finding is in tune with the findings of Rasool and Botha (2011) who find that South Africa is encountering a radical drastic shortage of skilled workers. Oke, Aigbavboa and Khangale (2018) also find that shortage of basic skills in the construction industry is posing a threat to the future of the industry and that it will keep on doing so particularly when there is an over growing demand for construction projects. This shortage of skills or lack thereof leads to implementation of project management strategies that are ineffective at the beginning of the project, which in turn leads to abortion of the construction project (Thwala and Philadi, 2009).

### **5.2.1.2 Lack of business skills**

Nine participants (90%) in this study agreed that lack of business skills is another factor that contributes towards women's low participation in the industry of construction. Only one participant (i.e. 10%) had a different view. Her view was that unwillingness to move from a comfort zone by learning new skills is the reason why women are hesitant to enter the construction industry. The majority of the women in this study contend that having business skills helps women to gain access and stay in the industry of construction. In addition, they believe that women who only have the guts to enter the industry while lacking business skills often fail to sustain their businesses. This is because they may be able to secure a contract in the beginning, but fail to keep the business afloat during all seasons because they lack business skills.

Oke, Aigbavboa and Khangale (2018) recognise and discovered that there is a requirement for technical skills, business skills and managerial skill for the construction industry to be successful. This shortage of the necessary skills in the construction industry reflects bad on the image of the industry and prevents the development of proper infrastructure in the country (Oke *et al.*, 2018).

### **5.2.1.3 Difficult industry to enter into**

Besides the fact that the industry is regarded one that is dominated by males, the respondents in the study stated that the bureaucratic systems make the construction industry particularly a difficult industry to enter. The industry bodies that they need to be registered with in order to be recognised as building contractors require a lot of resources, skills and business experience, and these are not easy to acquire for new businesses seeking entrance into the industry. The CIBD in particular, was criticised for being a bureaucratic wall that prevents women entrepreneurs from entering the construction industry. All ten participants (100%) agreed that the construction industry is difficult for women to enter into. Oke *et al.* (2018) confirms that CIDBs grading requires adequate skills and resources from emerging construction firms, making it difficult to enter the industry.

#### **5.2.1.4 Women within the industry not networking**

Another factor that was raised as a reason for low participation by women in the construction industry was the fact that those who are already in the industry do not network with other women. All participants agreed that they do not network and therefore do not get to build relationships and do not support one another as women in construction. Ilter (2016) cautions that there are approaches which are considered to be effective in solving the problems which women entrepreneurs encounter. These approaches include women entrepreneurs being organised and having frequent gatherings, and creating social communication. Without these networks, women will continue to struggle alone in their small corners. Turkey has seen the need for networking and established the women entrepreneurs association of Turkey for women entrepreneurs to gain such place in the business world and to be included in the communication networks between entrepreneurs. The purpose of the association among others is to grow the number of women in business and to inspire and support them. Over and above that, the association provides women entrepreneurs with education and mentorship for women to enter the business life and become entrepreneurs.

It is also proven in a study conducted by Ahmad and Naimat (2011) that networking supports women entrepreneurship. It is further proven that competency and the ability to recognise an opportunity is sky-high in women who are take part in networking activities or attend networking gatherings and have a background of business management. Capability is reported to be even higher among women who are connected to each other through networking session and activities, proving that networking is a drive for involvement and participation.

#### **5.2.2. Challenges facing women entrepreneurs in the construction industry**

This objective in this study focused on exploring challenges that women entrepreneurs face in the industry of construction. The study finds that one of the challenge that kept on coming up was the issue of gender based discrimination that women experience in this industry. All participants (100%) indicated that they have experienced discrimination in one form or another and that they continue to experience gender based discrimination. The other challenge that was highlighted was the fact that most women do not have qualifications that are related to the building construction industry and they are often forced to outsource their male counterparts to

help them do the job. This challenge was reported by seven participants (70%) whereas three participants (30%) did not see it as a challenge.

The study also finds that fear of leadership roles by women, lack of access to funds, lack of adequate support, lack of skilled labour and lack of business management skills were some of the obstacles that women entrepreneurs encounter in the building construction industry. Aneke, Derera and Bomani (2017) concur that women still encounter many obstacles in the industry of building construction. These obstacles, according to them include but are not limited to, difficulty in accessing start-up and working capital, inadequate industry knowledge and experience, difficulty in time management, inability to source clients and other sociocultural challenges.

Philips, Moos and Nieman (2014) state that to run a business is very unsafe for any entrepreneur, more especially for women entrepreneurs who have to fight for survival in an environment that is dominated by men while also suffering from lack of proper education and training in the field of construction. Chinomona and Maziriri (2015) add by noting that the impediments that women entrepreneurs encounter include lack of relevant education and training, inability to access to funds, gender based discrimination, negative attitudes and inadequate resources.

### **5.2.3. Success factors that help women entrepreneurs in the construction industry**

Participants were also asked about the success factors that help them in the construction industry and several factors came up, for which the participants agreed that they help them to succeed in this industry. Many credit their success to the following factors:

#### **5.2.3.1. The need for success and self-fulfilment**

Although the participants agreed that success is relative, they all agreed that their need to succeed and obtain self-fulfilment pushes them to succeed in their businesses. All 10 participants (i.e. 100%) agreed that this need for self-fulfilment pushes them and their businesses to succeed. Fayolle and Linan (2014) concur and indicate that the need to succeed and self-fulfilment is based on the theory of the Deriche for most women business owners. The theory of the Deriche is associated with achievement and autonomy and it contributes to the success of women-owned businesses (Shakeel, Yaokaung and Gahar, 2020).

#### **5.2.3.2. The need to prove a point**

A total of 70% (seven participants) agree that the other factor that helps them to succeed is the need to prove that they can also do it as women and succeed in the construction industry. They feel that failure is not an option for them but that they must push until they succeed and that is what they did. They have proven and continue to prove that women can also succeed in the construction industry. In Haupt and Madikizela (2009) the need to prove a point was also emphasised and a participant in that particular study was quoted saying “I wanted to prove that women are strong and are capable of handling the harsh realities of construction activities”.

#### **5.2.3.3. Religion**

Many participants (90%) in this study are Christians and only one of the participants is Muslim. Regardless of the religion that the participants subscribe to, they all acknowledged that they rely on divine backing to ensure that their businesses succeed. The finding here was that 100% of the participants concurred that they owe their success in this industry to the divine power that guides them on a daily basis as they run their businesses. Religion plays a role from deferent aspects in determining the social problems and solving them. Religion is the most important factors which affects the culture of society and also affects the economic and judicial structure. It serves as the basis of ethics and it is also necessary for a person to lean upon a spiritual power. Religion is believing in the existence and oneness of God for Christians and Allah for Islamists. It is this spiritual power that women entrepreneurs lean on (Ilter, 2016).

#### **5.2.3.4. Informal education**

Majority of the participant (90%) in this study distinguished between formal and informal education. They claim that informal education is one of the success factors that helped them to succeed in the construction industry. Only ten percent (10%) of the participants begged to differ, indicating that a formal industry related education is one step towards success of the business in this industry. The finding is that one can still succeed in the construction industry without a formal education but through obtaining relevant information via other informal educational platforms. Informal education was also credited for advancing career development for most women and success in the industry of construction (Rosa, Hon, Xia and Lamari, 2017).

#### **5.2.3.5. Ability to delegate**

The study finds that women entrepreneurs use delegation as one of the factors that helps them to succeed in the construction industry. They acknowledged that if one does not have the ability to delegate in this industry, one is bound to fail as one is unable to perform all activities on her own. This is supported by the findings of Fernando, Amaratunga and Haigh (2014) who find that working with others and delegating positively influence women's careers.

#### **5.2.3.6. Financial independence**

70% of the participants wanted to be financially independent and not entirely rely on their respective husbands or partners financially. The other 30% were pushed by the desire to give their children a comfortable life. The study finds that 100% of the participants were motivated to succeed in the building construction industry by their need for financial independence regardless of their reasons for wanting that independence. This is also backed by the findings of the survey that was done by Haupt and Madikizela (2009) where women indicated that they chose careers in the construction industry because of opportunities for financial independence.

#### **5.2.3.7. Ability to identify an opportunity**

The study also finds that one of the factors that was common amongst all the participants was their ability to identify opportunities that can help in the sustenance or growth of their businesses. This factor was described as one factor that can either sustain the business or break it if it is lacking. Nieuwenhuizen and Kroon (2002) argue that the ability to identify an opportunity alone is not enough but becomes a success factor if coupled with willingness to take a risk on the part of the entrepreneur.

#### **5.2.3.8. Commitment**

The study reveals that women entrepreneurs credit being committed to their businesses as one of the reasons for their success. They also added that this ability to commit is also one of the reasons why they entered the industry and are conquering, regardless of all the other challenges they face in the industry. Fernando *et al.* (2014) also find that commitment and dedication are contributors to the success of businesses that are owned by women in the industry of construction.

### **5.2.3.9. Training and development**

This study also finds that the other strategy that women entrepreneurs use is attending training and workshops continuously in order to stay relevant. 90% of the participants agreed that this strategy works as things and trends keep on changing in the building construction industry. Partnering with others or established women in the industry on big projects also helps the women to gain capacity and stand a better chance of succeeding in completing bigger projects. The study done by Bhardwaj (2014) finds that women require training in order for them to develop skills that are relevant for the industry of construction. Getting appropriate training can help them by activating creative thinking and conceptualising innovative ideas, and then converting those ideas into enterprises. The study further suggests that providing women entrepreneurs with specialised training and skills development programmes will assist them with launching of successful businesses (Bhardwaj, 2014).

### **5.2.3.10 Self-motivation**

The study also finds that self-motivation, perseverance, persistence and hard work are the strategies that work and enable them to cope in the construction industry. All the participants agreed that perseverance, persistence and hard work helped them to cope and succeed in this industry. Rosa, Hon, Xia and Lamari (2017) also contend that self-motivation is a personality traits that carry women and sustain them in the industry of construction.

### **5.2.3.11. Membership of business organisations**

The study finding here is that 80% of the participants believed that being a member to a business networking organisation is beneficial and can be used as a strategy to cope. This is so because in such organisations women come together to support one another through sharing ideas and discussing the challenges they face in the industry. Fernando *et al.* (2014) also identified networking as one of the success factors of women in construction.

#### **5.2.4. Whether the Participants have the Requisite Skills and Experience to enter the Construction Industry and Stay there.**

Another objective of this study was to check if the women entrepreneurs have the requisite skills and experience to enter the construction industry and stay there. The study finds that the women need business management skills in order to succeed in this industry. The skills that repeatedly came up are financial management skills; research and planning skills; and marketing skills. Although there are other skills that are needed in this industry such as technical skills that are more job specific, the ones that were recommended for the success of the business are the three mentioned above. The study finds that 70% of the participants fell short of the requisite skills and experience to enter the industry of building construction. However, they rely on other people who have the skills. Reliance on other skilled people was also seen as posing a challenge because such skilled people in most cases tend to be men who then exploit the situation and continue to treat these women with disrespect.

This finding is supported by other authors who contend that the shortage of skills in the industry of construction negatively impact on growth and development of Small Medium and Micro Enterprises (SMMEs) and hinders women from participating in the industry (Oke *et al.*, 2018). In a study done by Aneke, Derera and Bomani (2017), women also identified limited knowledge and experience in the industry as a challenge that women in the construction industry encounter. One of the women was quoted saying that it was very difficult for her to obtain industry experience as she had no experience in the field of the business she was venturing into (Aneke, Derera and Bomani, 2017).

#### **5.2.5. Suggested Strategies that can help the Women Entrepreneurs to cope in the Construction Industry**

The last objective of this study sought to explore the strategies that the women entrepreneurs in the current study think can help them to cope in the building construction industry. The suggestions that they offered were mainly in terms of the need for support and to relax registration procedures. Their suggestions are incorporated in the recommendations section 5.4 in this chapter.

### **5.3. CONCLUSIONS**

With reference to the results from collected data it can be deduced that women entrepreneurs in the construction industry lack industry related skills, i.e. technical skills and general business management skills. This makes them to rely on others to properly manage their businesses or to run projects, e.g. outsourcing jobs that they could be earning income from. It is also evident from the findings that women entrepreneurs in the industry of construction still face a lot of obstacles, and on top of the list of challenges is the discrimination that they experience simply because they are women. This discrimination is accelerated by the reality that the industry of construction is still dominated by males and men are not receptive to women who want to participate in that space. There are also factors that were identified as reasons for low participation of women in the industry of construction and they include gender bias and stereotypes, lack of technical and business skills, women within the industry not networking, and the industry itself being difficult to enter into.

Regardless of these factors that hinder women from participating in the industry of construction in large numbers, those that have found their way into the industry, like the participants in this study, identified success factors in this industry. They credit their success on the need to prove that women can also run successful businesses in this industry, self-motivation, commitment, membership of business organisations, continuous training and development, ability to identify opportunities, the need for financial independence, as well as the need for success and self-fulfilment.

### **5.3. RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE STUDY**

In this study the recommendations are derived from the findings of the study and are directed to the group of people and institutions indicated hereunder.

#### **5.4.1 Recommendation for women entrepreneurs in the construction industry**

The study recommends the following for women who are already participating in the industry and those who want to enter the industry:

- **Networking:** It is recommended that women learn to go out there and network so that they can draw support and strength from one another as women in the industry of construction.

Organisations such as the South African Women in Construction (SAWIC) and National House Builders Registration Council (NHBRC) should be utilised for purposes of empowerment and networking.

- **Continuous self-development:** Women should also identify and attend workshops as well as conferences that are geared towards empowerment and capacitating women who are in construction so that they can acquire more knowledge to enable them to support one another and sustain themselves once they enter the industry.
- **Mentoring and coaching:** Those women who are established should act as mentors and coaches of those who are only entering or aspiring to enter the industry. The onus is also upon those who are venturing into the industry to look for mentors who can help them with running their businesses. Aspiring women entrepreneurs should also seek mentorship and guidance from the women who have been in the industry and who are actually doing the job. Mentorship will present them with an opportunity to learn from somebody who has walked the path and has construction experience as a woman.
- **Training and development:** Female entrepreneurs who are already in the industry should get training in order to acquire industry related skills and to keep up with the new developments and technologies in the building industry.

This study finds that the majority of the women who are in the industry do not have the requisite skills to enter and sustain themselves in the industry. It is therefore recommended that those who are aspiring to gain entry in the industry should first acquire the industry related skills so that they can have a competitive advantage. The skills will also assist them to remain relevant and to sustain themselves without reliance on their male counterparts. They should also invest on acquiring business management skills that will assist them in properly running their businesses

- **Support:** Women entrepreneurs must also support one another thereby sharing ideas and coping mechanisms for overcoming challenging times. They must also seek support from family and friends so that they can get enough rest to think rationally and make better decisions when they go back to work. Balancing work and family life can be too much sometimes and this is why women entrepreneurs should make use of family and friends support so that they are able to function optimally.

#### **5.4.2 Recommendation for the Department of Cooperative Governance, Human Settlement and Traditional Affairs (CoGHSTA)**

The study recommends the following for the Department of Cooperative Governance, Human Settlement and Traditional Affairs (CoGHSTA):

The Department was specifically criticised by the participants for not awarding the most of the women with the opportunity to work. The concern was raised over the Department's requirement of previous experience for the company to be awarded a tender for building low cost houses. It is therefore recommended that the department should revisit the requirement for a company to qualify to construct low cost houses so that emerging women in the building construction should also benefit and/or considered for the job. The department should also put in place policies that address gender inequality in the industry of construction and assist by removing the red tape barricading women from participating in this industry in large numbers.

#### **5.4.3 Recommendation for the National Home Builders Registration Council**

The following are recommendations for the NHBRC:

Although NHBRC was praised for taking care of the women entrepreneurs who are registered with the council, the dark side was that it was not visible enough as its offices are only in big cities and towns. The concern was that women entrepreneurs who are not residing in towns do not have access to it. It is therefore recommended that the NHBRC should try and get closer to where the people are, perhaps by establishing satellite offices or information hubs next to where the people are in the villages so that they can have the same information as those in towns.

It is further recommended that the council should ensure that the women who are in construction and who are registered as home builders should network. The Council should make use of their database and create platforms for these women to meet so that they can share ideas and learn from one another.

#### **5.4.4 Recommendation for the Small Enterprise Development Agency (SEDA)**

SEDA has programmes and entrepreneurial courses that are geared toward empowering the owners of small businesses with the necessary skills aimed at growing and sustaining businesses. However, the concern was that the most of the participants in this study are not acquainted with these programmes. It is therefore recommended that SEDA should embark on

regular roadshows aimed at bringing awareness to small business owners about the services and training they can access that will benefit their businesses and ensure growth and sustainability in those businesses.

#### **5.4.5 Recommendation for the Construction Industry Development Board (CIDB)**

For the construction industry the following are recommended from this study:

CIDB was criticised for being a bureaucratic wall that is making it very hard for women to participate in the building industry. For a company to obtain a grading from two to nine requires that the company should have a certain amount of money in the bank for it to qualify. The women find this frustrating as they may not have the money in the account but are adamant that they can raise the money for the project once they have the appointment letter. It is therefore recommended that the board relaxes some of the determining factors for two to nine grading, especially the company's financial capability.

#### **5.4.6 Recommendation for the future researchers**

This study was conducted with the main purpose of exploring the factors that contribute to the sustainability of women entrepreneurs in the construction industry in Capricorn District of Limpopo Province. The research excluded other district municipalities in the province and only focused on Capricorn District. The study recommends that future researchers should explore this topic or similar topics and cover other district municipalities in the province in order to have inclusive as well as comparative findings for the whole province.

### **5.4. LIMITATION OF THE STUDY**

The methodological limitation of the study had to do with the sample size. Due to the research design used for purposes of this study the sample size was small. In addition, the study focused only on women in one district municipality within the province of Limpopo. As a result of the small sample as well as the focus area it will be difficult to generalise the findings.

## **5.5. SUMMARY**

This study was about exploring the factors contributing to the sustainability of women entrepreneurs in the construction industry in Capricorn District in Limpopo Province. The study was qualitative in nature. Ten women who own businesses within the industry of construction were interviewed. The study findings reveal that women still encounter a lot of difficulties in the industry but have somehow developed some strategies that help them to cope and ensure that they succeed and are sustainable within the industry. Some of the strategies include joining different networking organisations; continuously training and developing themselves; establishing partnerships; personality traits; as well as hard work. The study recommends a multi-sectoral approach to addressing the identified challenges including the issue of women also trying to help themselves. Recommendations were tabled for women entrepreneurs and those who are aspiring to gain entry to the industry of construction; for the department of CoGHSTA; NHBRCI; SEDA; and for future researchers. The limitations of the study were also included in this chapter.

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## ANNEXURE A: FACULTY APPROVAL



University of Limpopo  
Faculty of Management and Law  
OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE DEAN  
Private Bag X1106, Sovenga, 0727, South Africa  
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26 April 2019

Motsei M.S (200630187) MBA  
TURFLOOP GRADUATE SCHOOL OF LEADERSHIP  
MASTER OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION (Course Work)

Dear Motsei M.S,

### FACULTY APPROVAL OF PROPOSAL

I have pleasure in informing you that your Masters proposal served at the Faculty Higher Degrees Committee meeting on **19 March 2019** and it was approved as follows:

"Factors that contribute to the Sustainability of Women Entrepreneurs in Capricorn District Municipality, Limpopo Province".

Note the following: The study

| Ethical Clearance  | Tick One |
|--|----------|
| Requires no ethical clearance  |          |
| Proceed with the study   |          |
| Requires ethical clearance (Human) (TREC) (apply online)                   |          |
| Proceed with the study only after receipt of ethical clearance certificate | ✓        |
| Requires ethical clearance (Animal) (AREC)                                 |          |
| Proceed with the study only after receipt of ethical clearance certificate |          |

Yours faithfully,

 26/04/19

Prof MP Sebola

Chairperson: Faculty Higher Degrees Committee

CC: Ms M.F Rachidi, Supervisor, Dr E Zwane, Acting Programme Manager and Prof MX Lethoko,  
Acting Director of School.

## ANNEXURE B: ETHICS CLEARANCE



University of Limpopo  
Department of Research Administration and Development  
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Tel: (015) 268 3935, Fax: (015) 268 2306, Email: anastasia.ngobe@ul.ac.za

### TURFLOOP RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE ETHICS CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

MEETING: 4 July 2019

PROJECT NUMBER: TREC/134/2019: PG

PROJECT:

Title: Factors That Contribute to The Sustainability of Women Entrepreneurs in Construction Industry in Capricorn District, Limpopo Province.  
Researcher: MS Motsei  
Supervisor: Ms MF Rachidi  
Co-Supervisor/s: N/A  
School: Turfloop Graduate School of Leadership  
Degree: Master of Business Administration

  
PROF P MASOKO

CHAIRPERSON: TURFLOOP RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

The Turfloop Research Ethics Committee (TREC) is registered with the National Health Research Ethics Council, Registration Number: REC-0310111-031

Note:

- i) This Ethics Clearance Certificate will be valid for one (1) year, as from the abovementioned date. Application for annual renewal (or annual review) need to be received by TREC one month before lapse of this period.
- ii) Should any departure be contemplated from the research procedure as approved, the researcher(s) must re-submit the protocol to the committee, together with the Application for Amendment form.
- iii) PLEASE QUOTE THE PROTOCOL NUMBER IN ALL ENQUIRIES.

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## **ANNEXURE C: INFORMED CONSENT**

### **Dear Participant**

I, Mpho Solomon Motsei, am a registered student at the University of Limpopo-Turfloop Graduate School of Leadership. As part of the requirement for the fulfilment of the qualification of Masters in Business Administration (MBA), I will be conducting a research study under the topic “actors that contribute to the sustainability of women entrepreneurs in the construction industry in the Capricorn District of Limpopo Province”. The main purpose of this study is to explore the factors that contribute to the sustainability of women entrepreneurs in the construction industry in the Capricorn District Municipality of Limpopo Province. Data will be collected through an interview that will take about 30 minutes to an hour of your time.

The results of the study are expected to help with gaining the insight on the challenges that women face and come up with mechanisms to encourage women participation in the construction industry, thereby contributing to academic knowledge in this area.

Kindly note that your participation in this study is voluntary and you will not be remunerated in any way for taking part. Should you feel uncomfortable with any question during the interview you may decline to answer that question. Furthermore, should you want to withdraw your participation during the study you should feel free to do so.

Your identity will not be revealed to anyone and the information collected will be kept confidential.

By partaking in this study you are indicating that you agree with the above terms and agree to take part in the study.

Any other clarity that may be needed regarding this study should be directed to the researcher at:

Cell: 083 745 0570                    OR                    Email: [mphomotsei@gmail.com](mailto:mphomotsei@gmail.com)

## **ANNEXURE D: RESEARCH INSTRUMENT: INTERVIEW GUIDE**

**Title of study:** Factors that contribute to the sustainability of women entrepreneurs in the Capricorn District of the Limpopo Province.

This study is about investigating the factors that contribute to the sustainability of women entrepreneurs in Capricorn district of the Limpopo Province. This is the research interview guide that will be used to guide the interview during interview sessions with the participants.

### **SECTION A: BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION**

1. Your age range: (mark with a tick)

30 – 34: \_\_\_\_\_      35 – 39: \_\_\_\_\_      40 – 44: \_\_\_\_\_  
45 – 49: \_\_\_\_\_      50 – 54: \_\_\_\_\_      55 and above: \_\_\_\_\_

2. How long you have been in business within this sector: \_\_\_\_\_
3. What type of business do you own? \_\_\_\_\_
4. For how many years have you been in this business? \_\_\_\_\_
5. How many employees did you have when you first started? \_\_\_\_\_
6. How many employees do you have currently? \_\_\_\_\_

### **SECTION B**

The following are the questions that will guide the research interview:

7. What are your perceptions on the available support, or lack thereof, for women in the building construction industry?

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8. What are your views on whether the construction industry is conducive for women to enter it or not?

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9. What are the reasons for low participation of women entrepreneurs in the construction industry?

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10. What are the challenges that you, and other women, have faced (when they first entered the industry) and continue to face in the building construction industry?

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11. What are the personal and environmental factors that posed a challenge for you in the industry (regarding for instance friends, family, public/private sector, etc.)?

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12. What are the strategies that you have used to navigate/cope with those challenges?

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13. What are the factors that have contributed to your success in the construction industry?

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14. What are the personal and environmental (friends, family, public/private sector, etc.) factors that have contributed to your success in the construction industry?

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15. What are the kind of skills, expertise and/or experience that are required to be able to succeed in the construction industry and stay there?

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16. Do you think there is a minimum educational requirement for one to enter this industry? If yes, explain what you think the minimum is and why. If not, explain why not.

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17. What are your thoughts on whether women have the requisite skills and/or experience to survive in this industry?

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18. What are the kind of programmes you think should be put in place to support women entrepreneurs in this industry?

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19. Any other additional comments about the status of women participation in this industry?

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**THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION!**